



Halal Tourism Industry: Advantages and Challenges in Malaysia

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Abstract

Halal tourism is gaining popularity as it caters to religious demands and Shariah compliance. Malaysia is one of the most favoured travel destinations for Muslim tourists worldwide, providing halal tourism packages. This study aims to explore the halal tourism industry, particularly the advantages and challenges in Malaysia, and reviews the concept of halal tourism, halal destination, halal hotel and halal food. To better understand the halal tourism industry in Malaysia, this research employs secondary qualitative data gathered from various sources, including books, journal articles, newspapers, journal data, and reports. The SWOT and TOWS matrix were used to analyse the data. The finding discusses the advantages and the challenges of halal tourism in terms of halal destinations, halal hotels and halal food in Malaysia, including the statistics. Malaysia's halal tourism sector can develop further to align with the rise of Muslim visitors. Many other nations, with many Muslims and non-Muslims, work to promote halal tourism. This research shed light on the practice of halal tourism industry in Malaysia.

Keywords *halal tourism; halal destinations; halal hotels; halal food; Malaysia*

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia's position in the Global Muslim Travel Index 2023 (GMTI) remains dominant due to its strong attractiveness for Muslim travellers (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2023). Along with Indonesia, Malaysia is considered of the two top destinations for halal tourism worldwide. The constancy and dedication of the Malaysian government to integrating halal features into all of its economic activities, including its tourism industry, is the reason for Malaysia's leadership in many areas, including halal tourism (Rahmawati, Prahadipta, & Prameshwara, 2023). Furthermore, one of the prominent organisations that help the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism, The Islamic Tourist Centre (ITC), consistently conducts strategic tourist research and market intelligence and offers services for training and capacity-building in Islamic (halal) tourism. The Islamic Tourist Centre (ITC) states that as of December 2022, ITC had certified 52 Muslim-friendly hotels and 131 Muslim-Friendly tour guides in Malaysia. The number optimistically will rise due to the forecasting that there will be an arrival of 230 million Muslim tourists in 2028, spending a total of USD225 billion (Centre, Islamic Tourism Centre Showcases Malaysia's Muslim-Friendly Tourism Offerings at ATM, 2023).

Halal tourism nowadays is gaining popularity as it caters to religious demands and Shariah compliance. As well tourism is one of the Halal industry's promising and quickly expanding segments (see the potency in Figure 1.). The halal tourism sector encompasses all the elements of the halal travel chain, such as halal food, halal hotel, Muslim-friendly destinations, halal logistics, halal healthcare, and other products (AZAM, ABDULLAH, & RAZAK, 2019). Moreover, halal destinations, food, and hotels are essential for Muslim travellers.

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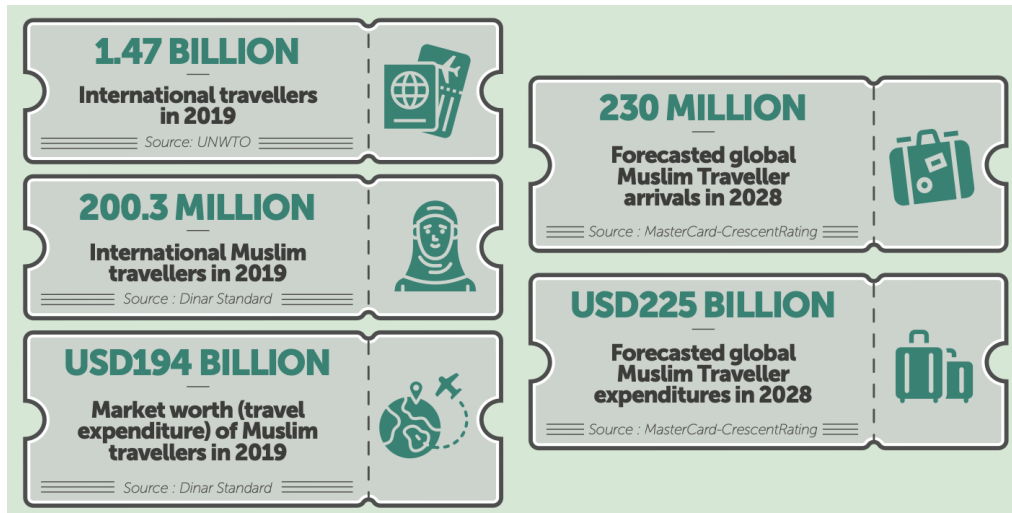


