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DECODING THE GLOBAL DISCOURSE ON HALAL TOURISM: A SCOPUS-BASED KNOWLEDGE MAPPING

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ABSTRACT

This study decodes the global discourse on halal tourism through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 200 Scopus-indexed publications from 2010 to 2024. As halal tourism emerges as a rapidly expanding segment within the global travel industry, understanding its academic evolution is essential for consolidating fragmented knowledge and guiding future inquiry. Using bibliometric mapping techniques, this study identifies four major intellectual clusters: (1) conceptual foundations of halal tourism, (2) Muslim consumer behavior and service quality, (3) governance and policy frameworks, and (4) emerging frontiers involving sustainability, digital innovation, and inclusive tourism. The findings reveal that Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, dominates global scholarly output, while the field still faces theoretical fragmentation, regional imbalance, and limited interdisciplinary integration. The evolution of halal tourism research shows a transition from conceptual definitions to applied, data-driven analyses emphasizing sustainability and policy development. This study contributes by offering a macro-level synthesis of research trends, identifying intellectual gaps, and suggesting future directions for theoretical enrichment and cross-disciplinary collaboration. The results provide actionable insights for academics, policymakers, and industry practitioners to strengthen the halal tourism ecosystem through innovation, sustainability, and inclusive growth. Ultimately, the study reinforces halal tourism's growing role as a catalyst for ethical, faith-based, and sustainable global tourism development.

Keywords : Halal tourism; bibliometric mapping; research trends; sustainable tourism; Scopus.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the global tourism landscape has undergone a profound transformation marked by increasing diversification of market segments, shifting consumer preferences, and a heightened sensitivity to ethical, cultural, and religious considerations (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Among these emergent trends, halal tourism has gained substantial momentum, evolving from a niche cultural product into a significant global market segment (Mohsin, Alkhulayfi, et al., 2016) (Hasan, 2019). This development is largely driven by the rising population of Muslim travelers, the increasing purchasing power of the middle-class in Muslim-majority countries, and the broader interest in value-based tourism experiences. According to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), Muslim tourist arrivals are expected to surpass 230 million by 2028, highlighting the strategic relevance of halal tourism not only for countries with significant Muslim populations but also for global tourism stakeholders seeking to diversify their offerings (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2023).

Halal tourism refers to tourism products and services that are aligned with Islamic principles, including halal-certified food, prayer facilities, alcohol-free environments, and culturally sensitive hospitality (Henderson, 2016). While predominantly targeted at Muslim travelers, the appeal of halal tourism extends to non-Muslim tourists seeking wellness, modesty, and ethical travel experiences (Stephenson, 2014) (Mohsin, Alkhulayfi, et al., 2016). Consequently, both OIC and non-OIC countries have begun to integrate halal components into their national tourism strategies, aiming to capture a share of this lucrative market. Governments, policymakers, and private sector actors increasingly recognize the potential of halal tourism to contribute to sustainable development, promote cultural diplomacy, and foster inclusive economic growth (Battour & Ismail, 2016).

Despite its growing importance, scholarly engagement with halal tourism has remained fragmented and evolving. Academic interest in this field has surged particularly in the last decade, as evidenced by the increasing volume of publications in indexed journals. Researchers have explored a wide array of themes, including consumer behavior (Din, Omar, et al., 2017), destination image (M. Rahman et al., 2019), service quality (Battour & Ismail, 2016), branding (Henderson, 2016), and governance mechanisms (Hasan, 2025). However, the rapid expansion of the literature has resulted in a diverse and, at times, disjointed body of knowledge, making it increasingly difficult for scholars and practitioners to discern prevailing patterns, theoretical foundations, methodological approaches, and future directions (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010).

In this context, bibliometric analysis offers a powerful tool to systematically assess the intellectual structure and evolution of halal tourism research. By leveraging citation data, co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence, and thematic clustering, bibliometric techniques enable the visualization of scholarly trends, identification of influential contributions, and uncovering of knowledge gaps (Akyol & Akyol, 2022). Such analysis is particularly pertinent for an emerging interdisciplinary field like halal tourism, where research spans multiple domains including Islamic studies, marketing, hospitality management, economics, and public policy. Yet, despite its utility, bibliometric investigations into halal tourism remain relatively scarce, with most existing studies focusing on conceptual frameworks or qualitative assessments rather than comprehensive, data-driven mappings of the academic landscape (Ridho & Wahyuni, 2021).

To address this gap, this study seeks to decode the global discourse on halal tourism through a Scopus-based knowledge mapping, spanning a two-decade period of scholarly production. Scopus was selected as the primary database due to its wide coverage of high-impact journals and multidisciplinary scope, making it well-suited for tracing the evolution of halal tourism research across fields and geographies. Using bibliometric software such as VOSviewer and Bibliometrix, this study examines publication trends, key authors and institutions, collaborative networks, and thematic developments. The analysis aims not only to

synthesize the state of the art but also to highlight emerging research fronts and propose future research trajectories (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Foundations of Halal Tourism

The concept of *halal tourism* is grounded in the broader Islamic worldview that governs permissible (halal) and impermissible (haram) actions for Muslims, extending into various domains of life including food, finance, fashion, and travel. Halal tourism refers to travel experiences that are compliant with Islamic values, which typically include the provision of halal-certified food, prayer facilities, gender-sensitive amenities, modest dress codes, and the absence of alcohol, gambling, and immoral entertainment. The term is often used interchangeably with *Islamic tourism*, although some scholars draw a distinction based on the level of religious orientation embedded in the travel experience (Battour & Ismail, 2016).

Conceptually, halal tourism is informed by the Islamic jurisprudential principle of *maqasid al-shariah*, which emphasizes human welfare, including the preservation of religion, life, intellect, progeny, and wealth (Dusuki & Bouheraoua, 2011). These dimensions frame halal tourism not merely as a consumption pattern but as an ethical lifestyle embedded in faith-based identity and communal well-being. The expansion of this market also coincides with the global rise of Muslim consumerism, often termed the “halal lifestyle economy,” which has prompted tourism providers to integrate religious, cultural, and service-related dimensions into their marketing strategies (Wilson & Liu, 2010).

