

THAI HALAL FOOD: HISTORY, CULTURE, AND MUSLIM TOURIST'S EXPERIENCES IN THAILAND

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Abstract

Thai halal food reflects both Islamic dietary rules and the cultural interactions between Muslim people and Thai society. The purpose of this study is to examine Thai halal food from three related angles: its cultural relevance, its historical development, and the experiences of Muslim tourists in Thailand. The current study employed a qualitative research strategy using documentary analysis, in-depth interviews with Muslim tourists, halal food entrepreneurs, and cultural specialists, as well as field observations in well-known tourist destinations with significant halal food services. According to the study, Islamic and Thai culinary traditions have traditionally interacted to produce Thai halal food, a unique hybrid cuisine that is both religiously compliant and expresses local cultural identity. Halal food serves as a cultural instrument for social integration, religious expression, and historical preservation. One of the key elements that Muslim travelers take into account when evaluating their vacation enjoyment, destination trust, and cultural experience is Thai halal cuisine. Furthermore, Thai halal cuisine reflects Thailand's pluralism and inclusivity in the international halal travel industry. By fusing historical and cultural analysis with traveler experience, the paper adds to the body of knowledge on halal tourism and culinary legacy. The findings provide practical implications for policymakers, tourism authorities and halal food entrepreneurs to promote Thailand's image as a Muslim-friendly destination without compromising the cultural authenticity of Thai halal food.

Keywords: *Thai halal food, Cultural heritage, Muslim tourists, Halal tourism, history*



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INTRODUCTION

Halal food is not only a dietary system in accordance with Islamic law but also a cultural symbol that reflects identity, historical memory and the lifeways of Muslim communities in different societies (Chantarungsri, C. 2024). The development of Muslim communities that have long been settled in various regions, including the South, the Central region, and major tourist cities such as Bangkok, Phuket, and Chiang Mai, has been strongly linked to Halal food in the Thai context (Sungnoi, P., & Soonthonsmai, V. (2024). Thus Thai halal cuisine is not simply “food for Muslims” but the outcome of a historical process of cultural fusion of Islamic culinary practices and Thai society in a multicultural milieu.

Islam and Muslim communities have arrived in the Thai lands historically from the Ayutthaya period onwards through trade routes, diplomacy and settlement of Persian, Arab and Malay merchants (Woodward, 2011; Kanjanee La-onsri, 2015). Therefore, the existence of halal food in Thai society is the result of the process of cultural adaptation or modification of local dishes to suit religious requirements, such as ingredient selection, ritual slaughter according to sharia, and the omission of prohibited (haram) items (Adulyasas, A., Baka, A., Muninnoppamas, J., & Yaena, B. 2023). These processes have resulted in Thai halal cuisine that possesses unique characteristics compared with halal foods in other Muslim-majority countries.

Culturally, Thai halal food can be considered as intangible cultural heritage that transmits culinary knowledge, beliefs and identity from one generation to the next (Park, E., Muangasame, K., & Kim, S. 2021). Food is not merely a consumable object, but rather a social language used to communicate group belonging, acceptance and religious difference (Thipmoud, B. (2024). Halal food is a way of upholding religion in everyday life, and is a bargaining space between Islamic identity and Thai-ness in Thai Muslim communities.

At the same time, in a modern global context, halal food has become part of the growing halal tourism industry, developing with the increase in Muslim travelers around the world (Sthapit, E., Yang, P., Ji, C., Björk, P., & Stone, M. J. 2024). As a major tourist destination, Thailand has been striving to develop Muslim-friendly services, particularly in the halal food, which is considered a fundamental factor in Muslim tourists' travel decision-making (Mastercard-CrescentRating. 2023).

However, the majority of study on halal food in Thailand has been on marketing, halal standards, and economic factors (Putera, P. B., & Rakhel, T. M., 2023). There are very few studies that look at the relationship between history, culture, and the experience of Muslim tourists. In-depth explanations of the cultural significance of halal food as a representation of identity and historical memory are lacking in many halal tourism research, which focuses on quantitative measurements of satisfaction or consumer behavior (Slamet, A., Abdullah, I., & Laila, N. Q. 2022).

