

*Review Article*

## **Halal Tourism: Literature Synthesis and Direction for Future Research**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Halal tourism, which arises from the growth in the number of Muslim travellers world-wide and the rapid development of halal industry, is defined as the engagement of any object or action by Muslim travellers that conforms to the Islamic teachings and facilitates the practice of the religion. As such, the application of halal concept in tourism, including in its development and marketing, must be guided by the Islamic principles. With the purpose to understand the current state of knowledge and practice, we reviewed the literature on halal tourism that has been published in high-tier academic journals. Based on the review, we identified the emergent themes and the knowledge gaps for future research. Among others, we found that the industry is booming with increased participations from Muslim-minority countries. However, there seems to be variations in the practice, perhaps due to the complexity of the market needs. The implementation of halal tourism by Muslim-minority countries is the most pressing issue due to the need to ensure that the process and the service offered strictly comply with the requirements of Islamic teachings, while at the same time, to ensure that the countries are able to develop their halal sectors into competitive industries. Understanding the implementation of halal tourism is an important

agenda for future research to ensure that the service provided addresses the fundamental issue of Muslims' obligations to adhere to the Islamic teachings in all aspects of their lives including while travelling.

*Keywords:* Halal, halal implementation, halal tourism, Islam, Muslim, tourism, tourist, traveller

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## INTRODUCTION

Halal tourism is one of the latest trends that arises from the growth in the number of Muslim travellers world-wide and the rapid development of halal industry. Halal tourism is dubbed as 'the new billion dollar travel trend'. Its market worldwide is recorded to increase at the annual rate of 5%, which is more than the normal tourism industry growth of 4% (Context Consulting, 2016). In a report on the state of the global Islamic Economy of 2014/2015, which was produced by Thomson Reuters and Dinar Standard, it had been indicated that Muslim tourists worldwide spent 140 billion US dollars in 2013, and this figure excluded the spending on the same year on Hajj and Umrah, which were valued at 16 billion US dollars. Moreover, the amounts spent by the Muslims constitute 11.5 per cent of global expenditure. Halal tourism segment is expected to be valued at 239 billion US dollars by 2019, which represent 13 per cent of global spending. These impressive figures influence more hotels and other service providers to announce new plans and strategies to draw interest of the Muslim tourists to their Sharia-compliant hotels, restaurants, spas and travel packages. In term of travel destinations for halal tourism, Turkey tops the list in the latest Global Muslim Travel Index, with Malaysia and the UAE in second and third places, respectively (Pillai, 2015).

As halal themes begin to influence tourism industry, both Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries are seeking to capture the Muslim tourist market by

providing halal foods, halal accommodation and relevant logistics to cater to the requirements of Muslim travellers. Lately, several Muslim-minority economies, such as Japan and New Zealand, have started to promote their own brand of halal tourism (Henderson, 2016b; Razzaq et al., 2016).

Halal tourism, in this study, is defined as the use or engagement of any object or action by Muslim travellers that conforms to the Islamic teachings and facilitate the practice of the religion (based on Battour & Ismail, 2016; Davids, 2014). Halbase (2017) described halal tourism as the providing of services in term of tour packages and travel destinations that met Muslims' requirements and preferences. These can include a) halal food served in hotels or in-flight while traveling, b) halal accommodation in regard to food and drinks served during the stay at the hotels, c) halal logistics, which means foods that are properly prepared, stored and delivered, d) halal spa, especially, in regard to having separated rooms or facilities for male and female clients and being served by the same gender, as well as e) Islamic finance, in which traveling is funded by halal or Sharia-compliant means.

Therefore, the development and marketing of halal tourism services must be guided by the Islamic teachings and principles, covering all aspects of tourism activities. This study addresses the fundamental issue of Muslims' obligations to follow the Islamic teachings in all aspects of their lives including while they are travelling. The concept of halal tourism has also attracts the interest of scholars,

particularly from mid-2000s onward. In the last 10 years the field continued to develop more rapidly. However, to date, there is still a lack of comprehensive evaluation on the literature in the field. This study intends to fulfil this gap.