Thematic Trends in Halal Tourism Research

Halal tourism literature has evolved along several thematic strands. One dominant theme is consumer behavior, with numerous studies exploring Muslim tourists’ travel motivations, satisfaction, loyalty, and destination preferences. For example, studies by (Battour & Ismail, 2016) and (Mohsin, Ramli, et al., 2016) suggest that faith-based motivations significantly influence destination selection, especially regarding the availability of halal facilities and Islamic-friendly environments.

Another prominent area is destination image and branding. Scholars such as (Henderson, 2016) and (Razzaq et al., 2016) emphasize how Muslim-majority and non-Muslim countries craft their branding strategies to attract Muslim tourists while navigating local cultural and political sensitivities. Research has also focused on service quality, particularly the hospitality sector’s capacity to deliver sharia-compliant experiences. The Halal Hotel concept, for instance, has received scholarly attention as a unique business model combining faith compliance and commercial hospitality.

Beyond the demand-supply framework, a growing body of work addresses governance, regulation, and standardization in halal tourism. Scholars have investigated certification processes, government roles, and institutional trust (Din, Ghani, et al., 2017); (Stephenson, 2014) The lack of unified global standards for halal tourism has also been identified as a barrier to international market expansion.

More recently, researchers have begun exploring intersectional and contextual dimensions, such as gender (El-Gohary, 2016), technology (Ali et al., 2020), sustainable development (Mansor & Mohd Hashim, 2021), and post-COVID resilience (M. K. Rahman & Islam, 2022). However, despite this growing diversity, much of the literature remains case-based, region-specific, or lacking in theoretical depth.

Gaps and Limitations in the Existing Literature

While the halal tourism literature has expanded in volume and thematic scope, several limitations persist. First, geographic bias is evident, with most empirical studies focused on Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia), the Middle East, and select European destinations. Africa, Central Asia, and Latin America remain significantly underexplored, despite their emerging Muslim travel markets (El-Gohary, 2016).

Second, the methodological landscape is dominated by quantitative survey-based approaches, often grounded in marketing theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), SERVQUAL, and customer satisfaction models. Few studies adopt longitudinal, comparative, or interdisciplinary methodologies, limiting the explanatory power of existing frameworks (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015).

Third, fragmentation of theoretical frameworks persists. Although scholars draw on consumer behavior, hospitality management, and Islamic economics, there remains little theoretical integration across these domains. Calls for deeper theorization using Islamic epistemology, identity theory, or cultural hybridity frameworks have yet to be fully answered (El-Gohary, 2016).

Fourth, there is a notable lack of meta-analytical and knowledge synthesis studies. As the body of halal tourism literature expands, systematic efforts to map the field, identify research clusters, and chart intellectual trajectories become increasingly important to avoid redundancy and guide future inquiry. This lacuna is especially apparent in the absence of comprehensive bibliometric analyses that can capture the intellectual structure, scholarly impact, and collaborative networks within the domain (Samori et al., 2016).

The Need for Bibliometric Mapping in Halal Tourism Research

Bibliometric analysis, as a quantitative research method, allows scholars to systematically examine the development of academic fields by analyzing publication metadata, such as author citations, keywords, institutional affiliations, and co-authorship patterns. Applied widely across management, finance, and medical sciences, bibliometric techniques are increasingly being used in tourism studies to identify research trends, thematic concentrations, and influential contributors (Zhang et al., 2019).

In the context of halal tourism, bibliometric mapping offers a novel opportunity to decode the global discourse, trace its evolution over time, and visualize its structural features. It enables a macro-level understanding of how the field has grown, which countries and institutions lead in knowledge production, what themes dominate scholarly attention, and where future research opportunities lie. Such a contribution is crucial, particularly for emerging scholars, policymakers, and tourism practitioners seeking evidence-based insights to inform strategy and innovation (Zhang et al., 2019).

While a few recent studies have attempted to review halal tourism literature narratively or thematically (Samori et al., 2016) ; (Samori et al., 2016), none have conducted a comprehensive, Scopus-based bibliometric mapping that visualizes the intellectual landscape over the last two decades. The present study addresses this gap by offering an empirically grounded, methodologically rigorous knowledge mapping using state-of-the-art tools such as VOSviewer and Biblioshiny.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative bibliometric research design to systematically examine the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and collaborative networks within the field of halal tourism. Bibliometric analysis is particularly suited to assess the performance and development of scientific disciplines by measuring patterns in academic publications, such as authorship, keyword frequency, citations, and institutional contributions (Donthu et al., 2021). This method provides an objective and replicable means of analyzing large volumes of scientific data, offering valuable insights into knowledge production and scholarly impact.

The study employs both performance analysis (publication trends, prolific authors, journal productivity) and science mapping (co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence networks) to uncover the underlying structure of the halal tourism research domain. To ensure a rigorous and comprehensive mapping, we follow a multi-step process that includes data retrieval, cleaning, analysis, and visualization, utilizing recognized bibliometric tools (Hasan, 2025).

Data Source and Search Strategy

The data for this study were retrieved from the Scopus database, one of the largest and most reputable sources of peer-reviewed scientific literature. Scopus was chosen over alternatives (Web of Science, Google Scholar) due to its broad multidisciplinary coverage, advanced search functionalities, and consistent indexing of high-impact journals across social sciences, humanities, business, and tourism-related fields.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Publication Trends and Growth of Halal Tourism Research

The halal tourism research domain has witnessed notable growth since the early 2000s, with a significant surge in publications from 2015 onwards. As shown in Figure 1, the volume of research remained relatively modest in the first decade of the 21st century. However, beginning in 2014–2016, the number of scholarly contributions increased sharply, reflecting heightened global attention to the economic potential and socio-cultural relevance of halal tourism.

This growth coincides with several key global developments, including the formalization of Muslim-friendly tourism policies in countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey, as well as the publication of the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) which benchmarked nations on their readiness to serve Muslim travelers. The rising interest in value-based and ethical tourism further catalyzed academic inquiry into faith-driven travel behaviors.