Figure 1. The Potency of Global Islamic Tourism (Centre, The Journey 2009-2022: The Dynamics of Islamic Tourism – A Malaysia Experience, 2023)

Malaysia is one of the most popular destinations among Muslim travellers worldwide that offer halal tourism packages. Malaysia has approximately 29 million individuals, more than 90% of whom are Malaysian natives and a vast majority of Islamic adherents. As the worldwide Muslim population grows, the Malaysian state incorporates Islamic culture into its daily operations as a standard. Consequently, the concept of halal tourism practice in Malaysia should be recognized by related stakeholders, including the advantages and challenges.

Based on the above insight, this research will focus on halal tourism for halal food, destinations, and hotel sectors because those industries are all placed first for Malaysia. Hence, the research objective is to explore the advantages and challenges in the halal tourism industry in Malaysia and reviews the concept of halal tourism, including destination, halal hotel and halal food.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are relationships between destinations, halal hotels and halal foods in the halal tourism industry that need to be discussed in this research. It is critical to understand the definitions of these three terms in order to have a common understanding of these subjects.

Halal Tourism

Halal tourism offers tour packages and destinations specifically designed to cater to Muslim considerations and address Muslim needs (El-Gohary, 2015). Halal tourism also refers to supplying a tourist product or service to Muslim travellers to support worship and dietary requirements that adhere to Islamic principles (Mohsin, Noriah, & Alkhulayfi, 2016). Essential components or things that must be incorporated into the halal tourism idea, such as transportation, food premises, finance, travel packages, and hotels, must be run in accordance with Shariah rules (Irshad, Sahari, & Abdul Halim, 2022).

Halal Destinations

Destinations can attract more tourists by showcasing their diversity and cultural awareness. This favourable view may result in higher tourism and more remarkable global recognition, which would benefit regional businesses and the economy. Travellers are becoming more interested in destinations, facilities, and experiences that emphasise environmental preservation, ethical behaviour, and the welfare of local people. Muslims will also prefer and look for eco-friendly travel

options that are consistent with their Islamic practises and principles. The structural analysis performed by Al-Ansi & Han (2019) showed that Muslim travellers' views and future desires towards a destination are considerably predicted by how well-performing halal-friendly destinations perform concerning the responsiveness created constructs. A study in South Korea revealed that Social environment, facilities, food and beverages, services, and locals and staff are the five main attributes that halal destination organisers should take into consideration to create a positive perception, obtain repeat visitation, and raise trustworthiness (Han, Al-Ansi, Olya, & Kim, 2019).

Halal Hotel

Halal hotel meets Muslim tourists' needs based on Shariah law, where the hotel usually follows Islamic law to verify the requirements provided to achieve Shariah compliance. It is also complied with Shariah requirements according to Islamic teachings in hotel management and operations, such as halal food, separate facilities for different sexes, moderate type of entertainment, primarily Muslim workers, conservative dress code and Islamic hotel room design and interior details (Razak, Raja Yusof, & Aziz, 2019).

Halal Food

Food tourism is visiting a restaurant, a food festival, a primary or secondary food producer, or a region with unusual food (Addina, Santoso, & Sucipto, 2020). The goal of food tourism is frequently to promote other cultures through food. Tourists are more likely to appreciate the socio-cultural features of a region if they have an enjoyable experience with the local cuisine. From the tourist's viewpoint, food becomes an essential component of travel. In the context of halal food, halal and haram refer to what Muslims can and cannot eat as prescribed by the Quran, the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, and judicial rulings. The term "halal" refers to all food chain aspects, including its form, origin, and processing. According to Islamic law, all equipment and machinery must be clean and not be tarnished by contact with non-halal materials (Ellis, Park, Kim, & Yeoman, 2018).