The objective of this study is to analyse the current state of knowledge and practice of halal tourism. In achieving this objective, we reviewed the extant literature on halal tourism that has been published in high-tier academic publications. We conducted the literature search on the SCOPUS database using keyword “halal tourism”. The database generated 44 articles on the topic. Specifically, we analysed these articles based on the dimensions of *type of article, contexts and subjects of study, field of discipline, and major findings and themes*. This information serves as the basis of assessing the main focus of the studies and their overall position and contribution to the field of knowledge in halal tourism. Based on this analysis, the emergent themes on halal concept as they relate to tourism are discussed and the knowledge gap for future research is identified.

#### **ANALYSIS OF PUBLISHED ARTICLES ON HALAL TOURISM**

Our search on the SCOPUS database yielded a total return of 44 articles. We excluded 15 articles from the original list that are not relevant to our topic of interest, as well as those that are works-in-progress and publications of proceedings. From the list of 29 articles included in our analysis, 16 are conceptual or review papers while the

remaining 13 are empirical. Table 1 shows the summary of all the articles included in this review.

The number of empirical articles that utilised qualitative methodology is eight, exceeding that of five articles that used quantitative approach. Seven of the empirical articles in our analysis dealt with consumer issues (of which the unit of analysis is the tourist), including those in the USA, Malaysia, Turkey, India and Indonesia. These studies are consumer behaviour studies, which can be categorised under the field of marketing. Six articles that examined the issues of halal tourism from the providers or related agencies perspective were conducted in Morocco, Tunisia, New Zealand, Italy and Thailand. Four of these articles utilised marketing management as the framework, while two articles on Thailand and New Zealand utilised geography and tourism as the framework, respectively. As a whole, the topic of halal tourism is mostly studied from the marketing perspective.

#### **Halal Tourism over the Years**

The rise in the number of published articles on halal tourism can be seen toward the late 2000s. The main focus of discussion at that time was the Shariah perspective on tourism (e.g. Battour et al., 2010; Bon & Hussain, 2010). Battour et al. (2010) defined halal tourism and emphasized the importance of awareness and observance of Shariah rules in halal tourism implementation, while Bon and Hussain (2010) highlighted that availability of halal food determined

the choice of destination for Muslim tourists. These two studies are followed by qualitative inquiries by Battour et al. (2011) who studied Muslim foreign tourists in Malaysia, Kurokawa (2013) who studied the branding of Chiang Mai for serving Muslim tourists, and Halkias et al. (2014) who studied family firms that provided halal food in Italy. While Battour et al. (2010) was concerned with Muslim providers serving Muslim tourists, Kurokawa's (2013) and Halkias et al.'s (2014) studies focused on non-Muslims providers serving Muslim tourists in Muslim-minority countries. Specifically Battour et al. (2010) generated a number of 'halal' attributes of destination that were valued by Muslim tourists, which included halal food and permissible entertainment, prayer areas and related facilities, and gender segregation.

In 2014, Stephenson suggested the need to consider non-Muslims' perception and experiences in halal services, including halal tourism, due to the reason that halal services were not being developed exclusively for or being consumed only by Muslim customers. This understanding is also important in order to address the prejudice or sentiments that are still existing among some non-Muslims against Islam. In similar vein, Haq and Medhekar (2014) proposed Pakistan (a Muslim-majority country) and India (a Muslim-minority country) to collaborate in order to leverage on the opportunities provided by halal tourism, due to their geographical and cultural proximities. Davids (2014) further discussed the potential for Islamic tourism to flourish in South

Africa, which is a Muslim-minority country. Backed by the long history of the presence of Islam and the Muslim community in South Africa, the author concluded that the Islamic culture in South Africa has evolved and shaped by the country's internal and external circumstances and regarded as a valuable national culture and heritage. In the same year, Medhekar and Haq (2014) reported their findings of a case study conducted on Muslim patients seeking for Shariah-compliant treatment in India. The study found that the choice of halal-certified medical care by Muslim patients, including foreign patients who travelled from abroad to seek health treatment (termed as medical tourists), was based on their rational and emotional attitudes as well as affective and cognitive feelings.

In 2015, Shakona et al. studied the travelling behaviour of Muslims in the US and made a suggestion to providers to consider the influence of religion on Muslim tourists. Henderson (2016a, 2016b) highlighted the complexity of serving different segments of tourists, the Muslims and non-Muslims. In Russia for example, Gabdrakhmanov et al. (2016b) concluded that the implementation of halal tourism had high potential to grow and sustain, while in another study, Gabdrakhmanov et al. (2016a) highlighted the need for proper infrastructure that would help to enable or facilitate the delivery of halal services as a requisite to promoting the growth of halal tourism in Russia, a Muslim-minority country. While at the beginning of their study, Razzaq et al. (2016) assumed that

halal tourism would take up in New Zealand because of their readied supply of halal meat, their study eventually suggested that provision of halal tourism was much more complex because of the need to understand Muslim consumer behaviour, as well as the comprehensive Shariah requirements related to preparing halal food.