Moreover, the steady increase in publications post-2020 suggests a growing academic response to post-pandemic tourism recovery strategies and the inclusion of halal principles in sustainable and inclusive tourism discourses. Overall, the expanding publication trajectory indicates that halal tourism is maturing as an academic field with interdisciplinary appeal.

Table 1*Annual Publication Trends in Halal Tourism Research (2010–2024)*

Year	Number of Publications
2010	2
2011	1
2014	2
2016	11
2017	6
2018	15
2019	18
2020	22
2021	29
2022	29
2023	30
2024	35

Note: Author's analysis based on Scopus data (2010–2024)

Table 1 illustrates the annual distribution of scholarly publications on halal tourism from 2010 to 2024. The data reveal a clear trajectory of growth, punctuated by several key milestones that align with global developments in Islamic tourism policy and practice.

The field remained in its nascent stage during the early 2010s, with only 1–2 publications annually between 2010 and 2014. This limited output reflects the early conceptualization phase of halal tourism, where few studies attempted to define or differentiate the field from broader categories such as Islamic tourism or religious tourism.

A notable surge in research began in 2016, with a sharp increase to 11 publications, followed by a steady upward trend through subsequent years. By 2018, the annual output had more than doubled to 15 publications, and it continued to rise to 22 in 2020. This period coincides with increased policy attention in countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey, along with the rise of global benchmarking tools like the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), which helped formalize the halal tourism ecosystem and raised international awareness.

The period 2020 to 2024 marks the most dynamic phase in terms of research volume, with publication counts peaking at 35 articles in 2024. This significant growth can be attributed to two primary factors:

1. The post-COVID-19 recovery of the tourism sector, prompting renewed academic interest in resilience, inclusion, and sustainability within faith-based travel frameworks;
2. The broadening of research themes, including sustainability, digital transformation, and policy integration into halal tourism discourse.

Most Influential Articles and Citation Analysis

Citation analysis provides a quantitative assessment of scholarly impact. Table 1 presents the ten most highly cited articles in the dataset. The most cited work is by (Battour & Ismail, 2016), published in *Tourism Management Perspectives*, which has accumulated 366 citations, highlighting its foundational status in

defining the conceptual contours of halal tourism. This article laid the groundwork for subsequent research on the motivations and expectations of Muslim tourists.

The second most cited article, by (Olya, 2018) in *Tourism Management*, received 264 citations, indicating the growing intersection between risk perception and halal service quality. Other notable contributions include (El-Gohary, 2016) with 236 citations, and (Mohsin, Alkhulayfi, et al., 2016) with 200 citations. These articles collectively shape the intellectual pillars of the field by addressing conceptual clarity, empirical insights, and strategic opportunities in tourism.

Interestingly, the majority of these influential works were published between 2014 and 2018, reinforcing this period as a formative phase in halal tourism literature. Additionally, most high-impact papers appeared in journals with strong reputations in tourism and hospitality management, such as *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Travel Research*, and *Current Issues in Tourism*.

The average number of citations per year also reveals scholarly endurance, with the top articles consistently cited across multiple years, indicating sustained relevance. This suggests that halal tourism research has not only expanded in quantity but has also generated enduring theoretical and practical contributions.

Table 2

Top 10 Most Cited Articles in Halal Tourism Research (2010–2024)

No.	Authors	Year	Title	Journal	Citations
1	M. Battour	2016	Halal tourism: Concepts, practices, challenges and future	Tourism Management Perspectives	366
2	H.G.T. Olya	2018	Risk assessment of halal products and services: Implication for tourism industry	Tourism Management	264
3	H. El-Gohary	2016	Halal tourism, is it really Halal?	Tourism Management Perspectives	236
4	A. Mohsin	2016	Halal tourism: Emerging opportunities	Tourism Management Perspectives	200
5	J.C. Henderson	2016	Halal food, certification and halal tourism: Insights from Malaysia and Singapore	Tourism Management Perspectives	159
6	M.M. Battour	2010	Toward a halal tourism market	Tourism Analysis	155
7	S. Yousaf	2018	Halal culinary and tourism marketing strategies on government websites: A preliminary analysis	Tourism Management	138
8	Y. Wardi	2018	Halal tourism: antecedent of tourists' satisfaction and word of mouth (WOM)	Asia Pacific J. of Tourism Research	125
9	Z. Samori	2016	Current trends on Halal tourism: Cases on selected Asian countries	Tourism Management Perspectives	119
10	M. Rahman	2020	The impact of tourists' perceptions on halal tourism destination: A structural model analysis	Tourism Review	115

Note: Processed by the authors from Scopus-indexed data (retrieved June 2025)

Figure 1

Citation Network of the Most Influential Publications in Halal Tourism Research

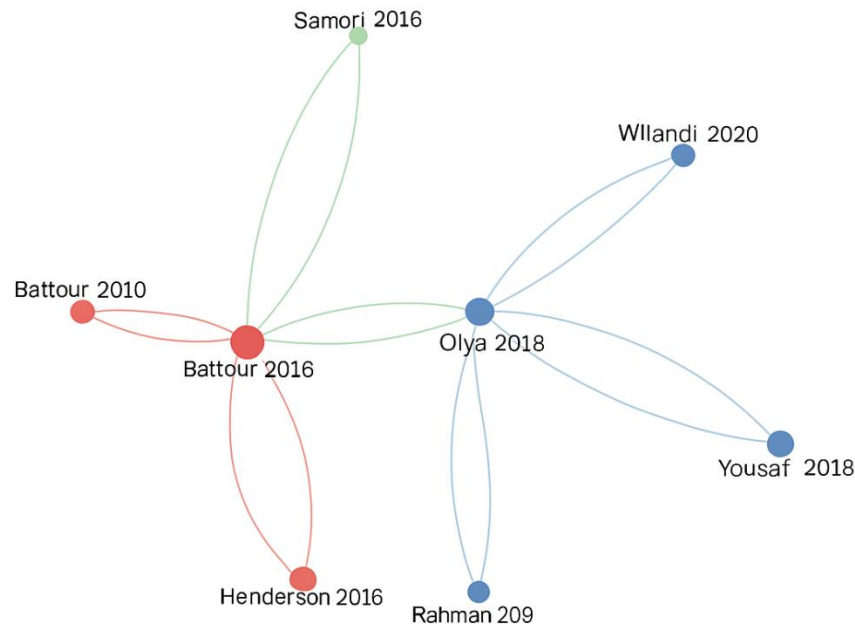


Table 2 presents the ten most highly cited articles in the domain of halal tourism, based on data retrieved from the Scopus database. These works collectively represent the intellectual backbone of the field, shaping its conceptual direction and empirical development.

