Trends and Emerging Themes in Halal Tourism Studies: A Bibliometric Review Using VOSviewer

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of halal tourism research using VOSviewer to identify trends, thematic developments, and collaboration patterns within the academic literature. Drawing on a dataset of publications indexed in Scopus between 2000 and 2024, the study maps co-authorship networks, country collaborations, keyword co-occurrences, and temporal shifts in research focus. The findings reveal that halal tourism is an emerging and rapidly expanding field, with Indonesia and Malaysia leading in scholarly output and international partnerships. Core research themes have traditionally centered on tourist satisfaction, behavioral intention, and service quality, but recent developments indicate a shift toward sustainability, digital engagement, and Islamic marketing. The overlay and density visualizations highlight both mature themes and underexplored areas, suggesting future research opportunities in ecotourism, decision-making processes, and the qualitative dimensions of Muslim travel experiences. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the intellectual structure of halal tourism and provides strategic insights for scholars, policymakers, and industry stakeholders in advancing the field.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the global tourism industry has experienced rapid growth and diversification, driven by globalization, digitalization, and changing consumer preferences. Among the many sub-sectors that have emerged, halal tourism has gained increasing attention as a growing niche market within the broader tourism industry. Halal tourism refers to travel and hospitality services that comply with Islamic principles, such as halal food, prayer facilities, gender-segregated services, and the absence of alcohol and gambling [1]. As the global Muslim population is projected to reach 2.2 billion by 2030, representing nearly 26% of the world's population, the demand for halal-friendly tourism products and services continues to rise [2].

The significance of halal tourism goes beyond religious obligations. It reflects broader cultural, social, and economic dynamics within Muslim communities, especially among the rising middle class in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey. These

developments have attracted both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries to invest in halal tourism infrastructure to cater to this expanding market. Countries like Japan, South Korea, and Thailand have actively promoted halal tourism in an attempt to diversify their visitor demographics [3]. Consequently, halal tourism is now positioned as a strategic sector with the potential to foster inclusive economic development, cultural understanding, and cross-border collaboration.

From an academic perspective, the rapid expansion of halal tourism has spurred a significant body of literature across multiple disciplines, including hospitality management, marketing, religious studies, cultural geography, and policy. Researchers have explored diverse topics ranging from consumer behavior, destination branding, service quality, and religious obligations, to the socio-political implications of halal travel. However, the literature remains fragmented, with varied terminologies, conceptual frameworks, and methodological approaches. Some scholars have examined halal tourism from a demand-side perspective, focusing on tourist motivations and satisfaction [4], while others have addressed the supply-side challenges such as certification, regulation, and service innovation [5].

Given the evolving nature of the field, it is essential to periodically assess and synthesize the research landscape to identify dominant trends, conceptual linkages, and emerging themes. Bibliometric analysis offers a valuable methodological approach for this purpose. Unlike traditional literature reviews, bibliometric studies provide a quantitative overview of academic output, enabling scholars to map the intellectual structure, co-authorship networks, and thematic clusters of a given research domain [6]. Tools such as VOSviewer enhance this analysis by visualizing citation patterns, keyword co-occurrences, and author collaboration networks, thereby revealing the underlying structure and evolution of research fields [7].

Despite the growing number of publications in halal tourism, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive bibliometric reviews that map the knowledge structure of this expanding research area. Previous reviews tend to be narrative or conceptual in nature, lacking the systematic rigor of bibliometric methods [8]. As such, there is a compelling need to conduct a bibliometric review using advanced visualization tools like VOSviewer to provide a systematic and holistic view of the halal tourism research landscape. By identifying research clusters, influential authors, and key journals, such a study can offer critical insights for scholars, policymakers, and industry practitioners seeking to navigate the complexity of halal tourism and align future research agendas with emerging global trends.

Although the field of halal tourism has grown substantially in recent years, existing literature lacks a cohesive understanding of its intellectual structure, thematic developments, and scholarly collaboration networks. The absence of a comprehensive bibliometric mapping means that researchers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders may struggle to identify prevailing research trends, conceptual gaps, and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. This fragmentation hinders the formation of a unified research agenda and may result in duplication of efforts, under-explored areas, or misalignment with global tourism dynamics. This study aims to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric review of the academic literature on halal tourism using VOSviewer to map research trends, influential publications, co-authorship networks, and emerging thematic clusters.

2. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative bibliometric analysis to systematically examine the development and structure of scholarly research in the field of halal tourism. Bibliometric analysis is a proven method for quantitatively assessing patterns in academic publications, including citation trends, co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence, and source impact [6]. The method allows for objective mapping of the intellectual

landscape of a given research area, making it particularly suitable for synthesizing dispersed literature such as halal tourism. To ensure rigor and reproducibility, the research followed the methodological framework proposed by [9], which includes phases of data collection, data cleaning, and data visualization.

Data were retrieved from the Scopus database, which is widely recognized for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed academic journals across multiple disciplines. The search was conducted using a combination of keywords related to halal tourism, including "halal tourism," "Islamic tourism," "Muslim-friendly tourism," and "Shariah-compliant tourism." Boolean operators (e.g., OR, AND) were used to broaden the search scope, and filters were applied to limit results to journal articles published between 2000 and 2024, in English. The final dataset consisted of 680 documents, including articles, reviews, and conference papers. Bibliographic data were exported in RIS and CSV formats for further analysis. The exported data were processed using VOSviewer, a software tool specifically designed for building and visualizing bibliometric networks [7]. The analysis focused on several dimensions: (1) co-authorship networks to identify collaboration patterns among authors, institutions, and countries; (2) co-occurrence of keywords to detect major research themes and trends; and (3) citation and co-citation analysis to map influential works and scholarly foundations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Co-Authorship Network

Figure 1. Author Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 1 illustrates the co-authorship network in halal tourism research, revealing distinct clusters of scholarly collaboration. The dense core of the network consists of highly interconnected authors such as Battour M., Han H., Al-Ansi A., and Hair J.F., indicating strong collaborative relationships and central influence in the field. This cluster reflects a concentrated scholarly community that contributes significantly to the advancement of halal tourism literature, often through joint publications and thematic alignment. In contrast, Jaelani A.K. appears as an isolated node on the far right, representing a scholar with limited or no co-authorship ties to the central network. This suggests either a more independent research trajectory or a thematic divergence from the dominant collaborative groups. The color-coded clusters also imply thematic groupings or institutional affiliations, with visible bridges indicating interdisciplinary or cross-national research collaborations.
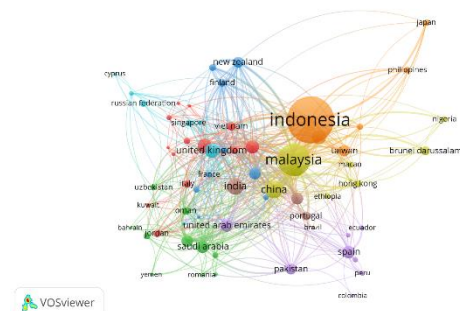

Figure 2. Country Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 2 displays the co-authorship network by country in halal tourism research, highlighting international collaboration patterns. Indonesia and Malaysia emerge as the two most dominant and central nodes, indicating their leadership and high productivity in this field. Their large node sizes and numerous connections reflect extensive international collaborations, particularly with countries like China, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom. Other notable contributors include India, Spain, and Japan, which maintain moderate connections within their respective clusters. The network reveals a high level of global academic interaction, with visible cross-continental links between Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. However, some

countries, such as Philippines, Nigeria, and Brunei Darussalam, are more peripheral, suggesting emerging but still limited participation.
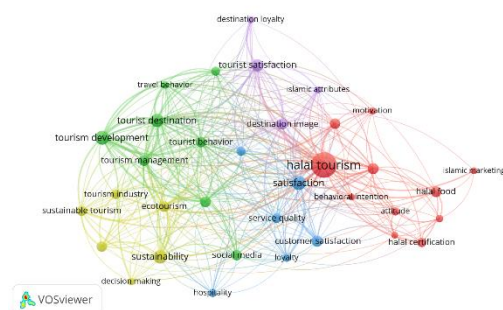
Co-Occurrence of Keyword

