



## Leveraging the Concept of a Meaningful Journey for Halal Tourism Development in Indonesia

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### Abstract

Indonesia possesses significant potential for halal industry development, particularly in the food, non-food, and services sectors. Among these, halal tourism has gained prominence due to its appeal in providing leisure, lifestyle fulfilment, and personal well-being. This study investigates the concept and strategic application of a meaningful journey within halal tourism, focusing on ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and a case study method, data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. Managerial-level representatives were selected via purposive sampling, and data analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 Plus software. The findings reveal that the meaningful journey concept, specifically the dimension of meaningfulness, plays a critical role in creating memorable tourism experiences. These experiences positively influence post-trip performance and increase revisit intentions. The study concludes that fostering meaningfulness is essential for sustaining engagement in halal tourism.

**Keywords** *Halal Tourism Development, Meaningful Travel Experience, Islamic Tourism in Indonesia, Spiritual Tourism Journey, Muslim-Friendly Travel Strategy*

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is recognized as a country with immense potential for developing its halal industry, driven by its large Muslim population, which comprises 12.7% of the global Muslim population. This demographic advantage and a growing global demand for halal products and services position Indonesia strategically within the halal industry. The industry significantly contributes to Indonesia's economy, generating USD 3.8 billion annually and creating substantial employment opportunities, ranging from 170,000 to 330,000 jobs (Fathoni & Syaputri, 2020). The Sharia Economy Masterplan 2019-2024, launched by the Ministry of National Development Planning, emphasizes the development of various sectors within the halal industry, including food, non-food, and services, with a particular focus on consumer preferences aligned with Islamic values (Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning, 2019). One key service sector in the halal industry is tourism. Halal tourism caters to both leisure and spiritual fulfilment, offering unique experiences that align with Islamic principles (Hidayat, 2023).

The growing demand for halal tourism has positioned Indonesia as a leading player, as reflected in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) rankings, where Indonesia was ranked as the top halal tourism destination in 2019, tied with Malaysia (Crescent Rating, 2019). However, in the 2021 GMTI rankings, Indonesia dropped to fourth place, largely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected key indicators such as accessibility, safety, and service delivery. This decline highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to successful halal tourism and the strategies needed to maintain Indonesia's competitiveness in the global

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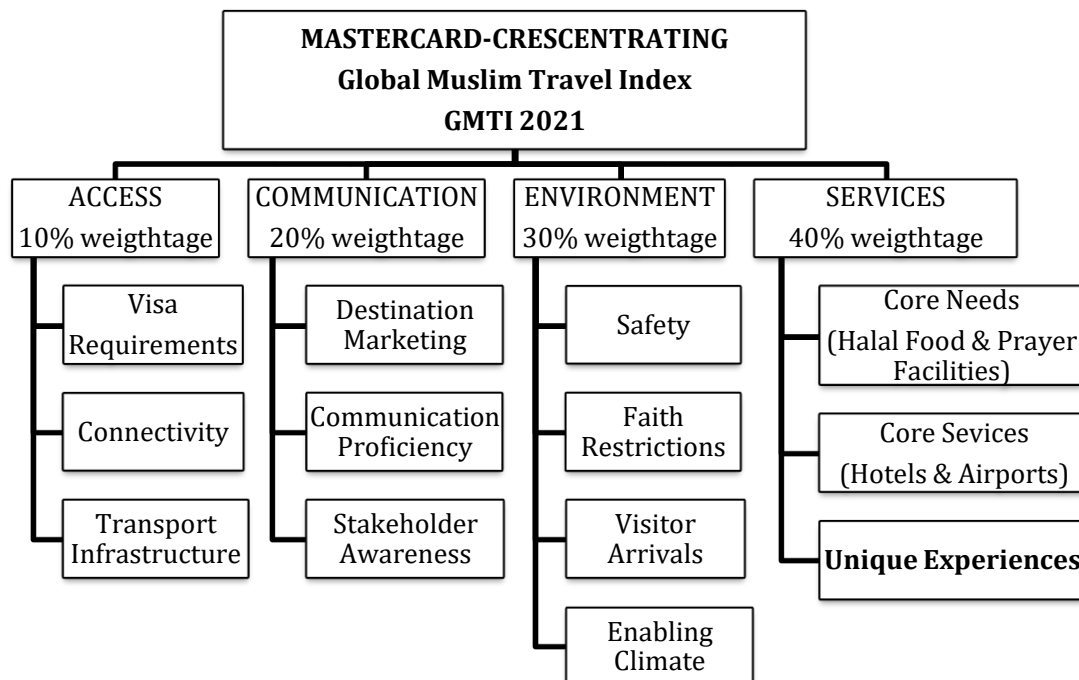
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market (Marohom & Fuerzas, 2023).

