

Halal Restaurants in New Zealand: Implications for the Hospitality and Tourism Industry

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Abstract

Approximately 98% of lamb and sheep, 60% of cattle and 85% of deer in New Zealand are halal slaughtered each year. The high production of halal meat in the country has lead Tourism New Zealand's Chief Executive Officer, George Hickton, to believe that it would be easier to promote New Zealand as a destination for Muslim travellers. However, research has shown that the majority of Muslim travellers find it difficult to obtain halal food in the country.

To understand why the access to halal food is limited for travellers, this study specifically investigates the management and promotion of halal food in restaurants. Data was obtained using a questionnaire that was administered through face-to-face interviews. Since the total population of halal restaurants in New Zealand was unknown, a snowball sampling method was chosen as it was the most efficient and economical way of locating a group of restaurants that was 'hidden'. The locations for sample selection were Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, which have the highest population of Muslims and are also major tourist destinations.

Results, obtained from a sample of 99 halal restaurants, indicate that nearly four out of ten respondents did not agree that the Muslim tourist market is significant to their business. Many were also reluctant to promote their halal food or put up the halal sign in front of their shop. Yet the number of halal restaurants in New Zealand has risen tremendously as a result of the rapidly growing domestic Muslim population. Given the increased risk of fraud, Muslim consumers in New Zealand are in urgent need of halal statutory regulations, as well as stronger guidelines pertaining to the issue of halal food. Additionally, there is also a need to establish and implement an effective halal certification system that is standard throughout the country. The issue of halal slaughter being associated with cruelty to animals will also need to be addressed. Concerted efforts should be made to understand this sentiment and to counter it with appropriate scientific information.