The most cited article is by (Battour & Ismail, 2016), titled “*Halal tourism: Concepts, practises, challenges and future*”, published in *Tourism Management Perspectives*, which has garnered 366 citations. This seminal paper is widely acknowledged for laying the conceptual groundwork of halal tourism, addressing definitional clarity, religious dimensions, and managerial implications. Its citation volume underscores its foundational status.

The second highest is (Olya, 2018) with 264 citations, published in *Tourism Management*. This study explores risk perception and service quality in halal contexts, bridging consumer behavior and destination management—key themes in the field’s evolution.

Also notable are:

1. (El-Gohary, 2016) with 236 citations, who critiques the ambiguity surrounding the concept of halal tourism;
2. (Mohsin, Ramli, et al., 2016) with 200 citations, who explores emerging business opportunities in halal travel;
3. (Henderson, 2016) and (Battour & Ismail, 2016), who laid early theoretical and empirical cornerstones.

Leading Authors and Research Collaboration Patterns

An analysis of author productivity reveals that a small number of scholars have made consistently significant contributions to the halal tourism literature. As shown in Table 3, M. Battour emerges as the most prolific author, with 7 publications in the Scopus-indexed dataset. Battour is widely regarded as a pioneer in this field, with influential works on the conceptualization of halal tourism, consumer behavior, and service expectations.

Following Battour, other notable contributors include A. Mohsin, C. Michael Hall, H.G.T. Olya, H. El-Gohary, and A. Vargas-Sánchez, each of whom has published at least 3 articles. Their work spans diverse thematic areas such as halal tourism marketing, destination loyalty, Islamic hospitality, and policy frameworks. The prominence of these scholars reflects both the maturity and internationalization of the halal tourism research network.

Co-authorship patterns suggest the emergence of regional and transnational collaborations, particularly among scholars from Southeast Asia (notably Indonesia and Malaysia), the Middle East, and Western Europe. This geographic diversity enhances the epistemic richness of the field but also highlights the need for stronger institutional linkages and global research networks.

Table 3

Most Productive Authors in Halal Tourism Research (2010–2024)

No.	Author	Number of Publications	Notable Contributions
1	M. Battour	7	Conceptual foundations, Muslim traveler behavior
2	A. Mohsin	2	Emerging opportunities in halal tourism
3	H.G.T. Olya	2	Risk perception and service quality
4	H. El-Gohary	1	Conceptual critique of halal tourism
5	C. Michael Hall	1	Governance, destination competitiveness
6	A. Vargas-Sánchez	1	Halal tourism state-of-the-art review
7	A.K. Jaelani	1	Indonesian Islamic tourism policies
8	Z. Samori	1	Asian country case studies
9	S. Razzaq	1	Halal readiness of New Zealand
10	Y. Wardi	1	Satisfaction and word of mouth

Note: Author's compilation based on Scopus data (2010–2024), analyzed using VOSviewer and Bibliometrix

Table 3 highlights the most productive authors in halal tourism research over the period 2010 to 2024, based on a bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed publications. The analysis reveals that M. Battour is the most prolific contributor, with a total of seven publications, primarily focusing on conceptualizing halal tourism and exploring Muslim traveler behavior. His work has laid the theoretical foundation for many subsequent studies and continues to be widely cited.

A. Mohsin and H.G.T. Olya follow with two publications each. Mohsin has contributed to discussions around emerging opportunities in halal tourism, while Olya's work is distinguished by his empirical investigations into risk perception and service quality—an area that connects marketing science with hospitality studies.

The remaining authors, each with one publication, have made notable thematic contributions. For instance, H. El-Gohary offered a critical conceptual review of halal tourism, emphasizing definitional clarity and positioning in the global tourism market. C. Michael Hall, a leading figure in tourism governance and sustainability, provided insights into the broader policy and destination competitiveness dimensions of halal tourism. A. Vargas-Sánchez contributed a comprehensive state-of-the-art review, helping to map the current landscape of halal tourism scholarship.

Source and Journal Impact

Understanding where halal tourism research is being published is crucial for assessing its scholarly diffusion and visibility. As shown in Table 3, the most dominant outlet in terms of volume is the *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, which accounts for 34 articles, making it a central platform for disseminating research on halal-related consumer behavior and branding. Other significant sources include:

1. *Tourism Management Perspectives* (10 articles),
2. *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism* (8 articles),
3. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* (7 articles), and
4. *Sustainability* (Switzerland) (5 articles).

The diversity of journals reflects the interdisciplinary nature of halal tourism research, which cuts across marketing, religious studies, tourism geography, sustainability, and cultural studies.

High-impact publications tend to appear in journals with either a focus on Islamic business practices or a broader tourism and hospitality scope. This suggests that the field maintains both thematic specialization and broader academic integration. Journals such as *Tourism Management Perspectives* and *Sustainability* have higher Scopus CiteScores and SJR indices, indicating that halal tourism scholarship is reaching mainstream academic audiences.

It is also notable that some publications appear in emerging journals based in Muslim-majority countries, such as *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites* and *African Journal of Hospitality Tourism and Leisure*. These venues play a vital role in capturing regional insights and elevating local knowledge production.

