

# Halal Space and Culinary Tourism of Hong Kong: A Guide for Muslim Travelers

**Ahmadin** 

Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

## Abstract

This article discusses my personal experience as a Muslim traveler visiting several attractions, public spaces, and restaurants in Hong Kong City from late October to early November 2017. The narrative of this experience aims to serve as a guide and reference for other Muslim travelers who will visit the country. The approach of this study uses the perspective of sociology of space by using qualitative data both in description and analysis. Data collection techniques were carried out in the form of direct observation and recording, interviews with tour guides, and documentation. The results showed that the Hong Kong government has an interesting tourism sector policy, including the provision of various culinary tourism destinations and some of them are restaurants that provide halal menus. This can be seen as a spatial awareness and spatial practice, especially in the field of urban tourism. The practical benefit of the study is as a guide for Muslim tourists who will visit Hong Kong.

Keywords: halal space, tourism, culinary, muslim travelers

## Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas tentang pengalaman pribadi saya sebagai wisatawan muslim yang mengunjungi beberapa objek wisata, ruang publik, dan restoran di Kota Hong Kong pada akhir Oktober hingga awal November 2017. Narasi pengalaman ini bertujuan untuk menjadi panduan dan referensi bagi wisatawan muslim lainnya yang akan berkunjung ke negara tersebut. Pendekatan penelitian ini menggunakan perspektif sosiologi ruang dengan menggunakan data kualitatif baik secara deskripsi maupun analisis. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan berupa observasi dan pencatatan langsung, wawancara dengan pemandu wisata, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemerintah Hong Kong memiliki kebijakan sektor pariwisata yang menarik, antara lain penyediaan berbagai destinasi wisata kuliner dan beberapa di antaranya adalah restoran yang menyediakan menu halal. Hal ini dapat dilihat sebagai sebuah kesadaran ruang publik dan praktik meruang, khususnya dalam bidang pariwisata perkotaan. Manfaat praktis dari penelitian ini adalah sebagai panduan bagi wisatawan muslim yang akan berkunjung ke Hong Kong.

Kata Kunci: ruang halal, wisata, kuliner, musafir muslim

## Introduction

The international narrative on world travel destinations (Boniface et al., 2016) has always featured Hong Kong as one of the countries that has earned the title of “Asia World City” (Shen, 2010), due to its beautiful city, exotic nature, and unique cultural heritage (Lowenthal, 2013). Media reports and travelers' personal experiences have informed the international community that Hong Kong is a destination with many advantages (Heung & Qu, 2020). One of the interesting international reputations that Hong Kong (H.-C. Wu et al., 2018) has is a culinary attraction where several types of food menus are listed on the Michelin Stars list (Baldwin et al., 2023). Just to explain that the Michelin Star is a title given to restaurants that serve exceptional cuisine. Some of the universal criteria that are used as a measure are the quality of ingredients, harmony of flavors, mastery of techniques for managing ingredients, the chef's personality that is reflected in his cooking, and consistency in the entire menu over time (Suhairom et al., 2019).

Hong Kong is now popular for its 10 Michelin Stars-listed cuisines (Huang et al., 2023), such as: Yat Lok Restaurant, which serves classic Roast Goose dishes that are in high demand among tourists vacationing in the country. The restaurant is located at Hong Kong, Central, Stanley St, 34-38 HK Hong Kong Island Central 34-38 Stanley Street Golden Harvest House Ground Floor Shop Conwell House. Another culinary product is a modernized version of Cantonese cuisine available at Ah Yat Harbour View located at Shop 2901, 29/F, iSQUARE, 63 Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui. The restaurant, which is famous for its scenic views, is open in two stages: every 11:30 am to 3 pm and 6 pm to 11 pm Hong Kong time. In addition, there is the Arbor restaurant which provides contemporary French menu, Ho Hung Kee restaurant which provides noodle soup menu, and several other restaurants.

Hong Kong's reputation on the international culinary (Cheung, 2013) stage is not limited to the possession of these 10 famous menus, but also to the government's policy of allowing entrepreneurs to open specialty restaurants for Muslim travelers (Ho, 2013). As a result, restaurants that serve a variety of halal food (Henderson, 2016) and beverage products have emerged, and in this article we use the term “halal space” (Battour et al., 2022). This is particularly interesting for three reasons, namely: First, culinary tourism in the promotion of tourism objects and the world tourism industry (Camilleri & Camilleri, 2018), is currently a trending topic that is widely used as the target of scientific studies of the academic community in various universities. Second, culinary products can be seen as a heritage of world history and mass culture as well as a reflection of the globalization of food production (Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2012) and consumption. Thus, culinary dishes can be imagined as the promotion of authenticity of tradition, commodification of tradition, construction of identity, intellectual property, and intangible heritage. In addition, culinary is imagined as a framework for exploring relationships with others through food as well as a parameter for ensuring cultural, ecological and economic sustainability (Long, 2012). Third, the presence of various restaurants providing halal food (Secinaro & Calandra, 2020) menus is interestingly connected to spatial awareness and spatial practices both from the government, especially tourism development planners and tourists, especially Muslim travelers.