This information gap suggests that in order to comprehend Thai halal cuisine as a dynamic social and cultural phenomenon, an integrated study incorporating historical, cultural, and tourism aspects is required. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine how Thai halal food has evolved historically, examine its cultural significance and values, and comprehend how Muslim tourists regard Thai halal cuisine.

The study is important from an academic and practical standpoint. It intellectually closes knowledge gaps about the cultural and historical facets of Thai halal food that have not been fully explored.. Practically, the results can be used to lead the sustainable development of halal tourism without threatening the cultural importance of Thai halal food. They can also be a source of information for policymakers, tourism authorities and halal food entrepreneurs to develop travel experiences that respect the local cultural contexts and religious beliefs.

Thus, the three objectives of this research are:

- (1) to review the historic evolution of Thai halal food.
- (2) to study the cultural values and meanings of Thai halal cuisine.
- (3) to explore the experiences and perceptions of Muslim tourists about Thailand in order to understand how Thai halal food acts as a bridge between religion, culture and travel in contemporary Thai society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review in this study was conducted to provide the conceptual framework and relevant research on:

- (1) Theories of Food and Culture.
- (2) The concept of halal and halal food.
- (3) Halal food in relation to identity and culture heritage.
- (4) Halal food in relation to tourism and Muslim tourist experiences in order to identify the research gap concerning Thai halal food in historical, cultural, and tourism contexts.

Theories of Food and Culture

Numerous anthropologists and sociologists have noted that food is a symbolic system reflecting social structures, values, and group identities rather than just a basic necessity for survival (Douglas, 1972; Fischler, 1988). According to Mintz and Du Bois (2002), food can represent class, group membership, and collective memory and is a place where culture, economy, and power combine.

According to Bourdieu (1984), dietary decisions are influenced by cultural capital and habitus, which represent preferences and social standing. Food serves as a cultural tool in this environment, reproducing group identities and divisions.

Goody (1982) contends in the cultural-historical study of food that the production, preparation, and cross-cultural exchange of food are vital to the development of civilizations. Pilcher (2012) goes on to show that power dynamics and cross-cultural interaction in colonial and postwar settings may be studied using food as a framework.

These viewpoints suggest that food might serve as a historical record of cross-cultural interactions. Therefore, Thai halal food is not just a religious product; rather, it is the outcome of cultural fusion between Thai society and Islam. "A good literature review does not simply summarize sources. It is an analytical, well-structured synthesis that critically evaluates existing research, highlights overarching themes or controversies, and clearly identifies knowledge gaps to justify your own research" (Webster & Watson, 2002).

The Concept of Halal and Halal Food

In the Islamic context, halal refers to what is allowed to be done or consumed in accordance with religious precepts (Riaz & Chaudry, 2004). Thus, halal cuisine refers to the kinds of materials, slaughter techniques, and processing processes that must be devoid of forbidden (haram) substances including alcohol, pig, and blood (Al-Qaradawi, 1995).

According to Wilson and Liu (2010), halal has evolved from a strictly religious notion to one with economic and industrial elements in the modern world. For Muslim customers, halal has become a quality standard and a sign of confidence. Additionally, Bonne and Verbeke (2008) point out that in multicultural settings, halal cuisine is crucial for fostering customer confidence and religious identity.

According to Hooker (2008) and Woodward (2011), halal customs in Southeast Asia are flexible and tailored to regional social and cultural settings. Through institutions like the Central Islamic Council of Thailand and halal certification programs, the halal concept has been institutionalized in Thailand (Jaroensuk, 2025).

The majority of studies on Thailand's halal sector concentrate on standards, marketing, and economic factors, with very little attention paid to the cultural and historical aspects of halal cuisine.

Halal Food, Identity, and Cultural Heritage

Ethnic and religious identities are formed and maintained in large part through food (Barthes, 1997). Halal cuisine is one way that Muslim communities uphold their religion in day-to-day living. (2023, Amrullah).

