From Niche to Mainstream: A Strategic Analysis of Halal-Centric Muslim-Friendly Element Development in International Tourism

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Abstract
Purpose: This paper tracks the history of development of halal tourism as a niche market area towards the mainstream area as a strategic opportunity over the past years, as a result of the 2.4 trillion halal economy developed worldwide. It also compares the concept of Muslim-friendly and halal-centric strategies and observes that latter incorporates Islamic ideology in the life cycle of touristic facilities and services beyond the housing conditions only.
Design/methodology/approach: Adopting a qualitative research design, this study engaged Sabah's halal tourism MSEs in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis of the data elucidated critical challenges in Muslim-friendly business management. These findings offer evidence-based insights for the international Muslim-friendly tourism sector, serving to identify strategic interventions and inform the development of enhanced operational frameworks for tourism providers.
Findings: Tourism industry stakeholders encounter significant challenges in expanding their enterprises into the Muslim-friendly tourism market. These multifaceted challenges span several critical domains, including digital marketing strategy, human resource development, understanding of the Malaysian halal certification process, operational management, and securing a supply chain for halal-certified raw materials. Consequently, the findings of this study are positioned to offer strategic recommendations aimed at empowering the halal tourism sector.
Research limitations/implications: The generalizability of this study's findings is constrained by its limited sample size and exclusive focus on the Malaysian context. Future research should validate these results with larger, cross-national samples and examine the module's efficacy across diverse industrial sectors.
Practical implications: The insights derived from this research offer a critical evidence base for formulating structured entrepreneurship initiatives and educational modules tailored to the needs of Micro and Small Entrepreneurs (MSEs).
Originality/value: This research helps bridge existing knowledge gaps and offers practical guidance to enhance Shariah-based financial practices, especially within Sabah's halal industry.

Keywords: Halal Tourism, Muslim-Friendly, Islamic Principles

Introduction

It has become so fast that, with the increasing percentage of Muslims comprising the major portion of the world tourism population and their acknowledgement that they require halal tourism, Halal tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the world tourism

industry. The Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) estimates that in 2026, there will be 230 million Muslim travelers, bringing with them USD 300 billion of revenue to the world economy. These increases are mainly fueled by young, well-educated Muslims with an incremental disposable income who are more inclined to visit destinations overseas (Rizkitama et al., 2024). This is a transition to a new paradigm of not merely responding to security challenges but actively building upon the concept of a halal-focused ecosystem reflecting Islamic teachings throughout the travel experience in the pursuit of a more affluent, quality-conscious, and Muslim-majority demographic (Hackett, C. & Lipka, M., 2018).

The idea of Muslim-friendly versus the halal-centric tourism is the core conceptual difference in tourism. The former is a simple religious accommodation, and the latter integrates the values of halal into every aspect of the architectural layout, activity schedule, financial model, and overall service provision, leading to integrated experiences that are maintained through Sharia rules and directives (Junaidi, 2020). This integration is increasingly recognized not only as a differentiator for Muslim travelers, who represent nearly a quarter of the global population, but also as a catalyst for enhancing destination competitiveness, ethical tourism practices, and overall value propositions (Ahmed, M. J., & Akbaba, A., 2020).

Rising expectations among modern Muslim tourists, especially the emerging middle class in Asia and the Middle East, necessitate authentic experiences that fuse religious observance with contemporary tourism standards (Sarkar,2025). This creates both opportunities and significant challenges for destinations: bridging the gap between halal certification frameworks and operational excellence remains problematic, highlighting the need for strategic guidance rooted in empirical analysis (Abd Wahab, 2025).

This article aims to analyze the strategic evolution of halal-centric elements, drawing on industry and academic literature, market data, and comparative case studies to identify key drivers, barriers, and actionable frameworks for effective halal tourism development. The scope includes major Muslim-majority and minority destinations, employing a mixed-method research approach for comprehensive insight (Suryanto et al., 2024).