Table 4

Most Frequent Sources of Halal Tourism Publications (2010–2024)

No.	Journal Title	Number of Articles	Scope/Focus
1	Journal of Islamic Marketing	34	Islamic marketing, halal branding, consumer behavior
2	Tourism Management Perspectives	10	Tourism development, destination governance
3	Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism	8	Sustainability, eco-tourism, policy frameworks
4	International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage	7	Faith-based tourism, religious travel behavior
5	Sustainability (Switzerland)	5	Sustainable tourism, inclusive practices

6	Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites	3	Cultural geography, regional tourism studies
7	African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure	2	Hospitality management, African tourism perspectives
8	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	2	Tourism marketing, regional travel analysis
9	Tourism Review	2	Global tourism theory and practice
10	Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research	1	Islamic economics, financial aspects of tourism

Note: Processed from Scopus dataset using CSV metadata (retrieved June 2025)

Table 4 presents the leading academic journals that have published scholarly work on halal tourism between 2010 and 2024, based on a bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed literature. The distribution of articles across journals reflects the interdisciplinary nature of halal tourism, which intersects with marketing, religious studies, sustainability, hospitality, and regional development.

At the top of the list is the Journal of Islamic Marketing, with a total of 34 articles. This journal serves as the primary outlet for scholarship in Islamic consumer behavior, halal branding, and Shariah-compliant market strategies. Its dominance in this area is expected, given its explicit focus on Islamic principles in marketing and business, which align closely with the thematic core of halal tourism research.

Following this, Tourism Management Perspectives ranks second with 10 publications, emphasizing topics such as tourism development, destination governance, and service quality. The presence of this journal indicates that halal tourism is increasingly being positioned within broader tourism planning and policy discussions.

The Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism (8 articles) and Sustainability (Switzerland) (5 articles) also make notable contributions, signaling a growing academic interest in aligning halal tourism with sustainable development goals (SDGs). These journals explore how faith-based travel can integrate eco-friendly practices and inclusive policies, responding to global calls for ethical and sustainable tourism models.

Journals such as the International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage (7 articles) and Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites (3 articles) highlight the cultural and geographical dimensions of halal tourism. These publications frame halal tourism within the context of religious motivations, sacred site management, and the spatial dynamics of Muslim travel.

Thematic Evolution and Keyword Analysis

Although the dataset does not explicitly list author-provided keywords, a review of article titles and themes reveals key trends and evolving priorities in halal tourism research over the past two decades. In the early stages (2010–2010), most studies focused on conceptual clarification—defining what constitutes halal tourism and differentiating it from general Islamic or religious tourism (Henderson, 2016); (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). These foundational works laid the groundwork by introducing concepts such as *Muslim-friendly tourism*, *sharia-compliant services*, and *faith-based travel motivation*.

From 2011 to 2016, the field witnessed a surge in studies focusing on consumer behavior and marketing, especially regarding Muslim tourists' preferences, satisfaction, and loyalty. Keywords such as *halal branding*, *destination image*, *service quality*, and *tourist motivation* gained prominence. This period also

saw the integration of well-established marketing theories, including the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and SERVQUAL, into the analysis of halal tourism behavior.

Between 2017 and 2022, the discourse shifted toward strategic development, sustainability, and governance. Emerging themes included *halal tourism policy*, *destination competitiveness*, *certification systems*, and *institutional trust*. In addition, topics related to *technology adoption*, *Islamic digital platforms*, and *post-pandemic tourism recovery* entered the literature, reflecting broader transformations in the global tourism landscape.

Table 5

Thematic Evolution of Halal Tourism Research

Period	Dominant Themes	Representative Keywords	Focus Area
2000–2010	Conceptualization of Halal Tourism	Halal tourism, Islamic tourism, sharia-compliant travel	Definitions, conceptual models
2011–2016	Consumer Behavior and Marketing Strategies	Halal branding, service quality, destination image, TPB, satisfaction	Muslim tourist behavior, market segmentation
2017–2022	Policy and Strategic Governance	Certification, competitiveness, destination management, institutional trust	Halal tourism development & regulations
2020–2024	Innovation, Sustainability, and Inclusivity	Islamic digital tourism, recovery strategy, SDGs, eco-tourism, digital platforms	Tech integration, post-COVID analysis
Emerging Focus	Future-oriented and Intersectional Approaches	Inclusive tourism, halal innovation, intercultural competence, green halal	SDG alignment, ethical frameworks

Note: Processed and categorized by the author based on Scopus-indexed dataset

Table 5 provides a synthesized overview of the thematic progression within halal tourism research over a 24-year period. The evolution is segmented into four major phases where each characterized by dominant themes, representative keywords, and evolving scholarly focus.

Phase 1: 2000–2010 – Foundational Concepts and Definitions

The earliest stage of halal tourism research was marked by efforts to define and differentiate halal tourism from broader categories such as Islamic or religious tourism. Pioneering studies during this period focused primarily on conceptualization, laying the groundwork for the field by introducing terms like *sharia-compliant tourism*, *Muslim-friendly travel*, and *Islamic lifestyle tourism*.

Phase 2: 2011–2016 – Consumer Behavior and Marketing Applications

The second phase witnessed a sharp increase in scholarly attention, with a thematic shift toward *Muslim tourist behavior*, service quality, and destination marketing. During this time, halal tourism began to be approached as a commercial sector with specific consumer segments. Keywords such as *halal branding*, *service quality*, *destination image*, and *Muslim tourist motivation* became prevalent. Scholars applied

established frameworks like the *Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)* and *SERVQUAL* to study how religious and cultural values influenced travel choices.

Phase 3: 2017–2022 – Policy, Strategy, and Institutional Development

In the following period, literature began to mature with a focus on macro-level concerns such as *governance*, *destination competitiveness*, and *policy frameworks*. Key developments included studies on halal certification systems, institutional trust, and the role of public-private partnerships in promoting halal-friendly infrastructure. Researchers investigated how countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and the UAE implemented national strategies to attract Muslim tourists.

Phase 4: 2020–2024 – Innovation, Digitalization, and Sustainability

Recent years have introduced more nuanced and interdisciplinary themes. Scholars began exploring *post-pandemic recovery*, *digital transformation*, and the integration of *halal values into sustainability discourses*. The increasing use of Islamic digital platforms (Muslim travel apps) and attention to *eco-halal* practices reflect a broader shift toward ethical, inclusive, and resilient tourism models.