The idea of intangible cultural legacy, which encompasses culinary expertise, cooking techniques, and eating customs as community heritage, was put forth by UNESCO in 2012. Bessière (1998) demonstrates how local foods can be transformed through tourist and cultural marketing techniques, into "heritage" (heritagization).

Halal food is not only a religious practice in Muslim countries, but it also serves as a barrier between "us" and "them" and a symbol of purity (Douglas, 1972; Fischler, 1988). However, Tamim (2017) contends that halal cuisine can serve as a negotiated space between mainstream culture and religious identity in heterogeneous cultures.

Dishes like Massaman curry, biryani (khao mok), and roti products of cultural exchanges between Persian, Indian, Malay, and Siamese influences show how Muslim communities have contributed to Thai culinary history (Suchart Phueakprapan, 2011; Kanjanee La'ongsri, 2015). Thus, these foods can be seen as part of the shared cultural history of Thai society as a whole and Muslim communities.

Halal Food, Tourism, and Muslim Tourist

Halal tourism has garnered attention as a high-potential rising business throughout the last ten years (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Henderson, 2016). The destination choice of Muslim travelers is mainly influenced by halal food (Mohsin et al., 2016).

As Stephenson (2014) observes, halal tourism is not only about providing services compatible with religious beliefs, but also about providing experiences that leave visitors with a sense of cultural familiarity and religious comfort. Food can serve as a "cultural mediator" between visitors and host countries, according to Timothy and Ron (2013).

Suksri (2017) and Nurdiansyah (2018) discovered that the halal meal has a significant effect on the trust and satisfaction of Muslim tourists in Thailand. However, rather than examining the cultural implications of halal food as an experiential phenomena, these studies tend to adopt quantitative approaches and focus on measuring satisfaction or intention to return.

As Jafari and Scott (2014) observe, much research on Muslim tourism is devoid of cultural and historical framework and is more management and marketing oriented than it is oriented towards explaining the identity and symbolic meanings of visitor experiences.

Research Gap

According to the literature study, studies on halal food fall into three primary categories:

- (1) Religious aspects and halal standards.
- (2) Economic aspects and marketing.
- (3) Halal tourism.

Studies that incorporate aspects of the historical, cultural, and Muslim tourist experience are scarce, especially when it comes to Thailand. The majority of current research views halal cuisine more as a commodity or service than as a symbol of cultural history and identity.

Furthermore, a lot of research uses quantitative approaches, which limits our ability to fully comprehend the cultural and religious significance of Thai halal cuisine for Muslim travelers.

Thus, this study attempts to close that gap by examining the cultural significance and historical evolution of Thai halal cuisine in addition to analyzing the experiences of Muslim tourists. It does this by employing qualitative methods to explain how Thai halal cuisine functions as a mediator between religion, culture, and tourism in modern Thai society.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research methodology to comprehend Thai halal food as a historical and cultural phenomenon, as well as the experiences of Muslim tourists in Thailand. It seeks to describe meanings and interpretations rather than to perform quantitative measurement. The researchers believe that the qualitative approach is most suited to examining issues of identity, culture, and human experience.

Research Design

This research is a qualitative integrative study that integrates fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and historical documentary sources. Studies to examine Thai halal cuisine from three perspectives: (1) historical evolution; (2) cultural meanings and values; and (3) Muslim travelers' experiences. This method is consistent with the idea of food studies, which view food as a social symbol as well as a tangible thing.

Study Area

The study focused on major Thai tourist locations with halal food options and a high Muslim tourist population. Pattani province, Phuket, Bangkok (Pongsakornrungrungsilp, S., Pongsakornrungrungsilp, P., Niyomdech, H., Chansamran, S., Chouykaew, T., & He, Y. 2024). A spatial comparative analysis is made easier by the fact that these locations represent various contexts in terms of Muslim community histories, tourism economic development, and types of Thai halal cuisine. (Chulalongkorn University, 2024).

Key Informants

Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to choose key informants, while focus groups were used for in-depth interviews.

- Foreign Muslim tourists, approximately 15 individuals.
- Halal restaurant operators, approximately 10 individuals.
- Food culture experts and Muslim community leaders, approximately 5-8 individuals.