Izberk-Bilgin and Nakata (2016) established a number of fundamentals or principles of halal marketing implementation that should be embraced by businesses providing halal services, including halal tourism. The principles included understanding and embracing the true meaning and requirements of halal as well as the regulatory rules and practices. Ryan (2016) in his editorial, acknowledged the increased attention on the topic of halal tourism in the academia and in practice. He further highlighted the need for advancing the knowledge of halal tourism through conducting more empirical research. In their review of literature, Battour and Ismail (2016) highlighted the increased number of Muslim tourists to both Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries and that there were many factors influencing this trend, including political conditions of the tourists' countries of origin as well as the destination countries, and the level of tourism promotions and programs. Whereas in a study on homestay host families in Morocco, Carboni and Janati (2016) found that these local hosts did not consider halal certification as a necessity to serve Muslim tourists, as being Muslims, the hosts believed that their services conformed to

Islamic requirements. While they did not object to being halal certified, the local hosts also believed that it was important to ensure such certification would not hinder their offerings to be appealing to those of other faiths.

According to Mohsin et al. (2016), the current and potential financial lucrativeness of the market is the main reason for many countries including Australia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Turkey are interested to tap into the high-growth halal tourism market. They defined Muslim-friendly hotel ambience, food and hospitality as fundamentals in serving this segment. Henderson (2016a), in comparing between Malaysia, a Muslim-majority country, and Singapore, a Muslim-minority country, suggested that both countries had their own advantage in marketing in halal tourism as long as they had proper control and certification mechanisms in place. In particular, both of the countries are considered as congenial destinations for inbound Muslim tourists due to their positive socio-political and religious conditions.

By 2016, the lack of studies and understanding on religious versus general travel requirements were still prevalent, as noted by El-Gohary (2016). El-Gohary (2016) established halal tourism as a form of religious tourism. Oktadiana et al. (2016) questioned the lack of studies of halal tourism in Indonesia, despite the country being the largest Muslim country in the world. They attributed various reasons for this research gap. Based on their review,

Table 1  
Summary of SCOPUS article review

No.	Author (Year)	Title	Source title	Article Type (Methodology, if relevant)	Context/ Subject of Study	Field of Study / Discipline	Summary of Major Findings/Themes
1	Shafaei (2017)	The relationship between involvement with travelling to Islamic destinations and Islamic brand equity: a case of Muslim tourists in Malaysia	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	Empirical (Quantitative)	Middle Eastern tourists travelling to Malaysia	Marketing (brand equity)	This study of Muslim tourists' perception of Malaysia's Islamic brand equity examined six variables, namely awareness, quality, image, value, loyalty and they relate to tourists' involvement with travelling to Islamic destinations. The study found that the strongest predictor of the involvement of travellers travelling to Islamic destinations is awareness.
2	Elaziz & Kurt (2017)	Religiosity, consumerism and halal tourism: A study of seaside tourism organizations in Turkey	Tourism	Empirical (Qualitative)	Muslim tourist perception on halal tourism in Turkey	Marketing	The study suggests that religious vacationers perceive holiday as one of the basic needs. This choice of lifestyle might be influenced by the capitalist consumer/tourism culture, thus possibly indicates that religious tourists are no different from ordinary tourists.
3	Carboni et al. (2017)	Developing tourism products in line with Islamic beliefs: some insights from Nabeul-Hammamet	Journal of North African Studies	Empirical (Qualitative)	Service providers in Tunisia	Management and Marketing	More service providers are becoming familiar with global products designed for Muslim consumers. These service providers consider tourism as a differentiation tool for their businesses.
4	Oktadiana et al. (2016)	Muslim travellers' needs: What don't we know?	Tourism Management Perspectives	Conceptual	-	Management	In this conceptual study, the authors reviewed a number of published articles and other online sources on the key cultural facets of interaction and communication of halal tourism. The process is based on the themes derived from Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory. Their review highlights that extant literature tends to offer a one-sided emphasis on the need for halal service providers to understand and become sensitive to their prospective customers' needs. On the contrary, the authors suggest that the inbound tourists, too, must be sensitive to the local sensitivity and cultures of the destinations of travel.
5	Samsi et al. (2016)	Information quality, usefulness and information satisfaction in Islamic e-Tourism websites	Journal of Theoretical and Applied Information Technology	Empirical (Quantitative)	Muslim tourists' expectation of travel websites that cater for their needs.	Marketing	In this study, relevancy, Islamic design, security and privacy are among significant features of Muslim-friendly travel websites that Muslim tourists find useful. Overall, this study illustrates how technology can influence the behaviour and choices made by Muslim tourists.