Theoretical Foundation and Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of halal tourism is grounded in Islamic principles that guide Muslim travel and hospitality, as articulated in the Quran and classical jurisprudence (fiqh). The Quran encourages travel as a means for spiritual growth and knowledge (Quran 29:20), while concepts such as adab al-safar outline ethical and respectful conduct during journeys. Central to halal tourism is the requirement of Shariah compliance, which extends beyond avoidance of prohibited (haram) elements to include positive obligations for public interest (maslahah) and ensuring the welfare of both travelers and host communities. This creates a travel demand that is associated with Islamic traditions like modesty, family orientation, and ethical behavior (Khoiri and Siregar, 2024).

The development of halal tourism has shifted the simplified halal food, prayer, and gender-related space framework of halal tourism to more oblique halal-focused frameworks that entangle religious values along the entire tourism value chain (Khoiri & Siregar, 2024). Destinations adopting comprehensive halal-centric approaches achieve improved family-friendliness, higher ethical standards, and increased appeal to broader segments seeking responsible and value-driven experiences. This shift is driven by the rising expectations and

diversity of Muslim travelers, particularly the growing middle class in Asia and the Middle East, along with competition among destinations for Muslim travel markets.

According to Adinda et al. (2024), contemporary halal tourism integrates Islamic principles with mainstream tourism theories, including the experience economy and sustainable tourism. Islamic concepts of stewardship (khalifa) and community welfare naturally align with sustainability and social responsibility efforts. Service quality theories in tourism are also adapted to incorporate Islamic hospitality values, resulting in culturally sensitive service models that appeal to both Muslim and non-Muslim travelers.

A. Strategic Development Theories in Halal Tourism
The Resource-Based View (RBV) posits that destinations with distinctive resources such as deep cultural expertise, religious credibility, and strong ties to Muslim communities can achieve lasting competitive advantage in halal tourism markets. Genuine cultural competency and relationship capital within Muslim communities provide significant value and barriers to imitation, reinforcing long-term success (Rahmat et al., 2024).

Market penetration strategies increase share within existing Muslim segments by strengthening compliance and value propositions (Bandial, 2025). In contrast, diversification strategies seek new traveler segments, product types, and geographic markets, adapting halal tourism offerings for different preferences and cultural contexts. Effective operators often expand into complementary sectors, such as halal food, Islamic finance, or Muslim lifestyle products, generating integrated value and broadening customer engagement (Ghani, 2025).

Cultural adaptation frameworks emphasize modifying tourism products to reflect both universal Islamic principles and local cultural norms, facilitating religious integrity while resonating with regional audiences. This approach helps resolve the diversity of Islamic interpretations and fosters authentic, differentiated experiences that balance religious and cultural authenticity.

B. Halal Certification, Standards, and Quality Assurance
International halal standards such as those developed by the OIC-SMIIC and measured by the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) provide operational frameworks for halal compliance in accommodation, food, and services. National approaches vary: Malaysia adopts comprehensive halal integration, while non-Muslim countries often implement "Muslim-friendly" standards emphasizing key basics.

Decentralized control over religion and numerous national and regional bodies complicate the consequences of global certification of halal. There is a set of accreditation activities, which is aimed at increasing coherence and acceptability with regard to certification, but harmonization at a general level is yet again a problem. To guarantee the quality assurance of the service offered by Halfalah tourism, the ongoing surveillance and audit and staffing education, technology is used more and more frequently concerning the tracking of compliance and client reviews (Rojak, J.A., et al, 2021).

Failure to standardize universally across various certification schemes could cause confusion on the part of the traveler and ambiguity on the part of the provider. Harmonization must not only eliminate technical differences between standards but also overcome cultural differences in Islamic practice by means that will bear in mind effectiveness and leave intact religious pluralism (Abdullah et al., 2025).

Methodology: Conceptual Framework and Derivation

Research Design

This research systematically reviews the literature along with theoretical conceptualization to form strong operational definitions and a wide-ranging Halal-centric Muslim-friendly tourism development theory. A structured, multi-phase approach for research design was adopted ensuring both academic rigor and practical relevance.