These informant groups were chosen to cover the perspectives of consumers (tourists), producers (operators), and knowledgeable cultural actors.

Questions for foreign Muslim tourists:

- Please describe your first or most memorable experience with halal food in Thailand.
- How is halal food in Thailand different from halal food in other countries?
- How do you think halal food in Thailand reflects or communicates religious or cultural identity?
- During your travels, have you experienced situations where access to or provision of halal food in Thailand either facilitated or hindered your travel?
- What suggestions or expectations do you have for improving halal food and services for Muslim tourists in Thailand ?

Questions for halal restaurant operators:

- Please describe the origin and development of your restaurant, including why you chose to operate a halal establishment.
- In your view, what are the key elements that define your food as “halal” for Muslim tourist customers?
- How do you perceive differences in tastes and expectations between foreign Muslim customers and local/Thai Muslim customers?
- How does your restaurant communicate its halal status and the cultural/historical stories of the food to help tourists understand?
- What opportunities or challenges do you see for the expansion of halal cuisine in Thailand's tourism industry going forward, and what suggestions do you have for other businesses or legislators?

Questions for leaders of the Muslim community and specialists in food culture:

- Please give an account of the evolution of halal cuisine in your local Muslim community over the past few decades.
- How, in your opinion, does halal cuisine represent the cultural identity and collective memory of the community?
- What role do you think Muslim visitors have in the community's halal cuisine, and does tourism have an impact on the preservation of local foodways?
- What are the primary obstacles to preserving the cultural significance of halal cuisine in the face of market forces and the growth of tourism?
- What useful suggestions or regulations would you provide to promote sustainable culinary tourism and preserve the legacy of halal cuisine?

Research Instruments

The data collection instruments included:

- A guide for semi-structured interviews (Flick, 2022). Questions addressed: - Thai people's experiences eating halal food Perceptions of the food's halalness and Thainess; cultural connotations of Thai halal cuisine
- Checklist for observations (Braun, V., & Clarke, 2021). It is used to capture halal restaurant aspects such as ambiance, layout, religious identity message, and employee-visitor interactions.
- Form for document analysis (Saldaña, 2021). Examining historical documents, previous research, and halal travel resources.

The instruments were created with flexibility and questions that were tailored to the informants' circumstances, all while adhering to the principles of qualitative research.

Data Collection

The data were collected in three periods, as follows:

Phase 1: Document study

The researchers examined academic literature on the history of Muslim communities, halal cuisine, and halal travel in addition to records from governmental and Islamic organizations in order to construct the conceptual framework and historical context.

Phase 2: In-depth interviews

Each focus group and one-on-one interview lasted around 30 minutes and was conducted both in person and electronically. With the informants' permission, notes and audio recordings of the data were made.

Phase 3: Field observation

In order to record spatial context and halal food consumption behaviors, the researchers examined halal restaurants, food markets, and prominent tourist destinations for Muslims.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to human-centered research ethics. Prior to conducting interviews, the researchers got consent from the participants and explained the goals of the study. Personal data was kept confidential and used only for research. The individuals' lives, religious convictions, or feeling of dignity were unaffected by the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher outlined the study's three objectives in the introduction:

- (1) to look at the historical development of Thai halal food.
- (2) to investigate the values and cultural importance of Thai halal cuisine.
- (3) to investigate Muslim tourists' perceptions of and experiences with halal cuisine in Thailand in order to shed light on how Thai halal cuisine serves as a link between religion, culture, and travel in contemporary Thai society.

These objectives can be divided into three main categories after field observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis:

- (1) Thai halal food's development.
- (2) The cultural importance of Thai halal food.
- (3) How Muslim tourists in Thailand experience halal cuisine. The results and observations are presented as follows:

Finding and Discussion 1 : Historical evolution of Thai halal food.