## Method

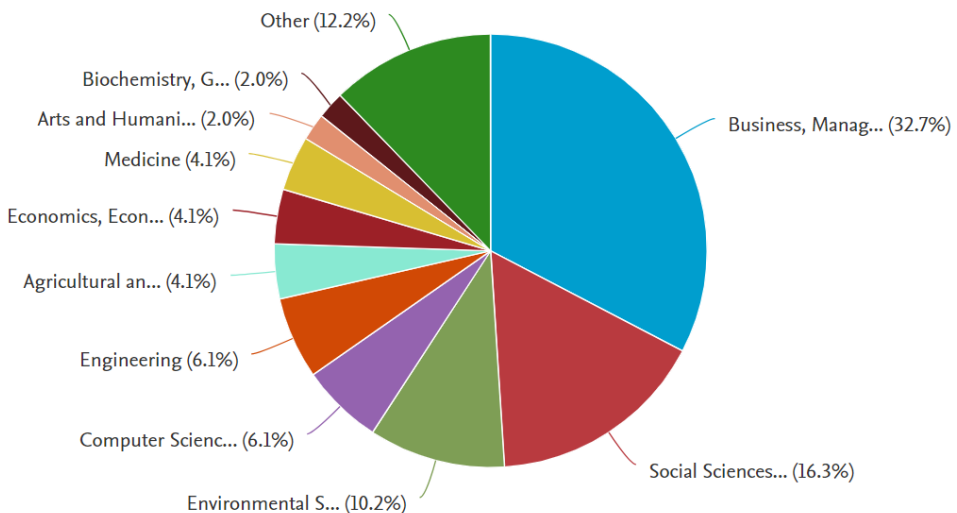
This type of research is descriptive qualitative research (Ahmadin, 2022b) that uses data from the results of searching a number of literature in the form of books and articles related to this topic. Other data is obtained through the process of direct observation (Chen & Ng, 2011) at the location in the form of travel notes and interviews with relevant parties, especially tour guides and restaurant

waiters. Data analysis is carried out descriptively and presents in the form of narratives about the location or places of restaurants that provide halal food menus in Hong Kong and Kowloon, and what are the benefits for Muslim tourists visiting this country.

## Discussion

One of the important concerns of travelers, especially Muslims, when visiting a country is the availability of halal eateries or restaurants. This is also an important question when Muslim tourists (Baig & O'Connor, 2015) visit Hong Kong to enjoy various famous tourist attractions in this Chinese country (Wright, 2020). Based on my personal experience when visiting Hong Kong in late October and early November 2017 (Ahmadin, 2024), I had questioned about the availability of restaurants that provide halal food. It turns out that from the explanation of the tour guide at that time, in Hong Kong there are quite a lot of halal restaurants (Akhtar et al., 2020) and food stalls that can be an alternative for Muslim tourists (Rashid et al., 2019). Not only did I get information about this, but after a few days in Kowloon and Hong Kong, I had time to prove it when visiting several restaurants and enjoying the food menu provided. This is interesting to discuss because the study of halal restaurants in relation to Muslim travelers has not received much attention, especially in studies in the field of social science or sociology of urban space. From the results of searching research data on the Scopus database, it shows that in the last 10 years there are only 8 social science articles out of a total of 23 titles.

### Documents by subject area



Source: Scopus Database 2015-2024, accessed October 5, 2024

Based on this data, it shows that the study of halal restaurants in relation to halal food and Muslim travelers is still very minimal, which only amounts to 23 articles. Even from this percentage, studies on this topic are dominated by business, management, and accounting, namely 16 articles (32.7%). This legitimizes the importance of studies on halal restaurants and menus in Hong Kong, especially in the perspective of sociology of space studies related to spatial awareness, spatial practices, and spatial representation. The description of the profile of halal restaurants in Hong Kong in terms of

practical benefits, can serve as a guide for tourism enthusiasts, especially Muslims in this country. From an academic aspect, it is useful especially for socio-cultural studies, multiculturalism, and the sociology of urban space.