Table 1. Previous Research in Halal Tourism

No	Journal / Year	Author(s)	Title
1	Journal of Halal Science, Industry, and Business (2023)	Santi Rahmawati, Wipti Eka Prahadipta, Prameshwara Anggahegari	A Review of Halal Tourism Implementation in Indonesia towards A Global Perspective.
2	Journal of Fatwa Management & Research (2022)	Zahrah Fatimah Ariff Irshad, Noorul Huda Sahari & Anis Husna	The Concept of Muslim Friendly Tourism and its Implementation in Malaysia
3	Journal of Fatwa Management and Research (2022)	Noraida Abdul Karim, Ainnin Sofea Azeman, Nadir Syafika Binti Noor Iskandar, Nur Ainina Mohd Ariffin, Faliza Mahamed Ali	Halal Standard: Issues in Hotel Industry

4	Mozaik Humaniora (2021)	Imam Mawardi, R. S.	Comparing the Concept of Halal Tourism in Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia.
5	IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science (2020)	F N Addina, I Santoso and Sucipto	Concept of halal food development to support halal tourism
6	Redalyc (2019)	S. Bangsawan, M. Ms, M.M Rahman, M.S.A Razimi	Muslim friendly tourism and accommodation of Malaysian hotel industries
7	Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences (2019)	Nur Athirah Abd Razak, Raja Nerina Raja Yusof, Yuhanis Ab Aziz	Challenges in Implementing Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services (MFHS) in Shariah-Compliant Hotels in Malaysia
8	Contemporary Management and Science Issues in the Halal Industry (2019)	Zaleha Muda, Diyana Md Jamil, Nur Hayati Abd Jamil, and Shafizul Faizal Zulkiply	Islamic Tourism: Emerging Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities in Tourism Industry of Malaysia
9	Journal of Destination Marketing & Management (2019)	Amr Al-Ansi, Heesup Han	Role of halal-friendly destination performances, value, satisfaction, and trust in generating destination image and loyalty
10	Research Gate (2019)	Haliza Abdul Rahman & Abdul bin Roslan	Potensi dan Cabaran Dalam Memajukan Pelancongan Islam di Malaysia Potential and Challenges in Islamic Tourism in Malaysia
11	Tourism Management (2018)	Ellis, A., Park, E., Kim, S., & Yeoman, I.	What is food tourism? Tourism Management
12	International Journal of Asian Social Science (2018)	Suhaimi Abdul Rahman, Anis Laderlah	Exploring Islamic Tourism in Malaysia.
13	Tourism Management Perspectives (2016)	Mohsin, A., Ramli, N., & Alkhulayfi, B. A.	Halal tourism: Emerging opportunities.
14	Tourism Management Perspectives (2016)	Zakiah Samori, Nor Zafir Md Salleh, Mohammad Mahyuddin Khalid	Current trends on Halal tourism: Cases on selected Asian countries

15	Tourism Management Perspectives (2016)	Hatem El-Gohary	Halal tourism, is it really Halal?
16	Journal of Applied Environmental and Biological Sciences (2015)	Mohd Aliff Abdul Majid, Izhar Hafifi Zainal Abidin, Hayati Adilin Mohd Abd Majid, Chemah Tamby Chik	Issues of Halal Food Implementation in Malaysia

From Table 1, prominent terms frequently appear in halal tourism industry discussion, such as halal food, halal hotel, halal destination, Muslim friendly, and Islamic tourism. Thus, this research looks into the insights of halal tourism practice in Malaysia from previous data in several documents, research papers, reports, and news. The enormous potency of Malaysia to be the leader in halal tourism needs to be reviewed to capture both advantages to achieve and challenges to overcome.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative secondary data collected from various sources, including books, journal articles, newspapers, journal data and reports to better understand Malaysia's halal tourism industry. From this, researchers get lucid information about the advantages and challenges of Malaysia halal tourism. According to Bowen (2009), the document analysis approach describes both the advantages and constraints. Moreover, this analysis also provides practical instances of document use in the research process. Skimming is a shallow examination, reading is a complete examination, and interpreting are three activities covered in the document analysis. Author combines the thematic analysis and content analysis as the iterative procedure.

Furthermore, to explore the advantages and challenge in halal tourism industry, SWOT and TOWS analysis were used. Author can formulate the strategy which can give more advantages and recommendation further to Malaysian related stakeholder to overcome the challenges in the future based on previous document analysis. Kulshrestha & Parul (2017) explaining that there are four situations generated from TOWS MATRIX:

- 1) maxi-maxi strategy for SO situation: this combination of Strength and Opportunities create an ideal strategy to do expansion and extensive development.
- 2) mini-maxi strategy for WO situation: this combination of Weakness and Opportunities can create more chances by overcoming the frailties.
- 3) maxi-mini strategy for ST situation: this combination of Strength and Threats encourage internal capacity to grow although there is a condition of threatening environment.
- 4) mini-mini strategy for WT situation: this combination of Weakness and Threats is the most unfavourable, where the potency to develop is too small and struggle for survival in the hope of revival.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Advantages and Challenges: Destination

There are several advantages and challenges for halal destinations in Malaysia. The advantages of destination tourism in Malaysia are its image as a Muslim country, world recognition and Islamic attraction or Muslim-friendly facilities. The challenges for Malaysia as a halal destination are to increase halal tourism in the next few years of Post Pandemic.