According to the study (Woodward, 2011; Kanchanee Laongsri, 2015), through trade and diplomatic networks of Persian, Arab, and Malay traders, Muslim communities that have resided in Thailand since the Ayutthaya period introduced cooking customs and halal practices that blended with regional cuisines. This is the origin of Thai halal food. Prime examples include rice-based dishes like biryani, which originated in Indian and Middle Eastern cuisines but were modified to suit local ingredients and Thai preferences, and curry dishes like massaman curry, which feature spices from the Muslim world.

Interviews with food history experts reflected that Thai halal food did not emerge from direct imitation of foreign Muslim cuisines but is the result of a process of cultural adaptation which aligns with Goody (1982) and Pilcher (2012), who view food as a product of cross-cultural contact and selective appropriation by the host society.

In the modern era, especially after World War II, the expansion of nation-states and bureaucratic systems led to the establishment of formal halal certification systems, resulting in the standardization and industrialization of Thai halal food (Riaz & Chaudry, 2004). Halal food thus shifted from a household and community practice to a commodity within the economy and tourism sector.

This study reflects that Thai halal food is a living history that narrates the relationship between Islam and Thai society through flavors, ingredients, and cooking practices, consistent with Mintz and Du Bois (2002), who argue that food can serve as evidence for cultural-historical inquiry.

All of the in-depth informants (5-8 individuals) agreed: "Thai halal food reflects journeys of culture flavors and ingredients tell stories of trade and settlement. Elders still remember ancestral recipes. There is an attempt to maintain traditional cooking techniques and associated customs, even though tastes have been modified for visitors and the market. While halal certification increases business trust, increased commercialization risks damaging local culinary identity. Thus, the best and most balanced approach is to promote tourism that respects knowledge transfer and boosts the local economy.

Based on the testimony of the informants, the author argues that Thai halal cuisine serves as a cultural testament connecting historical and modern flavors and ingredients, reflecting trade networks and settlement. Commercialization may endanger local identity in the absence of cautious community-oriented initiatives, even while it is economically vital to adapt to markets and tourists. Thus, the author proposes an all-encompassing approach: develop tourism strategies that encourage the sharing of traditional knowledge through culinary storytelling, community projects, and cultural marketing, as well as actions to provide financial support to local companies without compromising cultural values.

Finding and Discussion 2 : Thai halal food's cultural significance and ramifications.

Meanings and cultural values of Thai halal cuisine within the cultural dimension, the results show that Thai halal cuisine represents Thai Muslim identity and a cultural setting where Islamic and Thai customs coexist peacefully, in addition to being food that conforms with religious principles.

The availability of halal food in Thai cuisine has been discussed by a number of Muslim restaurant owners. Dishes like halal tom yum, halal green curry, or Thai single-dish meals support the notion that Muslims are a part of Thai society rather than a distinct cultural minority. This outcome is in line with Douglas (1972) and Fischler (1988), who argue that, under some circumstances, food can serve as both a symbolic barrier and a bridge between "us" and "them," as well as between different identities.

Furthermore, Thai halal food, religious rites, and historical narratives may be categorized as intangible cultural heritage due to their generational transmission (UNESCO 2012). Interviews with Muslim community leaders in the south revealed that a number of meals, such as khao yam, biryani, and roti, are connected to customs and important occasions in everyday community life.

This study logically supports Bessière's (1998) concept of food heritagization by illustrating how Thai halal cuisine is pushed as a culinary culture for tourists and marketing, rather than as communal meal. Jafari and Scott (2014) highlight that this approach has challenges in maintaining Islamic authenticity while adapting to accommodate visitors while analyzing Muslim tourism in the context of globalization.

Halal restaurant owners recognize the cultural significance of Thai halal cuisine, but they also recognize the necessity to alter flavors and presentation to match the tastes of foreign tourists. This entails lowering the level of spice, controlling the amount of salt, and presenting more modern food while preserving traditional cooking techniques and customs. Even while halal certification benefits our clients and increases confidence, some recipes may lose their community value due to market rivalry. We train staff to tell the story of the food, explain distinctions through menu descriptions, and demonstrate traditional preparation in order to help guests appreciate the cultural context and comprehend origins. Future legislation should support storytelling-based advertising and help local companies preserve their distinctiveness while promoting economic growth.