According to the GMTI 2019, Indonesia was named the world's top halal tourism destination. In April 2019, Fazal Bahardeen, CEO of Crescent Rating, awarded Indonesia the top spot in the GMTI 2019 rankings, tied with Malaysia (both with a score of 78). The top 10 rankings also included Turkey in third place (score 75), Saudi Arabia in fourth (score 72), the UAE in fifth (score 71), followed by Qatar, Morocco, Bahrain, Oman, and Brunei Darussalam (Crescent Rating, 2019). However, in the GMTI 2021 rankings, Indonesia dropped to fourth place, a decline of three spots, while other countries either improved by one position or maintained their rank (Crescent Rating, 2021). This raises questions about GMTI's evaluation of Indonesia's halal tourism. One major factor behind the drop was the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to flight restrictions and social distancing measures that disrupted key GMTI indicators. Several factors must be considered when delivering travel services under these conditions.

According to the Travel Readiness Report in 2020, a new framework for travel emerged, highlighting gaps in the GMTI assessment indicators, as illustrated in Figure 2. These gaps include (1) Access Gap (Borders and Barriers), (2) Communication Gap (Fear and Faceless), (3) Environment Gap (People and Profit), and (4) Service Gap (Adapt and Accelerate). These gaps suggest that tourist destinations must take several actions to support travel recovery during the pandemic. Some of the key strategies include Health Management, Economic Management, and Behavioral Management. Health management focuses on mutual care through monitoring, detection, prevention, and ensuring well-being. Meanwhile, economic management is essential for maintaining smooth operational processes involving resource support, allocation, and transformation. Lastly, behavioural management is crucial for ensuring adherence to health protocols and building public trust in the destination's safety, achieved through societal, organizational, and individual adjustments.



**Figure 1.** Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) Indicators 2021  
Source: Crescent Rating (2021).

In Figure 1 above, the GMTI assessment for the service indicator includes an evaluation of unique experiences. As is evident, travellers prioritize experiences during their journeys, aiming to visit, see, learn, enjoy, and escape from their daily routines. They embark on trips to gain behavioural or perceptual experiences, cognitive or emotional, explicit or implicit. Thus, when evaluating halal tourism globally, the experience becomes an essential factor to consider.

Tourism experiences, particularly memorable ones, are central to the development of the halal tourism sector. Memorable tourism experiences are characterized by components such as hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge (Verinita, 2016). Among these components, meaningfulness stands out as a critical element that can enhance a traveller's overall satisfaction and increase the likelihood of revisiting a destination. Prior studies have demonstrated that meaningful travel experiences significantly influence tourists' behaviour and decision-making, particularly in halal tourism, where spiritual fulfilment is often a key motivation (Amalia et al., 2019; Verinita, 2016).

However, the role of meaningfulness in shaping tourism experiences is not universally acknowledged. For instance, Coelho and Gosling (2018) found that Brazilian tourists did not prioritize meaningfulness as a key factor in their tourism experiences, suggesting that cultural differences may influence the perceived importance of certain components. This variation raises questions about how meaningfulness can be effectively integrated into halal tourism, especially in diverse cultural contexts.

This study explores the relationship between the meaningful journey method and memorable tourism experiences within the context of halal tourism. Specifically, it seeks to understand how the meaningful journey approach, as implemented by ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia, can enhance the meaningfulness of travel experiences and contribute to the overall success of halal tourism. The research questions guiding this study are: (1) How does the meaningful journey method contribute to memorable tourism experiences in halal tourism? (2) What strategies are required to effectively implement meaningful journeys in halal tourism? The objectives of this study are (1) to explain the relationship between the meaningful journey method and memorable tourism experiences in halal tourism and (2) to analyze the strategies necessary for implementing meaningful journeys in halal tourism.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Tourism Concept

According to Indonesian Law No. 10 of 2009 concerning tourism, tourism is defined as travel activities undertaken by an individual or a group of people by visiting a particular place for recreation, personal development, or to study the uniqueness of the tourist attractions visited temporarily. Tourism refers to a series of travel activities conducted by individuals, families, or groups from their place of origin to other locations to engage in tourism visits rather than work or seeking income at the destination. Such visits are temporary, as the travellers will eventually return to their original residence.