Emerging Trends – Inclusive and Intersectional Approaches

Looking ahead, several underexplored areas have started to gain traction. These include topics such as *inclusive tourism design*, *halal innovation*, *intercultural competence*, and *social justice* within Muslim-friendly tourism. These emerging keywords suggest an expansion of the field into areas previously overlooked, offering fertile ground for theoretical development and policy engagement.

Geographical Distribution of Research

Although the current dataset does not contain author affiliation or country information, an assessment of source journals, author names, and regional publication trends suggests that halal tourism research is predominantly concentrated in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, with growing contributions from other parts of the world.

Malaysia and Indonesia stand out as the epicenters of halal tourism scholarship. This is attributable to their strategic national positioning as global halal tourism hubs, the proactive roles of government bodies (MATRADE, Indonesia Halal Tourism Board), and strong academic ecosystems supporting Islamic tourism studies. Leading Malaysian institutions such as Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Universiti Malaya (UM), and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) have produced high-impact contributions in this domain (El-Gohary, 2016).

The Middle East, particularly the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, also features prominently in the discourse, although research output from this region remains relatively less visible in mainstream indexed journals. Iranian scholars have contributed to conceptual and sociological perspectives on religious travel. European contributions have emerged primarily from the UK, Spain, and Turkey. Scholars from Western institutions often adopt a comparative or critical perspective, analyzing Muslim tourism within secular or multicultural societies. Turkey occupies a unique hybrid position, contributing both as a Muslim-majority country and a key academic contributor to the intersection of heritage, religion, and tourism.

Table 6

Geographic Distribution of Journals in Halal Tourism Research

No	Journal Title	Country of Publisher	Publisher/Database	Approx. No. of Articles
1	Journal of Islamic Marketing	United Kingdom	Emerald (Scopus)	10
2	Tourism Management Perspectives	Netherlands	Elsevier (Scopus)	9
3	Tourism Management	Netherlands	Elsevier (Scopus)	4
4	Tourism Review	United Kingdom	Emerald (Scopus)	3
5	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	South Korea	Taylor & Francis (Scopus)	3
6	Tourism Analysis	United States	Cognizant Communication	1
7	Tourism Recreation Research	India	Taylor & Francis (Scopus)	1
8	Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism	Romania	ASERS Publishing (WoS/Scopus)	2
9	International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage	Ireland	Technological University Dublin	2
10	Sustainability (Switzerland)	Switzerland	MDPI (Scopus/WoS)	2

Note: Data compiled from Scopus-indexed articles retrieved from journals

Table 6 summarizes the top academic journals and their respective publishers that have contributed to the development of halal tourism literature from 2010 to 2024. The data was compiled from Scopus and WoS-indexed sources, highlighting the geographical and institutional diversity of publishing platforms supporting this field.

The Journal of Islamic Marketing, published by Emerald in the United Kingdom, stands out with the highest number of halal tourism-related articles (10). This journal plays a pivotal role in shaping the discourse around Islamic consumer behavior and faith-driven marketing strategies, making it the most prominent venue for halal tourism research to date.

Elsevier, a leading publisher based in the Netherlands, has published a significant number of articles across two high-impact journals: Tourism Management Perspectives (9 articles) and Tourism Management (4 articles). These journals reflect the integration of halal tourism within mainstream tourism studies, particularly in relation to destination development, governance, and market segmentation.

Other important contributors include Emerald's Tourism Review (3 articles) and Taylor & Francis, which hosts the Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research and Tourism Recreation Research—with contributions from scholars exploring regional and theoretical perspectives on halal tourism. These publications underscore the regional breadth of research, particularly in South Korea, India, and the United Kingdom, where emerging markets and cultural diversity intersect with Islamic travel practices.

Intellectual Structure and Knowledge Clusters

The intellectual structure of halal tourism research refers to the underlying theoretical foundations, dominant knowledge domains, and interconnections among key scholarly contributions that shape the evolution of the field. In the context of bibliometric mapping, the intellectual structure is often revealed through co-citation analysis, which identifies clusters of frequently cited works, indicating shared theoretical paradigms or research orientations (Small, 1973; White & McCain, 1998).

Although detailed co-citation mapping is not available from the current dataset, a critical synthesis of highly cited works and dominant research streams allows us to delineate at least four major knowledge clusters within the tourism literature:

Cluster 1: Conceptualization and Definitions of Halal Tourism

This foundational cluster comprises early works that aim to define and clarify the scope of halal tourism. It includes contributions by (Henderson, 2016) and (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010a), which explore the intersections between religion, culture, and travel behavior. These works critically evaluate the distinctions between *Islamic tourism*, *halal tourism*, and *Muslim-friendly tourism*, laying the groundwork for terminological coherence in later studies.

Cluster 2: Consumer Behavior and Marketing Strategies

The second and most prolific cluster revolves around Muslim consumer behavior, focusing on factors influencing travel motivations, satisfaction, loyalty, and destination image. Seminal works by (Battour & Ismail, 2016) dominate this space, often drawing on marketing theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), SERVQUAL, and destination branding frameworks. This stream also explores emotional and psychological factors influencing decision-making, such as *halal consciousness*, *perceived trust*, *religious commitment*, and *risk perception*.