Data Collection and Analysis Framework

Phase 1: Comprehensive Literature Identification • Database Sources: Systematic search through Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and specific tourism databases • Time Frame: Publications from 2010-2024 to identify the up-and-coming trends in Halal tourism • Key Search Terms: "Muslim-friendly tourism," "Halal tourism strategies," "Islamic tourism development," "Sharia-compliant hospitality," "Muslim travel market" • Inclusion Criteria: Peer-reviewed journals, Crescent Rating and Dinar Standard industry reports, and international tourism organization publications

Phase 2: Conceptual Synthesis and Definition Derivation The operational definitions were derived by systematic analysis and synthesis of existing literature: Halal-Centric Tourism: Defined through synthesis of several scholarly works, especially building on Battour and Ismail (2016) and Crescent Rating (2023), as "tourism products and services that comprehensively integrate Shariah principles beyond dietary requirements, encompassing whole tourist experiences like accommodation, transportation, entertainment and spiritual needs."

Muslim-Friendly Elements: Conceptualized based on framework analysis of Henderson (2016) and MasterCard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index, identifying core components including prayer facilities availability and quality, halal food certification and integrity, gender-segregated recreational facilities, Islamic cultural sensitivity in service delivery and alcohol-free environments.

Strategic Development Framework: Derived from integration of Porter's Diamond Model with Islamic tourism principles as discussed by Jafari & Scott (2014), creating a unique analytical tool for competitive advantage in Muslim-friendly tourism.

Analytical Approach

Content Analysis: Systematic coding of 85 peer-reviewed articles and 15 industry reports to identify key success factors and implementation challenges.

Thematic Synthesis: Grouping identified elements into coherent strategic themes through iterative analysis and expert validation.

Framework Development: Constructing an integrated strategic model through synthesis of best practices and theoretical foundations, validated through preliminary expert review with three industry practitioners and two academic specialists.

Validation Mechanism

Triangulation: Cross-verification of definitions across academic literature, industry standards, and regulatory frameworks.

Expert Review: Preliminary validation of conceptual framework with tourism industry professionals and Islamic scholars.

Comparative Analysis: Benchmarking against established tourism development models and existing Halal tourism standards.

This methodological approach ensures that the resulting definitions and strategic framework are both academically grounded and practically applicable, providing a solid foundation for analysing and developing Muslim-friendly tourism elements in international contexts. The systematic derivation process enhances the conceptual clarity and operational utility of the framework for industry stakeholders and policymakers.

Eco-systems towards empowerment Muslim Friendly Tourism
I. An International Halal Tourism Market Landscape
A. Market Dynamics and Growth Trajectory

The halal tourism market is already worth an estimated 220 billion dollars and will grow to reach 370 billion dollars in 2030, indicating a strong and accelerated growth in the global tourism industry (Halal Tourism Market Size, Share & Trends 2025-2035, n.d.). This remarkable growth is fueled by multiple interrelated factors, including the steady increase in the global Muslim population, the rising economic influence of Muslim-majority nations, and a heightened global awareness of halal-compliant travel options. Furthermore, the evolving preferences among Muslim travelers for authentic religious and culturally attuned experiences have driven a surge in demand for destinations capable of providing comprehensive halal-centric hospitality (*Growing Business Potential in the Halal Tourism Sector*, 2024).

Analysis of regional market dynamics reveals that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Southeast Asia, and Europe constitute the principal growth engines of halal tourism. The MENA region, benefiting from its dense Muslim-majority populations and robust inbound tourism demand, maintains its position as a central hub for halal tourism (Sarkar, 2025). In Southeast Asia, countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore are at the forefront, leveraging their strong halal certification frameworks, government support, and established reputations for Muslim-friendly tourism to attract a broader spectrum of international Muslim travelers (Yaqub, 2025). Meanwhile, Europe is witnessing a noticeable transformation, with nations like the UK and Germany progressively integrating halal standards into their tourism infrastructure to better serve the growing number of Muslim visitors from both within and outside the continent.