Thai halal food protects religious identity and promotes cultural exchange between Muslims and Thais. However, the author contends that while altering flavors and presentation is an essential economic survival tactic, doing so carries the risk of undermining cultural authenticity and communal elements based on the conversations with the operators. Policies and practical measures, such as promoting storytelling-based marketing to add cultural value, teaching employees to explain the origins of meals, and certification systems that take local surroundings into account, are therefore necessary to maintain balance. These rules would help operators make money from sustainable tourism while preserving their culinary identities.

Finding and Discussion 3 : Muslim tourism' experiences of Thai halal food

Interviews with Muslim visitors revealed that halal food plays a significant role in their trust and religious comfort while traveling in Thailand.

The majority of visitors have two perspectives on Thai halal cuisine:

- (1) Religious compliance.
- (2) Cultural experience.

In the first dimension, tourists place a strong emphasis on the restaurant's reputation as a place of religious safety, halal certification marks, and the transparency of food production procedures. Therefore, halal food contributes to the development of Muslim consumers' confidence and assurance.

In the second dimension, Muslim travelers see Thai halal food as a means of learning about Thai culture through food, particularly Thai recipes that have been modified to be halal (such as halal pad thai or halal tom yum), which enable them to experience Thai-ness without sacrificing religious values. As a result, food serves as a bridge between visitors and the local way of life.

However, some tourism claimed to be confused between foods that are pork-free and those that are actually halal, indicating a lack of knowledge about halal rules among both operators and regular tourists. This suggests that standards and halal identity communication continue to be obstacles for halal tourism in non-Muslim nations.

According to the statistics presented in the discussion, Thai halal cuisine serves as a symbol in advancing Thailand's reputation as a Muslim-friendly travel destination by meeting religious requirements and fostering cross-cultural communication.

Based on the interviews, the author claims that Muslim visitors' experiences with halal cuisine in Thailand reflect a complex link between cultural curiosity and religious confidence. Halal food is first and foremost a tool. Crucial components that lower anxiety and make travel and eating choices easier for tourists are transparency in food handling and certification labeling. However, depending only on certification is insufficient since it might produce confusion between pork-free and genuinely halal, undermining long-term trust when passengers and operators are unaware of what halal entails.

Second, halal food serves as a bridge between cultures, enabling tourists to enjoy Thai culture while upholding Islamic principles. Travelers value Thai food that has been converted to halal because it satisfies cultural and religious standards and promotes intercultural communication. However, altering menus to satisfy customer demands could weaken special relationships within the community.

Therefore, the author supports an integrated approach that includes training on halal principles and cultural communication for operators and staff, as well as explicit certification procedures and communication requirements (such as labeling, descriptive menus, and information on preparation processes). Storytelling-based tourism and interactive experiences that match visitors with local cooks can increase cultural and economic value without sacrificing culinary authenticity. Lastly, public policy should promote collaboration between communities, certification authorities, and the tourism industry in order to strike a balance between religious requirements, the preservation of culinary heritage, and the long-term sustainable development and expansion of Thailand's halal tourism sector.

Finding and Discussion 4 : The Integration of Tourism, Culture, and History

Dimensions Taking into account the results overall, Thai halal cuisine serves as a center for travel, history, and culture, especially:

- (1) Thai halal cuisine has historically represented migration and cross-cultural interaction.
- (2) In a multicultural culture, Thai halal cuisine is a cultural symbol of unity and individuality.
- (3) Thai halal cuisine is a cultural asset that provides Muslim travelers with experiences.

The study supports Stephenson's (2014) claim that halal tourism entails giving tourist locations cultural relevance in addition to providing services that follow religious precepts. From a policy standpoint, the results show that the development of halal tourism should focus on the cultural and historical aspects of Thai halal cuisine rather than just standards and marketing, since the value of Thai halal cuisine lies in its portrayal of religious and cultural harmony in Thai society.