Islamic Image

Malaysia is well known as an Islamic nation that is fast expanding, safe for Muslim or foreign tourists, and home to many Muslims. Since its founding in 2009, the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) has created and promoted Islamic travel-related goods in Malaysia. Tourism Malaysia has put much work into creating The Halal Master Plan, which promotes friendly travel to Muslims (Irshad, Sahari, & Abdul Halim, 2022). The next matter to be thoroughly maintained is the consistency in the impression.

World Recognition

Malaysia has received a lot of world recognition regarding the halal tourism industry. Global Muslim Travel Index reported that Malaysia has retained its status as the world's leading halal tourism destination after being ranked first in the category of 'Muslim-Friendly Destination' in 2021 and 2022. Malaysia has retained the top two position in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2023 report after announcing a Top Muslim-Friendly Destination of the Year and Muslim Women-Friendly Destination of the Year at the Halal in Travel Awards 2023 (Bernama, 2023). However, Malaysia should set the halal tourism standard higher than before to preserve the top position because Indonesia is rising to number one from last year's position in the GMTI 2023 rankings (see Figure 2.). Moreover, the ACES rankings in GMTI 2023 show the country's position in Access, Communications, Environment, and Services. Once again, Indonesia has become number one in GMTI ACES rankings for aspects of communication and services.

GMTI 2023 Rank	Change VS 2022	Destination	GMTI 2023 Scores
1	1	Indonesia	73
1	0	Malaysia	73
3	-1	Saudi Arabia	72
4	1	United Arab Emirates (UAE)	71
5	-3	Türkiye	70
6	0	Qatar	69
7	0	Iran	66
7	0	Jordan	66
9	0	Bahrain	65
9	3	Egypt	65
11	1	Kuwait	64
11	-2	Singapore	64
13	-1	Oman	63
13	-4	Uzbekistan	63
15	-3	Brunei	62
15	2	Tunisia	62
17	-5	Morocco	60
17	0	Pakistan	60
19	0	Lebanon	59
20	2	Kazakhstan	58
20	2	Kyrgyzstan	58
20	8	United Kingdom (UK)	58

Figure 2. Top Twenty Destinations based on Global Muslim Travel Index 2023 (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2023)

Attraction/Facilities

There are a lot of places to pray, halal cuisine, Islamic banking, and a welcoming environment for Muslim's travellers. In Malaysia, there is an endless array of halal goods and services. Malaysia has a wealth of Islamic architecture, artifacts, and culture, as well as stunning locations that need exploration. Muslim travellers want to be able to eat meals and use services that adhere to their religious beliefs. Therefore, this makes Halal one of their most crucial considerations when choosing a vacation spot. Based on Centre, *The Journey 2009-2022: The Dynamics of Islamic Tourism – A Malaysia Experience*, (2023) in 2019, a total of 5.3 million Muslim tourists arrived in Malaysia. By the enormous numbers, it takes serious and comprehensive effort from all related stakeholders to maintain the attractiveness and facilities comply with the Shariah.

Post-Pandemic

In 2020 (see Figure 3.), the overall tourism industry was hardly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with an estimated decline to -83.4% of total global tourists arriving in Malaysia from previous 2019 (Malaysia, 2022) . These are the significant challenges faced by Malaysians to increase the tourism industry in the next few years of Post-Pandemic. In order to increase this, Malaysians can enhance halal tourism promotion through the strategic transformation. Based on the *Tourism Malaysia Strategic Planning 2022-2026*, there are four strategies to do: 1) promotion domestically, 2) promotion internationally, 3) communication which integrates public relations and corporate communication, and 4) communication which covers information digital and advertising.



Figure 3. International tourist arrival patterns in COVID-19 pandemic outbreak (Malaysia, 2022)

Advantages and Challenges: Halal Hotel

There are several advantages and challenges for the halal hotel in halal tourism in Malaysia. The advantages of halal hotels are Facilities and Staff Management, and the challenges are Loss of income and Complicated.