Table 1 (*continue*)

No.	Author (Year)	Title	Source title	Article Type (Methodology, if relevant)	Context/ Subject of Study	Field of Study / Discipline	Summary of Major Findings/Themes
6	Samori et al. (2016)	Current trends on Halal tourism: Cases on selected Asian countries	Tourism Management Perspectives	Conceptual	-	Management	Development of halal tourism is reviewed by the authors and illustrated by two case examples: Malaysia as a predominantly Muslim country, and Japan as a Muslim-minority country. The scene of halal tourism in both the cases is promising due to increase in the worldwide tourism trend. In Malaysia, most of the facilities and services needed by Muslim tourists are in place, however, improvements to the quality are still needed in order to ensure sustained visits. Whereas for Japan, although receptive to the needs of Muslims tourists, the availability of halal services are still lacking especially in small cities, due to lack of exposure on Islam as well as the language barrier.
7	El-Gohary (2016)	Halal tourism, is it really Halal?	Tourism Management Perspectives	Conceptual	-	Marketing (tourism)	Halal tourism is considered a subcategory of religious tourism that is rooted within the rules Shariah (Islamic law), which must be observed by all Muslims. According to the author, religious tourism, particularly that focus on the actual linkage between religion and tourism, is still under researched.
8	Henderson (2016a)	Halal food, certification and halal tourism: Insights from Malaysia and Singapore	Tourism Management Perspectives	Conceptual (include anecdotal case study based on published sources)	Focus on Malaysia and Singapore which have majority and minority Muslim populations respectively.	Marketing (hospitality)	Destinations with either majority, or sizeable minority Muslim communities, have competitive advantages in regard to offering services to Muslim tourists, particularly related to halal food. This is due to the reason that halal food is a necessity and thus readily available for and offered by the local Muslims. Specifically, the agreeable social, cultural and religious conditions in Malaysia and Singapore render the countries as friendly to inbound Muslim tourists.
9	Mohsin et al. (2016)	Halal tourism: Emerging opportunities	Tourism Management Perspectives	Conceptual	-	Marketing	Countries such as Australia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Turkey are interested in attracting the growing number of Muslim tourists due to lucrative business opportunities. Muslim-friendly hotel ambience, food and hospitality are among the fundamental needs of this segment.



Table 1 (continue)

No.	Author (Year)	Title	Source title	Article Type (Methodology, if relevant)	Context/ Subject of Study	Field of Study / Discipline	Summary of Major Findings/Themes
10	Carboni and Janati (2016)	Halal tourism de facto: A case from Fez	Tourism Management Perspectives	Empirical (Qualitative)	Perception of local host in Fez, Morocco to market halal/spiritual tourism as cultural exchange.	Marketing	Local hosts, who are Muslims, consider their services as already halal and as such believe that the adoption of a halal label as redundant or does not make them 'more respectful of Islam'. However, they do not object to such certification, provided that non-Islamic tourists are not discriminated with or excluded by it. In other words, it is important to ensure that the services can be enjoyed by both Muslims and non-Muslims and not to the exclusion of others due to halal labelling.
11	Battour and Ismail (2016)	Halal tourism: Concepts, practises, challenges and future	Tourism Management Perspectives	Review	-	Marketing	Ten years after the concept of halal tourism was first coined, this article attempts to review the concept of halal tourism, its challenges and the future outlook. Their review highlights increased number of Muslim tourists to both Muslim and non-Muslim countries due to political situation (for instance, political instability in some Middle East countries had caused the increase of outbound tourists from those countries), and the level of tourism promotions and programs (for instance, how the information about a destination are being spread). The authors note the lack of engagement of social network and proper geographical marketing that would have the prospect to disseminate information about Muslim-friendly destinations.
12	Ryan (2016)	Halal tourism	Tourism Management Perspectives	Editorial / Review	-	Marketing (tourism) / Management	Compared to other forms of tourism, halal tourism is considered in its embryonic state as a subject for research. It is now, however, getting increased attention from the academia as well as the commercial world, evidenced with many related conventions and conferences being sponsored by the industry.
13	Izberk-Bilgin and Nakata (2016)	A new look at faith-based marketing: The global halal market	Business Horizons	Conceptual	Malaysia	Marketing	This article gives insight on the opportunities of global halal market and suggests five key-points towards successful halal marketing strategies to be used in order to tap into the Muslim segment, namely: the needs for businesses to subscribe to a holistic definition of halal, to fully understand about the rules and regulations of halal, to have a good rapport with the policy makers, to address the concerns of the consumers effectively and to have strategic and integrated view of halal.