The economic contribution of halal tourism to local and national economies is increasingly substantial. The influx of Muslim travelers stimulates growth across multiple sectors, including hotels, restaurants, retail, and transportation, while also supplementing GDP through increased tourism receipts. Recognizing this economic potential, several governments have elevated halal tourism within their strategic agendas, offering incentives for industry stakeholders to develop halal-compliant products and services and expanding destination marketing efforts to attract Muslim tourists (Ahmed, 2024). The growing presence of Muslim travelers is catalyzing the diversification and inclusivity of the tourism sector, fostering new opportunities for economic advancement, innovation, and cross-cultural exchange, particularly in emerging markets seeking to enhance their global tourism competitiveness.

B. Consumer Behavior and Expectations

Halal-conscious Muslim travelers demonstrate a broad spectrum of adherence to halal principles, resulting in diverse expectations and travel behaviors. For some, strict compliance is paramount, they exclusively seek destinations and services that carry reputable halal certification and guarantee religious integrity in all aspects of their journey (Farizkhan et al., 2023). Others, particularly those traveling in non-Muslim-majority or more cosmopolitan regions, may prioritize essential halal components such as certified food and access to prayer facilities, accepting greater flexibility in areas like entertainment or accommodation standards (Zulhilmi et al., 2025). Recognizing these variations in halal consciousness is essential for tourism operators aiming to tailor their products and services to different market segments.

When making travel decisions, Muslim tourists weigh multiple factors. While affordability is a notable concern, many are prepared to pay higher prices for genuine halal-compliant offerings, especially in destinations where such services are rare or perceived as premium (Tangvitoontham & Sattayanuwat, 2022). This price-versus-compliance trade-off is most evident in places with limited halal-friendly infrastructure, pushing travelers to invest more in accommodations and food that meet their religious expectations (Martaleni, Sugeng Mulyono and Elok Sri Utami, 2025). Increasingly, digital engagement shapes the way Muslim travelers research, select, and book their holidays; social media, travel apps, and review platforms are key tools for validating the authenticity of halal amenities and finding trusted recommendations (Azam et al., 2024).

Family dynamics are central to Muslim travel patterns, as trips often include several generations, for example, children, parents, and grandparents, making the demand for family-friendly, inclusive services especially strong. Destinations that cater to these needs, by providing child-appropriate halal meals, dedicated leisure areas for women, and convenient prayer spaces for seniors, are far more attractive to Muslim families. Addressing the needs of multi-generations puts destinations in a good position to capitalize on this large and loyal group of travelers (Abd Wahab et al., 2025).

The winning halal companies consider themselves and demarcate their products as authentic, knowledgeable of culture, and report compliance with halal standards (Tangvitoontham & Sattayanuwat, 2022). These agencies would sell their certifications and religious qualifications just to persuade Muslim travelers that they would obtain actual halal procedures. Novelty has manifested within organizations as new modalities of business, which include online halal booking platforms, peer-to-peer halal finding services, and digital interventions facilitating easy and convenient access to halal travel (Azam et al., 2024).

Despite this demand, there are barriers to competitiveness. There is no international standard of halal certification and that at least in the sense that when a travelling consumer takes some product or service, he is not told by someone (on whose product or service) that its quality suits him well or her well. The second issue has been the development of cultural competencies in mainstream tourism enterprises to ensure that the workers and the establishments can represent and feature Muslim practices. Those companies that are able to overcome those challenges and offer authentic halal experiences will be successful in the long run in this rapidly growing sector (Abd Wahab et al., 2025).

II. Core Elements of Halal-Centric Tourism Development

A. Foundation Components of Muslim-Friendly Tourism

Halal tourism is a compound term that can only be thought about as a highly coordinated mix of numerous important facts directed to cater to the spiritual, cultural, and practical needs of the Muslim tourist. The mixture of these elements creates an environment of reverence and comfort, which is strictly Islamic in its principles.

Prayer Facilities and Worship Infrastructure

Halal tourism exists and grows on the provision of an appropriate prayer room. It is also significant that the Muslim traveler can easily access the mosque or a prayer room within the hotel or resort with easy Qibla direction guides, and as per the official Muslim prayer services. This spot should remain very clean as well and it should be furnished with ablution stations (wudu) and should be well furnished to accommodate various factions during the prayer so that travelers do not forget about the religious duty (Rosli et al., 2025).