Facilities

Halal hotels provide various facilities based on Islamic ways, such as surau/ masjid, al-

Quran, Qibla direction, and prayer. However, creating a halal hotel is quite challenging because it takes time to create it. In Malaysia, it is reported that only 101 hotels throughout Malaysia have applied for a Halal logo certificate from JAKIM to confirm that their restaurants and cafes have Shariah compliant facilities (Karim, Azeman, Ali, Iskandar, & Mohd Ariffin, 2022).

Staff Management

The staff should know the culture or norms of their Muslim customers to meet their needs. Knowledge of the client's culture, religious views or norms is valuable when dealing with clients from different cultures and religious backgrounds. For example, staff must provide halal food to Muslim tourists regarding culinary requests and cannot serve food and drinks that are forbidden in Islam. Excellent staff service among customers can make tourists satisfied because most Muslim tourists will worry about whether the facilities, hospitality, food and drinks, services and sites of the tourist destination follow the concept of Islam or not (Bangsawan, MS, Rahman, & Razimi, 2019).

Loss of income

The development and management of halal hotels presents several difficulties for hotel owners, including the loss of revenue from the sale of alcoholic beverages and gambling, which lowers revenue from the sales of food and beverages. The decline in visitors who merely come to the hotel premises to dine and have fun is another effect of the ban on alcohol and gambling. Almulla Hospitality was the first hotel to establish the halal hotel concept in European cities. Because European hotel visitors were expected to be more non-Muslim, the halal hotel concept posed difficulties for four- and five-star hotels (Razak, Raja Yusof, & Aziz, 2019).

Complicated

Samori and Rahman (2013) argued that the separate arrangement of rooms and floors for men, women, and families makes halal hotels complicated. A halal hotel's interior design and design choices are equally challenging based on people's tolerance for diverse genders. Additionally, hotel operators must maximise the male and female workforce and ensure productivity and high-quality services. Hotel owners face a challenge since, to prevent conflict, they must accommodate Muslim and non-Muslim visitors (Razak, Raja Yusof, & Aziz, 2019).

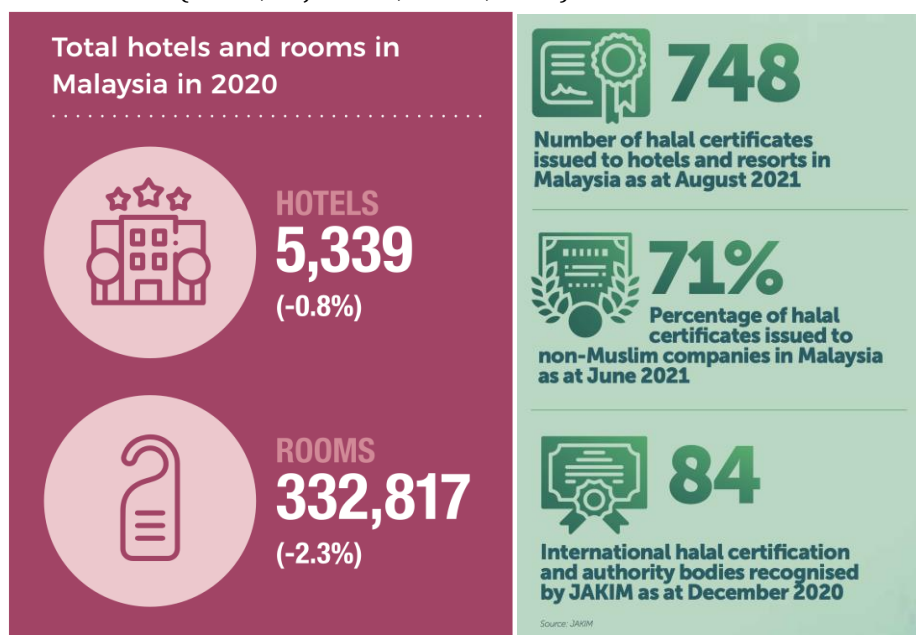


Figure 4. Total hotels and rooms (Malaysia, 2022) and numbers of halal certification issued in Malaysia in 2020 (Centre, The Journey 2009-2022: The Dynamics of Islamic Tourism – A Malaysia Experience, 2023)