Table 1 (continue)

No.	Author (Year)	Title	Source title	Article Type (Methodology, if relevant)	Context/ Subject of Study	Field of Study / Discipline	Summary of Major Findings/Themes
14	Razzaq et al. (2016)	The capacity of New Zealand to accommodate the halal tourism market - Or not	Tourism Management Perspectives	Empirical (Quantitative)	Study of accommodation provider websites in New Zealand	Marketing / management	While New Zealand has vast experience as global supplier of halal meat, provision of halal tourism, and hospitality is a much more complicated process that requires a finer understanding of their Muslim clients.
15	Gabdrakhmanov et al. (2016a)	Problems of development of halal tourism in Russia	Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict	Conceptual	Minority Muslim region in Russia (e.g., Tatarstan and Kazan).	Marketing	Good infrastructure, particularly that facilitates Muslim or halal-friendly services, are crucial to promote the development of halal tourism in Russia.
16	Gabdrakhmanov et al. (2016b)	Features of Islamic tourism	Academy of Marketing Studies Journal	Conceptual	-	Marketing	Halal food industry is expanding in the Russian Federation as halal exhibitions have been held regularly in Russia. The recent development indicates that the halal tourism has a potential to grow in Russia in the near future.
17	Henderson (2016b)	Muslim travellers, tourism industry responses and the case of Japan	Tourism Recreation Research	Conceptual	Japan	Marketing	Japan, a Muslim minority country is seen to have some success in attracting Muslim visitors, although not without challenges. Among others, service providers find the concept difficult to understand. In particular, local service providers are looking to avoid possible conflicts between the locals, and foreign Muslim tourists.
18	Shakona et al. (2015)	Understanding the traveling behavior of Muslims in the United States	International Journal of Culture, Tourism, and Hospitality Research	Empirical (Qualitative)	Interview of 12 Muslims of different nationalities in the USA	Consumer Behaviour / Marketing	Tourism marketers need to pay more attention to the influence of religion on the leisure and travel behaviours of Muslim travellers.
19	Medhekar and Haq (2014)	Halal branding for medical tourism: Case of Indian hospitals	Emerging Research on Islamic Marketing and Tourism in the Global Economy	Empirical (Qualitative)	Case study of the first halal certified hospital in Chennai, India	Marketing (Halal branding for medical tourism)	The study found that Muslim patients, including foreign patients who travelled from abroad to seek health treatment at the hospital (medical tourists), showed attitudes of rational, emotional as well as elements of affective and cognitive feelings when it comes to the reason why they chose a halal-certified medical care.

Table 1 (continue)