One of the first halal restaurants I visited while in Hong Kong was Islam Food, a fairly old restaurant in this country that has been serving its customers since 1950. When I was about to enter this restaurant, I saw on the front written “Since 1950”. This old Hong Kong restaurant is located at 1 Lung Kong Road, Kowloon City (Lai & Chua, 2018). About an hour more I was with several friends in this restaurant and enjoyed a variety of food menus. For the size of dinner, I think it is enough with a menu of food such as rice, shrimp, egg omelet, soup, and hot tea. Besides enjoying the food, we also had a light discussion about the city and reclaimed product space in Kowloon and Hong Kong (Ahmadin, 2022a).



*Islam Food is one of the oldest restaurants in Hong Kong and has been serving its customers since 1950  
(Photo: Ahmadin, 2017).*

Another restaurant that serves authentic Cantonese halal food (Ambrose et al., 2018) that I visited was the Islamic Center Masjid Ammar and Osman Ramju Sadick canteen (Jacky Li et al., 2024). The canteen is located on the 3rd floor of the Islamic Center, located at 40 Oi Kwan Road, Wan Chai (Ho, 2013). This place can be visited by walking about 5 minutes from Exit A, Causeway Bay MTR Station. Even in this place, you can enjoy a variety of halal menus until late at night, because the restaurant is open from 10:00 am to 3:00 am. For lunch on the second day while in Hong Kong, we did not take advantage of some of the restaurants mentioned. Instead, we were at another halal restaurant and enjoyed the distinctive flavors of the archipelago's cuisine at the Indonesian Restaurant (Tan, 2011). The Indonesian aura is indeed very thick in this place to eat, where the waiter also speaks Indonesian.

A halal restaurant in Hong Kong that also attracts many Muslim travelers is Wai Kee Duck Rice located at Shop 5, Bowrington Road Cooked Food Centre, 1/F, Bowrington Road Market, 21 Bowrington Road, Wan Chai. According to our travel companion, this restaurant is famous for its signature duck rice menu which is the best in Hong Kong (D. Y. H. Wu, 2001). In this halal

restaurant, which is open from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, also provides a meat curry menu for fans of this type of cuisine. Even various noodles such as roasted duck noodles are also available and many other types of food menus.

Especially for travelers who are fond of eating mutton rendang, said HW (Interview, 2017), you can find this type of menu at Ma's Restaurant located at Shop A, G/F, 21-25 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Sham Shui Po. This restaurant, which offers mutton dishes, has a rather long opening time, starting at 11:30 am until 11:00 pm. From Exit E, Prince Edward MTR Station, we can walk to this restaurant with a distance of about 5 to 7 minutes. For about 30 minutes we treat our hunger and unwind for a moment. The atmosphere of lunch at this restaurant is quite fun and feels like in Indonesia. From this restaurant we went to the Islamic Center, a mosque in Kowloon City (Jacky Li et al., 2024) in order to fulfill our 4 rak'ah obligation as a Muslim, the Dhuhr prayer.

The availability of halal spaces (a term for halal food provider restaurants) in Hong Kong can be interpreted as a phenomenon of cultural space construction motivated by multicultural-based social awareness. The existence of halal food provider restaurants has become a representative space that facilitates the needs of Muslim travelers visiting Hong Kong. Similarly, the symbolic meaning of a restaurant is not only limited to the representation of the taste of the food, but also an iconic space that marks the place sought after by Muslim travelers. In terms of Hong Kong government policy, the availability of restaurants that provide halal menus has very important economic implications for the country. It can be imagined that if in Hong Kong Muslim tourists find it difficult to find food stalls or restaurants that provide halal food, it is certain that the number of Muslim visitors will decrease.

## Conclusion

Hong Kong is not only famous as one of the countries that has the largest tourist visitors in the world because of its attractive tourist objects, but also the government and development planners have a brilliant vision. It is proven that there are many Muslim tourists visiting Hong Kong, so it is necessary to provide various special facilities such as places to eat or restaurants that provide halal food menus. Tourism policy based on space awareness in the form of the importance of special facilities for Muslim travelers can be seen as part of social care and high cultural awareness. On the other hand, this spatial awareness reflects the multicultural values embraced by the Hong Kong government and society, which in its implementation can create a positive image and is a special attraction owned by this country. The availability of halal space in the form of special restaurants for Muslim travelers in Hong Kong can be a best practice that inspires other countries in the world, especially in the tourism development sector.

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