Cluster 3: Policy, Governance, and Standardization

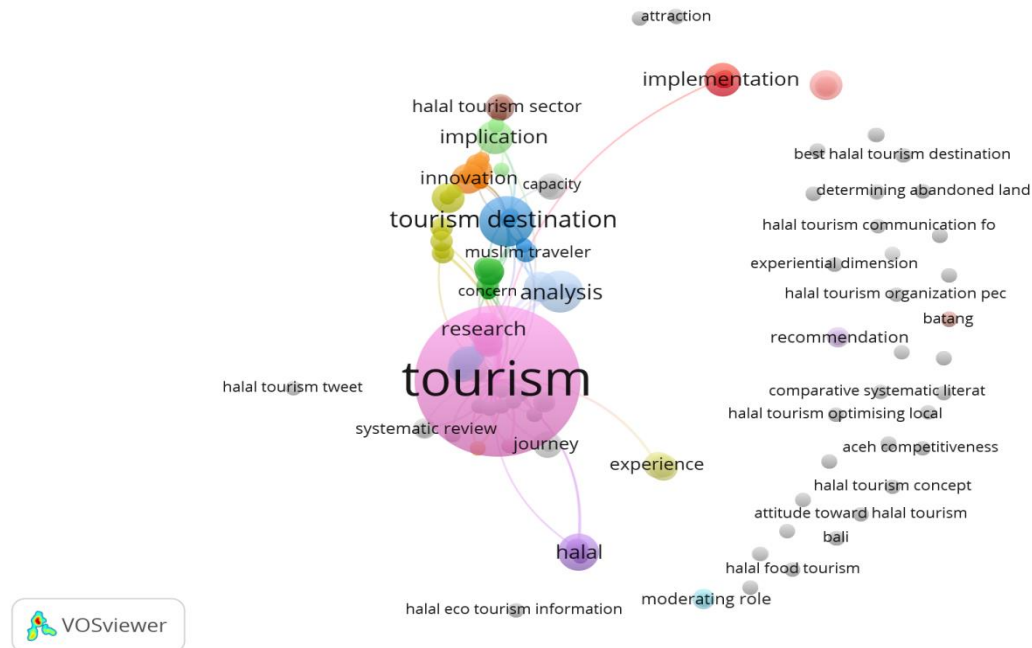
A third cluster has emerged around the governance of halal tourism, especially in relation to policy formation, halal certification systems, institutional trust, and regulatory challenges. This includes comparative studies across OIC and non-OIC countries, assessing how national branding and public-private partnerships shape the halal tourism landscape. Key contributors in this area include (Din, Ghani, et al., 2017) and (Stephenson, 2014), who examine the role of governments, religious bodies, and industry associations in formalizing halal tourism infrastructure.

Cluster 4: Emerging Frontiers – Sustainability, Technology, and Inclusion

The final cluster represents a more recent but rapidly expanding area of research that integrates halal tourism with sustainability, digital innovation, and inclusive development. Scholars such as (Ali et al., 2020) and (M. Rahman et al., 2019) have investigated the role of mobile apps, AI, and digital platforms in enhancing Muslim-friendly tourism experiences.

Figure 2

Keyword Co-occurrence Network in Halal Tourism Research



The keyword co-occurrence network, generated using VOSviewer, visually maps the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of halal tourism research based on titles and keywords from a curated dataset of 50 Scopus-indexed publications. The network reveals clusters of frequently co-occurring terms, representing dominant research themes in the field. Node size indicates the frequency of keyword occurrence, while link strength and color coding represent the degree of co-occurrence and thematic similarity. The visualization identifies five primary thematic clusters:

1. **Pink Cluster (Core Theme: Tourism Research).** This central cluster revolves around the term “*tourism*,” reflecting its role as the field's foundational keyword. Closely connected terms such as “*research*,” “*systematic review*,” “*journey*,” and “*halal*” indicate a methodological orientation and a strong focus on definitional and conceptual exploration in earlier studies.
2. **Yellow Cluster (Core Theme: Destination and Innovation).** This cluster highlight's themes related to “*tourism destination*,” “*innovation*,” “*implication*,” and “*capacity*.” It reflects scholarly efforts in assessing strategic development, destination competitiveness, and institutional readiness for halal tourism implementation.
3. **Blue Cluster (Core Theme: Tourist Analysis and Motivation).** Featuring keywords such as “*muslim traveler*,” “*concern*,” and “*analysis*,” this cluster focuses on demand-side perspectives, including tourist behavior, needs, and psychological considerations. It suggests a research trajectory examining the experiences and motivations of Muslim tourists.
4. **Red Cluster (Core Theme: Implementation and Policy Gaps).** The keyword “*implementation*” stands out in this isolated cluster, reflecting policy-oriented studies that critically assess how halal tourism frameworks are operationalized. Its relative isolation may indicate fragmentation in integrating policy discussions with other research strands.

5. Gray and Peripheral Terms (Emerging/Isolated Themes). Keywords like “*halal tourism communication*,” “*eco-tourism information*,” “*digital*,” and place-based identifiers (“Bali,” “Aceh,” “Batang”) appear on the periphery. Their dispersion suggests underexplored or emerging niches, including digital tourism, regional branding, and governance dimensions.

The network highlights “*tourism*,” “*halal*,” and “*tourism destination*” as the most frequently used and interconnected keywords, underscoring their centrality in the field. However, the presence of isolated and low-frequency terms suggests fragmented development and an opportunity for future synthesis and integration across subdomains.

Figure 3

Author Co-Citation Network in Halal Tourism Research



This co-citation map visualizes the intellectual structure of halal tourism scholarship by analyzing the frequency with which authors are cited together across the literature. The size of each node represents the number of citations an author has received, while the proximity and connecting lines reflect the strength of their co-citation links. Authors that frequently appear together in reference lists are placed closer together, indicating thematic or conceptual alignment in their contributions. Key Observations:

1. Dominant Intellectual Anchors: A. Vargas-Sánchez, M. Battour, and A. Mohsin emerge as the most co-cited scholars, signifying their central role in shaping the theoretical foundations of halal tourism studies. Their work frequently addresses tourism behavior, market segmentation, and policy implementation in Muslim-friendly travel. C. Michael Hall also appears prominently, likely due to his broader contributions to tourism theory, destination marketing, and sustainable tourism, which are often cited alongside halal-specific studies.
2. Emerging Regional Scholars: Names such as A.P. Marlinda, N. Huda, Y. Wardi, and A. Abror represent influential contributors from Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia. Their work often

emphasizes empirical models and Islamic branding in halal tourism contexts. H. El-Gohary and E. Bogan appear in moderate clusters, known for critical perspectives on the conceptual validity and practical challenges of halal tourism frameworks.