Figure 3. Network Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 3 provides a comprehensive thematic mapping of the halal tourism research landscape, revealing several interrelated clusters that represent the core and peripheral themes in the literature. At the heart of the visualization, the term "halal tourism" appears as the most central and dominant keyword, signifying its pivotal role as the anchor around which the research discourse revolves. Closely associated with it are terms such as "satisfaction," "behavioral intention," and "service quality," indicating that much of the research is concerned with understanding the behavioral responses and experiences of halal tourists. These keywords suggest a strong focus on the consumer-centric perspective, particularly how perceived service elements and compliance with halal standards influence tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

The red cluster on the right side of the map represents the Islamic-centric dimension of halal tourism. It includes keywords like "halal food," "halal certification," "Islamic marketing," "attitude," and "motivation." This thematic area explores the religious, cultural, and psychological underpinnings that shape tourist preferences and decisions. The presence of "Islamic attributes" and "attitude" signals an ongoing investigation into how religious identity and compliance affect perceived value and destination selection. Scholars in this cluster often examine how destinations or service

providers can effectively communicate their halal offerings to appeal to Muslim tourists through faith-based branding and promotion strategies. In contrast, the green and yellow clusters on the left side of the visualization emphasize the destination development and sustainability aspects of halal tourism. Keywords such as "tourism development," "tourism industry," "sustainable tourism," "ecotourism," and "sustainability" point to an emerging strand of research concerned with integrating halal tourism within the broader agenda of sustainable and responsible travel. This suggests that researchers are also looking beyond consumer satisfaction to evaluate how halal tourism can contribute to local economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. The linkage between "tourism management" and "decision making" further highlights the managerial and policy-driven interest in positioning halal tourism within strategic tourism planning.

The blue and purple clusters highlight the marketing and experiential dimensions of halal tourism. Keywords like "customer satisfaction," "social media," "hospitality," "destination image," and "tourist satisfaction" suggest a strong emphasis on perceived experience, emotional response, and digital engagement. This indicates that researchers are not only measuring satisfaction from tangible services but are also examining the role of digital platforms and branding in shaping tourists' perceptions and loyalty. The keyword "social media" implies a growing interest in how Muslim travelers use digital tools to access, evaluate, and share halal travel experiences, thereby influencing travel decision-making processes.
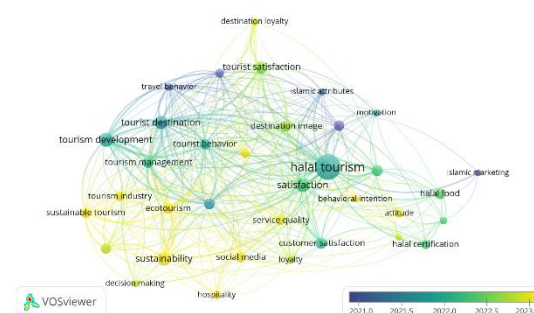
Figure 4. Overlay Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 4 highlights the temporal evolution of halal tourism research topics based on average publication year. The color gradient from purple (earlier years) to yellow (more recent years) allows us to identify which topics have gained prominence recently. Central themes such as "halal tourism," "satisfaction," "behavioral intention," and "service quality" are coded in green, indicating consistent scholarly interest between 2021 and 2022. These core topics represent the stable backbone of the research field, focusing on consumer experience and service expectations in halal-compliant tourism environments.

In contrast, several keywords such as "sustainability," "ecotourism," "decision making," and "social media" are marked in yellow, reflecting their emergence or increased attention in 2022–2023. This suggests a shift toward sustainable and digital dimensions of halal tourism, likely driven by global trends in environmental consciousness and the digital transformation of the travel industry. The recent prominence of these terms also indicates that researchers are expanding their focus beyond religious and behavioral aspects to incorporate broader societal and technological factors influencing halal travel. These emerging themes reveal opportunities for future interdisciplinary research that integrates tourism sustainability, digital communication, and ethical consumerism. Meanwhile, topics like "Islamic marketing," "motivation," and "destination image" appear in cooler shades (blue to purple), suggesting they were more intensively studied in the earlier phase (2021 or before) of the reviewed period. This indicates that initial research efforts were oriented toward understanding the role of religion, culture, and branding in attracting Muslim tourists. As the field matures, these