Accommodation Services

The certification of beverages and food as being halal is one of the biggest demands among accommodation providers. There are Certified 3 Votes and Liked 1789 Certified halal kitchens promise that will be complementary to the dishes it is made, no alcohol, which Walmart implements, may remove the Kenyan minibar or replace liquor with halal options and get a bonus (Rosli et al., 2025). In the context of modesty, leisure amenities, including spas and gyms, and swimming pools, are segregated on the basis of gender. The family-friendly room design with a focus on privacy and an Islamic decor with Arabic calligraphy and Islamic motifs, making guest rooms quickly culturally indulgent and cozy, followed by a design style that is well accepted by Muslim guests, is another feature (Growing Business Potential in the Halal Tourism Sector, 2024).

Entertainment and Recreation

The entertainment and recreational services provided in halal tourism focus on family and culturally oriented services. The cultural performances, nature hikes or visits to different museums and other activities of Islamic history tours are some programs that enable tourists to explore the attractions without compromising Islamic values. Facilities such as gender-specific fitness centers and private spa options further cater to the modesty and privacy needs of Muslim visitors (Rosli et al., 2025).

Transportation and Mobility

Transportation services increasingly accommodate halal tourism by providing halal meal options aboard flights, verified against halal certification standards. Airlines and ground transport operators also integrate prayer breaks into travel schedules, honoring Muslim prayer times, especially on long journeys. Training staff in cultural sensitivity is vital to ensure respectful treatment of Muslim travelers. Moreover, incorporating the Islamic calendar into booking systems helps accommodate peak travel periods like Ramadan and Eid, enhancing traveler convenience and satisfaction (Marlinda et al., 2023).

B. Halal Certification Scheme Components

Halal certification is a fundamental pillar that assures Muslim travelers their services and products fully comply with Islamic law, instilling confidence and trust in the tourism experience.

Product and Premises Certification

According to Junaidi (2020), every product and service offered by halal tourism providers must undergo halal certification. This includes comprehensive evaluation and certification of all food and beverage items, ensuring halal sourcing and preparation in kitchens that prevent cross-contamination with non-halal foods (*Halal Tourism Market Size, Share & Trends 2025-2035*, n.d.). Certification bodies scrutinize sourcing, handling, and serving processes in strict adherence to Islamic dietary laws, alongside maintaining safety and hygiene standards (Henderson, 2016).

Halal Logistics and Supply Chain Management

Effective halal tourism depends on robust halal logistics and supply chain systems. These systems ensure that transportation and storage of halal products uphold halal integrity, particularly through cold chain management for perishable items like meat. Warehouses and distribution centers must also be halal-certified, equipped with traceability systems that verify the halal status throughout the product journey. This vigilance prevents any contamination with non-halal products, safeguarding product purity and compliance (Doğanera & Fidan, 2023).

III. Strategic Implementation Framework
A. Assessment and Planning Phase

The initial step in successfully developing halal tourism offerings is the Assessment and Planning Phase, which sets the groundwork through strategic evaluation and analysis. The process begins with thorough market research and feasibility studies to identify specific target markets and evaluate their growth potential. Demographic analysis, consumer buying patterns and travel trend forecasting techniques can help a business to identify areas and consumer segments with the best potential when expanding halal tourism. Knowledge of geographic demand trends should facilitate the focus of services on geographic needs (Zulhilmi et al., 2025).

It is also necessary to develop a competitive analysis. Tourism vendors need to see through the market that they are in and identify direct competition and indirect competition with permanent services provided by those catering to the halal tourism market as well as the other mainstream players providing products and services that are halal friendly. When evaluating the weaknesses and strengths of competitors, companies will be able to identify areas in which they can diversify to successfully tap into the Muslim travel market. This involves looking into how good halal tourism company positions themselves in the market, as well as the identification of needs that are not being met in the industry (Adinugraha et al., 2023).

A key element of this step is the evaluation of cultural and religious sensitivity. The services offered must go beyond what is demanded, in terms of meeting the needs of halal compliance, to accommodate the cultural orientations of the Muslim traveling folk in terms of food, recreation, privacy and entertainment (Irshad et al., 2022). The consultation of religious authorities and the cultural consultants means that Islamic values are added to the tourism product in a natural manner, to give the products more credibility and authenticity.