No.	Author (Year)	Title	Source title	Article Type (Methodology, Subject if relevant)	Context/ Subject of Study	Field of Study / Discipline	Summary of Major Findings/Themes
20	Dauids (2014)	Islamic tourism in South Africa: An emerging market approach	Emerging Research on Islamic Marketing and Tourism in the Global Economy	Conceptual	-	Marketing	In this book chapter, the author describes how halal tourism in South Africa begins to become a significant part of tourism in the country. The Islamic culture in South Africa is a fusion of religious and cultural nuances and has high potential for the tourism sector as it is prized as a national heritage.
21	Haq and Medhekar (2014)	Islamic tourism in India and Pakistan: Opportunities and challenges	Emerging Research on Islamic Marketing and Tourism in the Global Economy	Conceptual	India and Pakistan	Marketing (halal branding)	Based on a review of the literature, this book chapter provides a discussion of the history of Islamic tourism in India and Pakistan particularly that is related to its branding. Due to the two countries' close connections, culturally and geographically, the study suggests the two countries should work collaboratively in growing their halal tourism market.
22	Stephenson (2014)	Deciphering 'Islamic hospitality': Developments, challenges and opportunities	Tourism Management	Conceptual	-	Management and Marketing	The authors suggest that it is imperative to deliberate on the involvement of non-Muslims in halal tourism, due to halal services are also being consumed by non-Muslims. In addition, there are still significant amount of 'fears' or prejudice about Islam among non-Muslims that made them reluctant to engage with or even reject Muslim-friendly services. Understanding this segment, particularly those who are receptive to or interested in the cultures of others would be beneficial to the development of halal services including halal tourism.
23	Halkias et al. (2014)	Halal products and services in the Italian tourism and hospitality industry: Brief case studies of entrepreneurship and innovation	Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship	Empirical (Qualitative)	Case study of two family businesses in Italy that cater to Muslim tourists.	Marketing	Overall, there is a lack of demand, and similarly, lack of offerings of halal products and services in Europe. Nevertheless, the situation is progressively changing due to the growing halal market on the global scene.
24	Kurokawa (2013)	Case studies of the innovative local cottage industries and tourism in north and northeast district in Thailand: Implications from the local branding strategy of Thailand	Studies in Regional Science	Empirical (Qualitative)	Branding of Chiang Mai region of Thailand	Geography and tourism	In this study, the government of Thailand has implemented a decentralized approach to tourism management. Specifically, the study examines implementation of branding strategy of local government of Chiang Mai to cater to Muslim tourists. The study suggests regional or local branding strategy has the potential to increase tourism.

Table 1 (continue)

No.	Author (Year)	Title	Source title	Article Type (Methodology, if relevant)	Context/ Subject of Study	Field of Study / Discipline	Summary of Major Findings/Themes
25	Battour et al. (2011)	The impact of destination attributes on Muslim tourist's choice	International Journal of Tourism Research	Empirical (Qualitative)	Muslim foreign tourists in Malaysia	Marketing (Consumer behaviour)	There are a number of 'halal' attributes of destination (i.e., categorized as tangible and intangible) that are valued by Muslim tourists, which are halal food, prayer areas and related facilities, gender segregation and choice of entertainment that are suitable for Muslims.
26	Bon and Hussain (2010)	Halal food and tourism: Prospects and challenges	Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice	Conceptual	-	Shariah, tourism management and policy	Food plays a major role in halal tourism and thus has significant implication on the policy and practice of halal tourism. Particularly for Muslim tourists, availability of halal food determines their choice of travel destination, either to Muslim or non-Muslim countries.
27	Battour et al. (2010)	Toward a halal tourism market	Tourism Analysis	Conceptual	-	Shariah, Tourism management	This article attempts to define halal tourism and emphasizes the importance of the awareness and observance of Shariah rules in halal tourism implementation.
28	Wan-Hassan and Awang (2009)	Halal food in New Zealand restaurants: An exploratory study	International Journal of Economics and Management	Empirical (Quantitative)	Quantitative survey of restaurants serving halal food in New Zealand	Tourism and hospitality	Many restaurant operators in New Zealand are not familiar with halal concept and they do not consider Muslim tourist market as significant to their business.
29	Mohsin and Ryan (1997)	Business visitors to the northern territory expo	Tourism Recreation Research	Empirical (Quantitative)	Malaysian and Indonesian business travellers to Northern Territory Expo.	Consumer behaviour	The findings suggest availability of halal foods and accessibility to Islamic services as important considerations for Muslim business travellers.

Source: Authors' review of literature

they concluded that there was a need of the inbound tourists to understand the local sensitivity and cultures. This was in addition to the existing imbalanced focus of the literature which mainly emphasised on the need for providers to understand the nuances of the inbound tourists. Further, Samori et al. (2016) discussed on Islamic religious requirements for travelling. They also illustrated different cases of halal tourism implementation by comparing the experiences of Malaysia (a Muslim-majority country) and Japan (a Muslim-minority country), as both strived to become competitive in the burgeoning halal tourism market. The study also highlighted some areas of improvement in their halal tourism offerings: For Malaysia, there was a need to improve the quality of the services, while in Japan, there was a notable lack of availability of halal services particularly in rural and small cities. In the same year, Samsi et al. (2016) examined the role of technology and information in influencing Muslim tourists' behaviour. They highlighted content, timeliness, reliability and accessibility as among the useful website features for Muslim tourists.