Citation Analysis

foundational concepts remain relevant but are now complemented by newer concerns such as environmental impact, digital engagement, and service innovation.
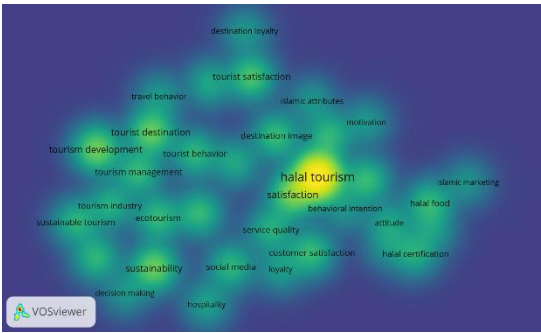

Figure 5. Density Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 5 illustrates the density of keyword occurrences in halal tourism literature, with color intensity representing the frequency and centrality of each keyword. The bright yellow area centered around "halal tourism" and "satisfaction" indicates these are the most frequently occurring and heavily cited themes in the field. The high concentration in this region suggests that the core focus of existing research revolves around understanding tourist satisfaction within halal tourism contexts, especially in terms of behavioral intentions and service quality. These core concepts have formed the foundation of the field, guiding much of the academic inquiry to date. As the heatmap transitions into green and blue tones, it reflects keywords with moderate to lower densities, including "sustainability," "halal food," "social media," and "Islamic marketing." While still relevant, these areas are less saturated, indicating that they represent either emerging or peripheral themes within the literature. Notably, concepts such as "sustainable tourism" and "digital engagement" (e.g., "social media") are gaining traction, suggesting a shift toward interdisciplinary concerns.

Table 1. Top Cited Literature

Citation	Author's	Title
371	[10]	Halal tourism: Concepts, practises, challenges and future

253	[11]	Role of halal-friendly destination performances, value, satisfaction, and trust in generating destination image and loyalty
238	[12]	Halal tourism, is it really Halal?
231	[13]	Exploring halal-friendly destination attributes in South Korea: Perceptions and behaviors of Muslim travelers toward a non-Muslim destination
201	[14]	Halal tourism: Emerging opportunities
162	[15]	Halal food, certification and halal tourism: Insights from Malaysia and Singapore
155	[16]	Toward a halal tourism market
139	[17]	Halal culinary and tourism marketing strategies on government websites: A preliminary analysis
126	[18]	Halal tourism: antecedent of tourist's satisfaction and word of mouth (WOM)
120	[19]	Current trends on Halal tourism: Cases on selected Asian countries

Source: Scopus, 2025

DISCUSSION

Intellectual Leadership and Author Collaboration Patterns

The co-authorship network reveals that the halal tourism field is supported by a core group of influential scholars. Central figures such as Battour M., Al-Ansi A., Han H., and Hair J.F. form a densely connected research cluster, indicating high productivity and collaborative synergy within this elite circle. Their frequent co-publications and shared thematic interests, particularly in consumer behavior, service quality, and Islamic attributes have shaped the theoretical backbone of halal tourism research. These authors are frequently cited and serve as hubs for knowledge dissemination. Interestingly, the network also displays instances of scholarly isolation, as exemplified by the author Jaelani A.K., whose research node appears detached from the central cluster. This suggests the presence of fragmented or independently developed scholarship, which, while potentially innovative, may benefit from increased engagement with broader academic networks to amplify its impact and integration into mainstream discourse. The coexistence of cohesive clusters and isolated contributors signals a semi-mature research field, one with emerging schools of thought but lacking full consolidation.

Country Collaboration and Regional Leadership

The country collaboration map indicates that Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, dominate halal tourism research output and collaboration. Their large node sizes and extensive connections reflect both high productivity and active international engagement. This is consistent with their national strategic interests, as both countries have positioned themselves as global leaders in the halal economy, backed by strong institutional support and dedicated tourism initiatives. Other emerging contributors include China, India, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom, each maintaining significant linkages with Southeast Asian scholars. The presence of European and Middle Eastern countries within this network suggests a broadening of the research base, moving halal tourism from a region-specific focus to a global academic and policy agenda. However, the map also shows several peripheral or emerging contributors such as Brunei, the Philippines, and Nigeria, whose smaller node sizes and fewer links indicate nascent but growing interest. These countries may represent future growth markets and could benefit from structured capacity-building in tourism research and policy.