It is also required that financial planning is undertaken. Projects need definite investment need estimates and estimated returns such as the costs of halal certification, infrastructure adjustment, special facilities, etc (Henderson, 2016). Beautiful ROI predictions help the stakeholders and investors to understand the level of profits and when such profits commence. At the same time, the recognition of risks such as unstable demand or any changes in regulations

and the creation of mitigation strategies are essential elements of sustainable operations (Suryanto et al., 2024).

Lastly, an important element in assessment and planning is stakeholder involvement. Engaging Islamic scholars and religious institutions is a sure way to follow the religious precepts and win the confidence of local people. Partnership with the local Muslim communities would ensure that the cultural aspect of the touring activity is relevant and accepted by other communities. Coordinated action with government bodies brings the projects in accordance with the policies and regulatory standards of tourism in the country (COMCEC,2021). Association with certification agencies, tourist intermediaries and local companies adds value and quality of service to the halal tourism supply chain and the wider ecosystem.

B. Development and Certification Phase

Once the planning phase is done, the attention switches to the Development and Certification Phase, where strategies are actualized and the halal compliance is strictly observed. Another important initial process is the selection of relevant halal certification bodies because their reliability is the only way that businesses can confirm their compliance with halal standards (Crescentrating, 2023). The certification includes rigorous audits and gap analyses, enabling highlighting of nonstandard practices against the halal requirements in order to allow businesses opportunities to address their own underperforming practices and achieve the required standards, after which official certification can be approved (World Halal Trust, 2025).

Developing elaborate standard operating procedures (SOPs), as well as keeping effective records, aids in ensuring uniformity in halal service delivery. These practices encompass all the processes of food handling and preparation up to assigning prayer areas. As the business environment matures, it is important to continually monitor and renew the certification together with the compliance and to adapt to the changes as per the needs of different travelers and the level of compliance (COMCEC, 2021).

In the infrastructure development is another important feature of this part. Often, facilities have to be modified to accommodate halal tourism or new buildings may have to be constructed. In order to enhance consistency in food safety, sanitation, and service delivery, it is possible to use technology to check halal compliance on the fly (Azam et al., 2024). The other aspect that should be set up is a good halal supply chain. The difficulties in the businesses observing the overall compliance force the businesses to contract qualified suppliers who will undertake the responsibility of ensuring the integrity of the halal, whether in sourcing or handling (Doganera & Fidan, 2023).

Recruitment and training of staff is also important. To ensure that the employees are aware of all halal demands and appreciate religious practices and culture, hiring aware staff and offering regular education is important to ensure they are well versed with the rules governing halal diets and religion and culture. This will enable employees to provide a smooth, dignified, and culturally sensitive service experience to Muslim sightseers, which is key to the success of halal tourism (Crescentrating, 2025).

C. Marketing and Brand Positioning

Coming up with a halal and compliant infrastructure and facility is only the second step after which marketing and branding emerge as an important move to attract the halal-conscious travelers. Establishing a brand around the values of the Islamic faith and cultural aesthetics begins by creating a brand identity that conveys the values of Islam. this involves applying

culturally specific logos, colors and messages that appeal to Muslim customers. Speech about the authenticity of halal states and services helps build confidence and trust in the target population (Sarkar, 2025).

Presence in the digital world should be developed in the information era. Your own appealing webpage and service booking systems have widened the online menu in regards to Muslim travelers all over the world. Marketing is more effective and relatable as this leads to a choice of language, images, or cultural elements that are more specific to the location of the product or service (Farizkhan et al., 2023).

The influencers of the Muslim community are valuable partners in the marketing process. By posting authentic halal travel content, influencers are contributing to the popularity and authority of certain destinations in the eyes of Muslim audiences, across the globe (Rosli et al., 2025).

To enter the market and expand, businesses typically rely on staged rollouts, expanding to areas with a high demand for halal tourism first, and then rolling out to other areas. Linkages with halal travel and tour operators allow reaching the existing networks of Muslim travelers and penetrating the market more easily (Tangvitoontham & Sattayanuwat, 2022; Marlinda et al., 2023). Other promotional and networking opportunities are also valuable through participation in international halal tourism fairs and exhibitions (Adinugraha, 2023).