Based on the statistics above in Figure 4, there were 5,339 hotels in Malaysia in 2020. From this amount, there are 748 halal certificates issued to hotels and resorts in Malaysia. 71% of halal certificates are also issued to non-Muslim in Malaysia, and 84 international halal certification and authority bodies are recognised by JAKIM (the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia) for Halal tourism in Malaysia. Furthermore, Malaysia is the first ranked Muslim Women Friendly Destination among the top 10 OIC destinations, followed by Indonesia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Brunei, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Oman, and Jordan (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2023). Thus, halal tourism in Malaysia is the choice for all Muslims (men and women) in the world, leading to an increase in demand for halal hotels in Malaysia.

Advantages and Challenges: Halal Food

There are several advantages and challenges for halal food in halal tourism in Malaysia. The advantages of halal food are safer to eat and more ethical, while the challenges are food producers and the enforcement by the JAKIM.

Safer to eat

Halal food places much focus on cleanliness and food safety. Food safety indicates that the incidence of food contamination is also less common. Because Halal farmers are required to abide by the norms and regulations established by their religion, animals grown on Halal farms are raised differently. Halal farmers also refrain from using the antibiotics and chemicals that many other profit-driven farms use, and they must treat the animals well and feed them healthy, clean food. Additionally, Muslims who make the food are required to adhere to the same Halal laws, so they must deliver food that meets the highest standards of hygienic and sanitary conditions.

More ethical

Animals are kept in natural and clean environments to support disease-free growth because it is not acceptable to murder ill animals. The treatment of animals is good, and many people also think that Halal slaughter is exceptionally compassionate because it results in less stress and anguish for the animals than modern farming practices.

Food producers

According to Majid, Abidin, Majid, & Chik (2015), in order to guarantee that manufactured goods are free of contamination and do not include haram substances during their preparation, production, and storage, the government must monitor and oversee all food manufacturers. Then, to market halal products, the entire quality management practice needs to be used, and the food maker should not limit their attention to halal certification procedures.

The enforcement by the JAKIM

The public was suspicious due to the JAKIM staff's enforcement of monitoring the use of the certified halal trademark. This issue worsens due to the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs' lack of assistance. Muslims have begun to question the legitimacy of the halal certification process due to the lack of cooperation among the world's halal certification authorities (Majid, Abidin, Majid, & Chik, 2015).

SWOT and TOWS Analysis

In order to determine a priority strategy and improve achievement in terms of halal tourism in Malaysia, a SWOT and TOWS matrix was conducted to identify the critical factors based on the internal and external strengths and weaknesses of the literature study.

Table 2. SWOT Analysis

<u>STRENGTHS</u>	<u>WEAKNESSES</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Availability of prayer facilities at tourist spots and public premises. 2. Access a wide variety of halal food for Muslim tourists (including fast food outlets). 3. Malaysian hotels' services for Muslim tourists. 4. Malaysia's stability and safety. 5. Muslim-friendly healthcare facilities. 6. Rich Islamic artefacts around the country, including mosques and Islamic architecture. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alcohol is served in hotels and restaurants. 2. Gambling-free areas. 3. No separate salon, recreational facilities and swimming pools for men and women. 4. No separate rooms/ floors for unmarried couples. 5. Non-Shariah compliance entertainments. 6. Tourism websites feature Malay cultures and traditions rather than religious aspects.
<u>OPPORTUNITIES</u>	<u>THREATS</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Branding and positioning Malaysia in Islamic tourism. 2. The rise of the mobile app empowered travellers. 3. Providing employment opportunities for Muslims from other countries. 4. The rise in Gen-Y Muslim Travelers. 5. Enhancing potential travellers' awareness about Islamic offerings of Malaysia through media and travel agents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Competition from other Islamic countries which have a rich culture rooted in Islam. 2. Negative word-of-mouth due to the fact that Islamic law is relaxed in Malaysia. 3. Displays of women wearing scanty clothing and sunbathing naked on tourism websites tarnish Malaysia's Islamic image 4. Loss of tourists due to too much emphasis on Muslim tourists

Based on the table above, SWOT analysis includes internal and external factors, which are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, to determine a priority strategy and improve achievement in terms of halal tourism in Malaysia.