By 2017, there has been a significant increase in the awareness and understanding of halal tourism concept by service providers (Carboni et al., 2017). In the same year, however, Elaziz and Kurt (2017) suggested that religious tourists and regular tourists had similar intentions of capitalist nature on what made them travel. Shafaei's (2017) findings emphasized the role of awareness about halal Malaysia brand in inducing

travel amongst Middle-Easterns, citing awareness as the key reason for their decision to travel.

## LITERATURE SYNTHESIS

Based on our analysis, we are able to identify six key themes that emerge from the review of the extant literature on halal tourism. The first two themes are directly related to the industry trends (indicated by the circles with dark arrow), while the other four themes centre-stage the predicament and challenges faced by the providers when operating within the halal tourism market, although the dimensions of halal tourism have begun to crystallize. Finally, the last theme concerns the inseparability of discussing the aspects of religion and values of Islam when dealing with halal tourism issues. Figure 1 summarises the major themes that emerged from our literature review.

### **The Halal Tourism Industry is Booming**

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, with the number of Muslim population expanding across 200 countries through emigration and migration. About 23% of Muslims around the world travel for leisure as domestic and outbound tourists, and their number is gradually increasing over time. Looking at the potential of this market-driven segment, halal tourism has gained considerable attention from tourism operators in Muslim-majority countries as well as Muslim-minority countries. They plan to reap the economic benefits and business opportunities arising from the industry.

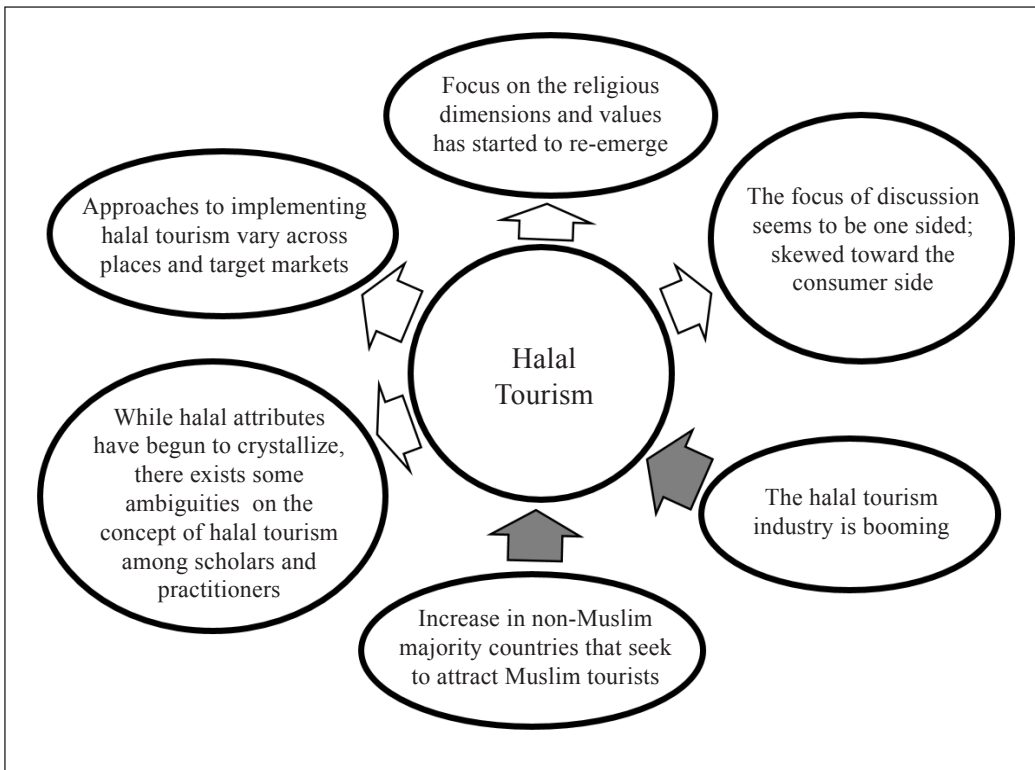


Figure 1. Key themes in the literature on halal tourism  
Source: Authors' review of literature