Lastly, performance measuring systems should also be used in order to monitor the effectiveness of marketing. With this set of frameworks, businesses are able to evaluate the success of the strategy and modulate according to the data to better fit the market as time goes by (Farizkhan et al., 2023).

IV. Future Trends and Innovation Opportunities

Due to evolving characteristics of the traveler segments and modern technologies, the bilal tourism market is growing at an exceedingly fast pace. Some of the most influential include younger Muslim travelers, especially amongst the Millennial and Gen Z groups, who demand a smooth digital experience. They love mobile apps and platforms that make it easier to book and get access to the halal-friendly services instantly. This group of technologically minded travelers is also interested in customized travel plans and, therefore, artificial intelligence (AI) can be instrumental in providing customized halal travelling recommendations based on their preferences and previous behaviors. Moreover, this generation values sustainability highly, prefers those businesses whose leaders take the right steps to preserve their environment, promote social responsibility, and treat communities justly (Azam et al., 2024).

Tourists prefer to have some adventure in their tours, and experience-based tourism is increasing due to a significant influx of Muslim travelers. English adventure tourism such as eco-tourism, hiking, wildlife safaris, and even extreme sports, is becoming popular among the religious with a combination of adventure and religious adherence (Sarkar, 2025). Specialized halal niches such as medical and wellness tourism also show strong growth, as Muslim travelers look for healthcare and wellness services aligned with their faith (Yaqub,2025). Islamic heritage tourism remains important, attracting those interested in religious sites and cultural education, while halal business tourism expands in parallel with growing global trade, emphasizing halal-compliant accommodations and services at business events (Ahmaed, 2024).

Technology will significantly shape the future of halal tourism. Smart solutions using the Internet of Things (IoT) can monitor halal compliance in real-time, such as sensors in kitchens ensuring food preparation standards or facility monitoring to maintain cleanliness and prayer room readiness. Virtual reality (VR) offers immersive experiences, allowing global access to Islamic heritage sites and interactive educational programs. Augmented reality (AR) further enhances site visits by providing instant cultural and historical insights through smartphone interaction (Azam et al., 2024). Holistic digital halal travel platforms are also emerging, integrating accommodation, dining, and activities into unified booking systems accessible worldwide.

Blockchain technology can be revolutionary to the halal certification concept because it provides the company with the ability to ensure transparency and traceability, increasing the confidence of consumers by giving a reliable indication of compliance. Arabian P2P accommodation platforms like Airbnb are growing in popularity because they provide personalized traveler solutions not only by offering alternatives to traditional hotel offerings: flexible, private, and fully compliant with halal, but also addressing the custom needs of different travelers (Farizkhan, et al., 2023).

The concept of sustainability is taking center stage in halal tourism as Muslim travelers increasingly demand ethical tourism. Environmental protection and conservation, and community welfare models are being widely embraced to fulfill Islamic teachings on stewardship (khalifa) (Martaleni et al., 2025). Community-based halal tourism gives the local Muslim people a sense of empowerment through ensuring that the benefits of tourism stay at the local level, hence cultural protection and inequalities are minimized (Tangvitoontham & Sattayanuwat, 2022). Economic empowerment programs, like local job creation, support of businesses or tourism-related training, promote long-term socio-economic development in Muslim-dominated areas as well as building local pride and ownership of halal tourism development (Zulhilmi et al., 2025).

V. Strategic Recommendations
A. Empowering SMIIC-OIC Standards Implementation
To ensure that the halal certification standards of the SMIIC-OIC are spread throughout the world in order to facilitate the establishment of global halal tourism. These standards provide a universal reference point, which guarantees a reasonable degree of agreement in the level of compliance of halal among organizations that practice in an industry that enables the delivery of reliable experiences of halal to Muslim travelers wherever they may be (SMICC, 2019). Awareness and buy-in will require more awareness throughout the world, via both educational and workshop as well as digital outreach to both consumers and tourism professionals (Salaam Gateway, 2023).