The researchers argue in policy discussions that the development of halal tourism should prioritize the cultural and historical aspects of Thai halal food rather than focusing only on standards and marketing because the value of Thai halal cuisine lies in its role as a representation of the coexistence of religion and culture in Thai society. The researchers also emphasize that community-participatory methods must be used in the design of tourist initiatives in order to combine these features. Cooking demonstrations, historical narratives, and cultural information-transmission workshops are examples of these systems, which support households in creating direct revenue and preserving the legacy of local knowledge. In order for halal tourist development to attain long-term economic, social, and cultural sustainability,

regulatory support is required for culturally adaptive certification requirements, storytelling-based marketing, and a fund to help small operators.

CONCLUSION

The study "Thai Halal Food: History, Culture, and the Experiences of Muslim Tourists in Thailand" aims to characterize the role of Thai halal food from three perspectives: the experiences of Muslim tourists, cultural meanings and values, and historical evolution. The results show that Thai halal cuisine is a result of cultural fusion between Islam and Thai society in a multicultural setting, rather than just a food system that complies with Islamic law.

Through centuries of commercial networks and cultural contacts with the Muslim world, Thai halal cuisine has historically represented the establishment and relationships of Muslim communities in Thailand. Thus, some foods like roti, biryani, and massaman curry can be considered as products of a common past between Muslims and Thai civilization as a whole. In this way, Thai halal cuisine serves as a living history that documents, via regular eating, the connection between religion and culture.

Culturally, the results demonstrate that Thai halal cuisine functions as a space for cultural negotiation with the majority society as well as a way to maintain Muslim community identity. Not only does halal cuisine serve as a religious barrier, but it also serves as a means for Muslims to express their sense of belonging to Thai society by creating Thai-inspired yet religiously compatible foods. As a result, Thai halal food can be regarded as intangible cultural legacy, passing on identity, knowledge, and values through the generations.

Halal food in Thailand has a huge impact on Muslim guests' religious confidence and enjoyment with their trip. In addition to satisfying religious requirements, halal food gives visitors an opportunity to learn about Thai culture through eating. As a result, travelers' perceptions of Thai halal food consider both religious practice and cultural experience. The report does, however, also draw attention to challenges in communicating halal identity and understanding halal standards in tourism destinations, which may erode Muslim tourists' trust.

This study fills a knowledge gap by integrating historical, cultural, and tourist analytical frameworks. The findings imply that Thai halal food should not just be seen as a product or economic service, but also as a cultural resource with symbolic and identity meanings. The study recommends that, in terms of policy and practice, the historical and cultural features of Thai halal cuisine should be given equal priority with initiatives to raise standards and the legitimacy of halal systems. Showcasing Thai halal cuisine as a cultural legacy and a sign of a diverse society will enhance Thailand's standing as a Muslim-friendly vacation destination and promote sustainable tourism.

The study suggests broadening the scope to other parts of Thailand and doing comparative studies with countries with more developed halal tourism in order to acquire a better understanding of the role of halal food in various cultural contexts.

DECLARATIONS

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Authors' contributions

Throughout this research project, the authors worked together harmoniously and maintained strong mutual support. They divided their responsibilities among themselves, resulting in the completion of this academic work. The authors' respective roles can be broadly outlined as follows: Nawawee Arawan: Supervision, conceptualization, methodology, analysis, and investigation. Rushdy Thaokloy: Funding acquisition, supervision, and assistance with the journal publication process. Hartinee Cheming: Reviewing and revising the manuscript, including editing the language for accuracy, clarity, and fluency.

Data Availability

All data generated or analysed during this study are included in this published article.

Competing Interest

The author(s) declare that they have no competing interests.

Ethics Approval

This study received consent and approval from all participants involved in the in-depth interviews throughout every stage of the research. All participants consented to the analysis and disclosure of the interview findings for the dissemination of academic knowledge. No interviewees were identified by name, and no photographs were taken. Accordingly, the researchers analyzed and synthesized the interview data, refining them into the research findings presented in this study, in full accordance with academic standards and ethical principles.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

ChatGPT was used solely to assist with language editing and to improve the clarity of the manuscript. All content, analysis, arguments, and conclusions were reviewed, verified, and approved by the author(s), who remain fully responsible for the final manuscript.

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