### **An Increase of Interest of Non-Muslim Majority Countries to Seek For and Attract Muslim Tourists**

The provision of halal tourism in non-Muslim majority or Muslim-minority countries raises the issue of whether their service meets the requirements of halal, as stipulated by the Islamic teachings as well as the level of readiness of providers in these countries to serve Muslim tourists. This is because the service providers need to thoroughly understand the correct concept of halal to be able to apply it accordingly. Since halal concept is embraced as a way for life for Muslims, and it is deeply

rooted within the Shariah, it is perceived that service providers in Muslim-majority countries would face less issue with proper implementation of halal services. However, for Muslim-minority countries where halal concept is not part of their culture and might be considered as foreign, implementing halal services is challenging, and thus service providers need proper education, awareness, as well as guidance and proper governance by relevant agencies. Particularly, assurance of services that meets the Islamic requirements would ensure acceptance of the services by Muslim travellers and win their loyalty in the future.

### **Ambiguity on the Concept of Halal Tourism Exists Among Scholars and Practitioners**

The emergence of halal attributes in tourism services signifies to the service providers on the dimensions of serving the Muslim tourists. However, while dimensions of halal attributes in tourism services have begun to crystallize, there seems to be some ambiguities in relation to the interpretation of the halal tourism concept, which influences the differences in the approaches of its implementation. To overcome this problem, the conceptualization of halal tourism needs to be strengthened based on authentic sources in combination with expert opinions in future research.

### **Approaches to Implementing the Concept of Halal Tourism Vary Across Places and Target Markets**

The complexities faced by service providers in serving different markets and different groups of tourists are highlighted in past studies. In fact, in certain Muslim-minority countries, the providers struggle with the implementation of halal services due to the lack of understanding of the halal concept.

### **The Focus of Discussion on Halal Tourism Seems To Be One Sided, Which Is Skewed Toward the Consumer Side**

While some studies examine issues related to service providers, the studies' implications are still focus on the service recipient, i.e., the tourists or traveller groups. This situation reflects a lack of stakeholder view in discussing halal tourism. Future research can explore the use of systems perspective in

examining halal tourism, as it will provide a comprehensive view on the players as well as all the direct and indirect stakeholders within the halal tourism services industry. Having a comprehensive view is needed as the halal concept covers the entire value chain and processes involved in the provision of the halal tourism service.

### **The Focus on the Religious Dimensions and Values has Started to Re-Emerge**

At the initial stage of the development of the field, the issues of Shariah have been center-staged. Later, however, most articles focus on marketing and consumer behaviour issues, while the dimension of religion and values seems to be side tracked. Most recently, scholars began to recognise the importance and the influence of religion and values on services and this can be expected to enrich the discussion of halal tourism in the future, which will further strengthen halal tourism as a body of knowledge.

### **DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

On the whole, the identification of the themes enables us to recognise the issues and areas of concern within the literature. Specifically, the knowledge gap on halal tourism implementation in Muslim-minority countries is highlighted. This, in fact, can be considered as the most pressing issue because the providers are generally non-Muslims and Islamic values are not embedded within their society's cultures. Within the context of business, there is a pressing need to ensure that the process and product

complies with the requirements as stipulated by the Islamic teachings. Understanding the implementation of halal tourism in this context is an important agenda for future research. This is because of the need to ensure that the halal tourism services that are provided in those countries address the fundamental issue of Muslims' obligations in adhering to the Islamic teachings in all aspects of their lives including while travelling. This understanding, at the same time, is also vital as it can assist the service providers in developing and marketing halal tourism in their countries. On the other hand, the Muslim tourists must also be sensitive to the local cultures and values, without sacrificing their religious values.

Addressing the above and other related issues also supports the development of the field of halal tourism, from the current infancy stage to a maturing field and eventually to be recognized as a legitimate body of knowledge. Such legitimacy is needed particularly given the importance of travelling and the need to serve customers to meet their religious needs and to facilitate their practice of religion. This pursuit for knowledge development is indeed fundamental because searching for halal is obligatory upon Muslims. As such, Muslim researchers play a significant role in educating the non-Muslim majority societies to embrace the proper halal concept. Similarly, on the part of service providers, the development of a comprehensive knowledge about halal tourism supports the development and sustainability of their organizations. This knowledge also serves

as the basis for decision making for the service providers as well as the governing bodies which will provide assurance for the customers, as well as for their future improvements.

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