The solution to adopting the halal certification is to streamline the halal certification procedure especially in new markets. Lighter and less opaque certification and forms would enable more businesses to qualify as compliant and expand the product offerings of halal tourism in locales where it has historically been underrepresented (SMIIC,2019). The development of the universal standards of the halal system also promotes the assurance of quality to ensure that there is a minimum difference in the services offered in the different countries and regions regarding halal services. It is this standardization that makes the Muslim travelers trust them that they will receive the same level of high-quality experience anywhere in the world (Salaam Gateway, 2023).

By focusing on internationalization, the creation of halal tourism can be more efficient with organized experiences fueled by comparable certification and compliance (SMIIC, 2023).

B. Industry-Specific Recommendations

Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) need to focus more on incorporating the element of Halal tourism into their long-term master planning. of halal-friendly infrastructure, such as accommodations, dining, transportation, and entertainment, to be developed with halal principles in collaboration with governments and local stakeholders. The development of halal tourism relies heavily on the development of partnerships between the government and the privatized organizations (Halal Times, 2025). By providing incentives such as tax breaks or grants, governments can promote investment and make it easier to access halal certification resources, particularly in emerging markets.

Destinations in the halal tourism industry take off faster due to international collaboration and exchange of knowledge. DMOs can take advantage of knowledge sharing and strategy coordination to respond to the increased needs of Muslim travelers around the world (COMCEC, 2021).

In the case of hospitality providers, it is a good idea to make the transition to halal in phases. The gradual introduction of halal-certified menus, prayer kiosks, and privacy-conscious amenities does not alter operations and can be reconfigured to customer needs, depending on service requirements, over time. These guests will have a better experience at that place as such professional training programs as requirements to be certified by halal, quality of customer service, and cultural sensitivity will contribute to the fact that these guests will not have any more doubts whether they can find it comfortable to stay in that place (CrescentRating, 2025). Finally, technology adoption improves the compliance and transparency that comes with halal. Part of an electronic system, including certification management software, live supervision and automated auditing, can help comply and build customer trust by demonstrating commitment to halal ethics (Azam et al., 2024).

Through these, it will be demonstrated that DMOs and service providers can be the owners of the halal tourism industry that can utilize its developing potential by providing real and quality service and quality halal travelling.

Conclusion

Halal tourism has grown from a niche market towards an important global industry with an increasing number of destinations adopting comprehensive halal-focused practices. This shift reflects a strategic transformation from offering basic halal accommodations to developing fully integrated halal tourism ecosystems that cater to the diverse needs of Muslim travelers worldwide. Such development is no longer restricted to Muslim-majority countries but is expanding across regions previously untapped by this market (Halal Tourism Market Size, Share & Trends 2025-2035, n.d.). The sustainable growth of halal tourism hinges on several critical factors, including the establishment of robust international standards, strategic and inclusive planning, and active engagement among diverse stakeholders (Ghani, 2025).

Technological innovation plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of halal tourism. Advances such as the Internet of Things for real-time compliance monitoring and artificial intelligence for personalized travel experiences offer new opportunities to enhance service quality and scale halal tourism offerings efficiently. These technologies address rising consumer expectations for

seamless, trustworthy, and customized travel experiences while ensuring compliance with religious requirements (Azam et al., 2024).

For the tourism industry, these insights underscore the necessity of practical frameworks to implement halal tourism effectively. Operators and destinations must continue to develop culturally sensitive and halal-compliant services that facilitate a smooth, respectful experience for Muslim travelers. From an academic perspective, halal tourism offers a rich landscape for research exploring cultural adaptations, policy development, and the application of technology within religious tourism.

In sum, the promise of halal tourism lies in its capacity to create a globally connected ecosystem that authentically meets Muslim travelers' cultural and religious needs while stimulating economic development. As the sector continues to expand, collaboration between governments, businesses, and communities is essential to foster an inclusive, innovative, and culturally respectful tourism environment. This vision not only supports Muslim travelers but also encourages broader industry innovation and inclusivity, contributing positively to the global tourism landscape.

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