Table 3. TOWS Matrix

<u>STRENGTHS</u>	<u>WEAKNESSES</u>
<u>OPPORTUNITIES</u>	<u>THREATS</u>
SO Strategies:	WO Strategies:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To develop a mobile app that features the availability of Muslim 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To feature more Islamic-related activities the country can offer to

<p>facilities, access to Halal food and Hotel services in Malaysia to cater to the rise of the mobile-app-empowered traveller (S1, S2, S3, O2).</p> <p>2. To promote and commercialise Malaysia's stability and safety to encourage Muslim Women solo travellers to come and experience Malaysia (S4, O4, O5).</p>	<p>attract the rise in Gen Y Muslim Travelers (W6, O4).</p> <p>2. To only allow alcohol serving in restricted areas in hotels and restaurants, and gambling areas to portray strict law enforcement to have a better Islamic Tourism branding and positioning (W1, W2, O1).</p>
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<u>THREATS</u>	ST Strategies:	WT Strategies:
	<p>1. To promote Muslim facilities and halal availability through tourism websites to compete with other rich-rooted Islamic countries (S1, T1).</p> <p>2. To promote Malaysia's friendly healthcare services, stability, and Islam to attract tourists who might also be interested in the culture and history of Malaysia (S4, S5, T4).</p>	<p>1. Feature more Islamic elements of Malaysia in tourism websites to combat the perception of a relaxed Malaysian Islamic law (W6, T2).</p> <p>2. To only allow non-shariah compliance activities during a particular time of the day/week to improve the tarnished Islamic image of Malaysia (W5, T3).</p>

Based on the table above, TOWS Matrix is a matching strategy between the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Hence a resultant strategy was developed further to identify the conclusion and recommendation for halal tourism in Malaysia from the ST, WO, TS, and TW perspectives. Table 3 shows that the maxi-maxi strategy has the potency to use current technology, such as mobile applications, to boost the halal tourism industry in Malaysia. Meanwhile, in the mini-maxi strategy, the variation of allowed activity in halal tourism can open more opportunities to grow the number of Muslim travellers. The maxi-mini strategy highlights Malaysian's internal capacity and capability in various aspects to gain competitive advantages over other countries over halal tourism. Last, the mini-mini strategy can be avoided by curating tourism websites and policies to regulate non-shariah-compliance activities.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, most non-Muslim nations have further expanded halal tourism by using certified branding as a kind of identification. Halal tourism, which has grown in Muslim-majority nations, is a concern because of the diverse community culture, where people are used to accepting one another's differences. The ability of Malaysia's halal tourism industry to develop further depends on an increase in the number of Muslim tourists year after year. Many other nations, with many Muslims and non-Muslims alike, work to promote halal tourism. These nations often exclusively work to create a Muslim-friendly environment, according to the existing concepts and principles of halal tourism, which is a superiority owned by Malaysia.

As a theoretical contribution, this research gives the specific position of halal tourism in Malaysia, which sheds light on the advantages and challenges, particularly from three industry

perspectives (halal destinations, hotels, and food). The TOWS matrix in the study also provides new insight and strategies based on the Malaysian halal tourism local context. Next, as a practical contribution, this research offers recommendations to be considered for related stakeholders in the halal tourism industry to gain more achievement and benefits yet still aware of the challenges. By acknowledging SWOT's internal and external factors, associated stakeholders can take action to maximise the gain and minimise the risk.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation is to allow non-halal activities on halal tourism at certain times. Since non-shariah-compliant entertainment and activities are acceptable at almost any time of day, such as gambling and alcohol, this could give Muslim tourists a false perception of Malaysia as an Islamic country. The Islamic Tourism of Malaysia should contact the government to ensure that any non-shariah-compliant activity is allowed only during specific days or hours of the week, maybe only on the weekends or at night. The recommendation for further regulation makes it clear to Muslim tourists that Malaysia allows non-shariah-compliant activities because Malaysia is a country of many different religions. Furthermore, the quintuple helix approach, which involves government, industry, academia/ university, media, society, and environment, can make the halal tourism industry in Malaysia more amalgamate.

LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

This research has several limitations in the context of Malaysia, the methodology used, and the focal terms of halal tourism covering halal destinations, hotels, and food. Further research may consider developing the finding from the TOWS matrix into quantitative for initial testing and elaboration. Moreover, since Malaysia and Indonesia are the top two destinations for halal tourism with several similarities, a research collaboration among those countries will enrich the academic discourse.

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