Thematic Structure and Interdisciplinary Expansion

The keyword co-occurrence map sheds light on the thematic architecture of halal tourism research. "Halal tourism" unsurprisingly occupies the central node, surrounded by tightly linked terms such as "satisfaction," "behavioral intention," "service

quality," and "destination image." This reflects a dominant research orientation toward understanding Muslim tourist behavior, service perception, and decision-making processes. The emphasis on customer satisfaction indicates that much of the literature is grounded in marketing and consumer psychology theories, especially the Theory of Planned Behavior [20] and Expectation Confirmation Theory. Moreover, the presence of keywords like "halal food," "halal certification," and "Islamic marketing" suggests a focus on supply-side concerns, such as the availability and promotion of halal-compliant services. This intersection of religious principles and service delivery remains a defining characteristic of the field. However, the visualization also reveals diversification into broader tourism themes, such as "sustainability," "ecotourism," "social media," and "decision making," indicating that halal tourism is increasingly integrated into mainstream tourism discourses like responsible travel, environmental stewardship, and digital communication.

Temporal Shifts and Emerging Priorities

The overlay visualization provides further insight into how research priorities have evolved over time. Earlier studies, concentrated around 2021, focused on foundational issues such as Islamic attributes, motivation, and halal branding strategies. These areas helped establish the religious and cultural context of halal tourism. However, more recent research, especially from 2022 to 2023, has begun to explore newer dimensions like sustainability, social media engagement, digital certification, and customer empowerment. The emergence of sustainability-related keywords highlights a growing awareness of the need to align halal tourism with environmental and socio-economic goals. This reflects a global shift in tourism research that seeks to balance economic growth with community well-being and environmental integrity. Similarly, the inclusion of digital tools such as "social media" suggests that halal tourism is now being examined through a technological lens, acknowledging the role of digital platforms in

shaping tourist experiences and decision-making. This transition from religious and behavioral foundations to contemporary, interdisciplinary themes is a positive indicator of the field's maturation. It suggests that researchers are not only interested in defining halal tourism but are also actively working to reposition it within the broader global tourism agenda.

Research Density and Knowledge Gaps

The keyword density visualization reinforces earlier observations by visually highlighting "halal tourism" and "satisfaction" as the most densely researched areas. This reaffirms the centrality of customer experience and service performance in the literature. However, it also points to relative gaps in peripheral areas, such as "decision making," "hospitality," "ecotourism," and "Islamic marketing." These lower-density zones represent potential opportunities for future research, especially in under-theorized or emerging subfields. For instance, while Islamic marketing has been conceptually acknowledged, it has not been explored with the same empirical rigor as behavioral intention or service quality. Similarly, ecotourism and sustainability, though increasingly relevant, remain underrepresented in terms of volume and depth. These findings suggest that future research could benefit from targeted expansion into these less-developed themes, especially as global tourism shifts toward digitalization, ethical consumption, and post-pandemic recovery.

4. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric review of halal tourism studies reveals a dynamic and evolving research landscape characterized by strong regional leadership, particularly from Indonesia and Malaysia, and a growing global collaboration network. Thematic analysis shows that the field has traditionally focused on consumer satisfaction, behavioral intention, and service quality, reflecting a demand-side orientation grounded in religious and psychological frameworks. However, recent trends highlight a

broadening of scope to include emerging themes such as sustainability, ecotourism, digital engagement, and Islamic marketing. The shift toward interdisciplinary approaches signals the maturation of halal tourism as an academic domain and underscores its relevance in addressing contemporary tourism challenges. Despite its growth, gaps remain in underexplored areas like hospitality management, decision-making, and the integration of qualitative perspectives. Future research should aim to bridge these gaps while fostering deeper international and cross-sectoral collaborations to ensure that halal tourism continues to align with global trends in ethical, inclusive, and sustainable travel.

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