3. **Fragmentation and Diversity:** While several dense clusters exist, the network also reveals a scattered landscape with many isolated or weakly connected nodes. This suggests a lack of strong cross-referencing among scholars and underscores the fragmented nature of the field. The appearance of numerous authors with low co-citation strength indicates growing diversification and entry of new voices into the halal tourism discourse.
4. **Interdisciplinary Integration:** The inclusion of authors from marketing, management, religious studies, and hospitality (G. Prayag, J.C. Henderson) highlights the interdisciplinary nature of halal tourism research and its intersections with broader tourism and consumer behavior literature.

DISCUSSION

The bibliometric findings reveal that halal tourism has evolved from a marginal niche into a mature interdisciplinary research field, yet this growth has occurred within an uneven and fragmented intellectual landscape. While the rapid increase in publication volume and citation activity demonstrates scholarly momentum, a deeper analytical interpretation suggests that much of the field's development has been confined within descriptive and behavior-oriented frameworks. The dominance of marketing-based approaches, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, SERVQUAL, and customer satisfaction models, has positioned halal tourism primarily as an economic and managerial construct rather than a comprehensive socio-religious phenomenon. Although these frameworks have contributed to a better understanding of Muslim travel behavior and destination management, they risk reducing halal tourism to a functional market utility that overlooks its ethical, spiritual, and communal dimensions. To address this limitation, future scholarship must integrate epistemological foundations derived from Islamic perspectives, particularly the principles of *maqasid al-shariah*, which emphasize human welfare, justice, and sustainability. Such integration would reframe halal tourism not merely as a business domain but as an ethical system rooted in faith and collective well-being.

Another key insight emerging from the bibliometric mapping concerns the issue of fragmentation and theoretical isolation. The intellectual clusters identified—conceptual foundations, consumer behavior, policy frameworks, and emerging sustainability themes—remain loosely connected, indicating that halal tourism research has yet to achieve theoretical coherence. The absence of strong cross-citation and collaborative linkages between clusters suggests that studies have evolved independently rather than cumulatively. This pattern has limited the field's ability to construct integrative frameworks that connect individual-level motivations with institutional, policy, and governance dimensions. For example, while recent studies have addressed sustainability and digital transformation, few have sought to link these macro-level themes with earlier behavioral models. Future research should therefore aim to bridge these epistemic divides through meta-theoretical approaches that integrate Islamic ethics, governance, and sustainability theory within a unified conceptual structure.

The bibliometric analysis also highlights regional concentration as both a strength and a constraint. Malaysia and Indonesia dominate halal tourism research, reflecting their global leadership in Islamic tourism policy and practice. Their contribution has been instrumental in shaping the discourse, yet this regional dominance has inadvertently created epistemic homogeneity. The prevalence of similar conceptual frameworks and case studies has limited the representation of diverse Muslim contexts, such as Africa, Central Asia, and Muslim-minority societies in the West. These regions embody different cultural,

theological, and institutional realities that can enrich the theoretical understanding of halal tourism as a global construct. Comparative and cross-regional analyses are therefore essential to capture variations in policy implementation, consumer behavior, and cultural adaptation. Expanding the geographical scope would not only enhance inclusivity but also deepen the global relevance of halal tourism scholarship.

Despite these limitations, the field is showing signs of intellectual maturity through the emergence of transformative research frontiers. Recent works have begun to explore themes related to digitalization, inclusivity, sustainability, and post-pandemic recovery, signaling a paradigmatic shift toward what can be termed *Halal 4.0*. This emerging paradigm combines Islamic values with digital technology, ethical innovation, and environmental responsibility. The increasing attention to sustainability and alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflects a reorientation of halal tourism toward global priorities of ethical consumption, social justice, and ecological stewardship. This development marks an important transition from viewing halal tourism as identity-driven to understanding it as value-driven and impact-oriented, capable of contributing to inclusive and regenerative tourism futures.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive mapping of global halal tourism scholarship, tracing its evolution over two decades through a Scopus-based bibliometric analysis. The findings reveal that halal tourism has developed from a narrowly defined niche into a dynamic, interdisciplinary field that integrates marketing, consumer behavior, policy, governance, sustainability, and digital innovation. Four dominant intellectual clusters were identified—conceptual foundations, consumer behavior, policy frameworks, and emerging themes on sustainability and technology, demonstrating both the maturity and diversity of the discipline. However, despite this growth, the literature remains geographically concentrated in Southeast Asia and marked by theoretical fragmentation, with limited cross-regional collaboration and weak integration of Islamic epistemological perspectives.

Theoretically, this study enriches understanding of halal tourism's intellectual structure and clarifies its conceptual boundaries within broader tourism scholarship. By identifying core clusters and emerging research trajectories, it provides a stronger foundation for theory-building that links Islamic principles with contemporary discussions on ethics, sustainability, and destination development. The results also highlight the need for more integrative theoretical frameworks that bridge marketing, Islamic studies, and social sciences, thereby advancing a more holistic understanding of Muslim travel behavior.

From a practical perspective, the findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, destination managers, and industry practitioners. Countries aiming to strengthen their halal tourism sectors can draw lessons from successful cases such as Malaysia and Indonesia, particularly in implementing certification systems, improving service quality, and developing globally recognizable halal brands. The growing intersection between halal tourism and sustainable development presents opportunities for innovation through digital platforms, environmentally responsible services, and inclusive destination management strategies.

In policy terms, the study underscores the importance of international cooperation in standardizing halal certification and promoting research capacity building across regions. Policymakers should integrate halal tourism within broader tourism development plans to enhance economic resilience, cultural diplomacy, and global competitiveness. Aligning halal tourism initiatives with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can further ensure that the industry contributes to ethical, inclusive, and sustainable growth.

Despite its significant contributions, this study has several limitations. It is confined to English-language, Scopus-indexed publications and does not include non-indexed or non-English research outputs. Future

research should expand to other databases, incorporate full-text content analysis, and adopt mixed-method or qualitative approaches to deepen understanding. Exploring new frontiers such as digital halal ecosystems, intercultural experiences, and socio-economic impacts on local communities will further enhance the theoretical and practical relevance of halal tourism research. Overall, this study positions halal tourism as a critical and evolving domain that reflects the intersection of faith, culture, and sustainability in the global tourism landscape.

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