Structurally, tourism has several key components that affect its sustainability, including tourists and infrastructure. According to Suryadana (2013) a tourist is a person who travels for leisure, medical purposes, business, sports, or education by visiting beautiful places or specific countries. Types of tourists can be classified based on the nature of their trip and the location of their travels as follows: foreign tourists, domestic foreign tourists, domestic tourists (local tourists), indigenous foreign tourists, transit tourists, and business tourists (Suwena & Widyatmaja, 2017).

Regarding infrastructure and facilities, Yoeti (1996) explains that tourism infrastructure consists of all the facilities that allow tourism to thrive and develop, providing satisfactory services to meet various tourist needs. These include roads, railways, airports, ports, telecommunication

systems, health clinics, hospitals, security posts near tourist attractions, police stations, and gas stations. Tourism facilities, according to [Suwena and Widyatmaja \(2017\)](#) refer to companies providing direct or indirect services to tourists and whose existence depends on tourist arrivals, such as hotels or lodging, transportation services, restaurants, and shops ([Alam et al., 2024](#)).

### The Concept of Halal Tourism

According to [Battour and Ismail \(2016\)](#), halal tourism refers to activities in tourism that are "permissible or allowed" under Islamic teachings. [Mohsin et al. \(2016\)](#) define halal tourism as the provision of tourism products and services that cater to the needs of Muslim travellers in accordance with Islamic principles. Furthermore, [Satriana and Faridah \(2018\)](#) describes halal tourism as offering travel packages and destinations specifically designed to meet the needs and considerations of Muslim tourists. From an industry perspective, halal tourism is viewed as a complementary product that does not eliminate conventional tourism but rather as a new way to develop Indonesian tourism by upholding Islamic values and culture while maintaining the uniqueness and authenticity of the local area ([Noviantoro & Zurohman, 2020](#)).

According to DSN-MUI Fatwa No: 108/DSN-MUI/2016, halal tourism is defined as tourism that adheres to Sharia principles ([Maulidizen, 2019](#)). Based on this fatwa, various activities in halal tourism include specific regulations for agreements (contracts), hotels, tourist destinations, spas, saunas, massages, travel agencies, and guidelines for tour guides ([Abbasian et al., 2024](#); [Ekka & Bhardwaj, 2024](#)).

#### 1. The Essence of Halal Tourism

According to [Surur \(2020\)](#), the essence of halal tourism can be viewed from five aspects:

##### a. Worship Aspect

[Arifin \(2015\)](#) notes that the primary purpose of tourism in Islam is to recognize God. The act of worship in tourism can also be linked to the fifth pillar of Islam, performing the Hajj and Umrah in Mecca and Medina, where pilgrims carry out rituals like tawaf, sa'i, and stoning of the jamarat. These rituals are performed with the intent of worship, drawing Muslims closer to Allah.

##### b. Knowledge Aspect

Since the emergence of Islam, the religion has encouraged its followers to seek knowledge, even from distant lands. One key factor behind the growth of Islamic civilization was travel aimed at gaining knowledge. As stated in the Quran, Surah Ali Imran, Verse 137: "Many ways of life have passed away before you. So, travel through the land and observe how the end of those who denied [the truth] was." This command to travel aims to learn lessons from the remnants of previous civilizations

##### c. Economic Aspect

From an Islamic perspective, tourism is also seen as an opportunity for business activities. Islam encourages earning income through lawful means, such as trade. The Quran highlights the importance of healthy business practices, as illustrated in Surah Quraysh, Verses 1-4, which mention the Quraysh tribe's trading journeys to Yemen and Syria. This motivation encouraged Muslims to travel the world for trade and income.

##### d. Islamic Values Aspect

Halal tourism also serves as a means of Islamic outreach, using tourist attractions as a medium for da'wah (Islamic propagation). Religious tourism promotes awareness of God's greatness and strengthens religious consciousness.

##### e. Mental Well-being Aspect

In Islam, tourism is also geared toward positive relaxation. Tourists can witness God's

beautiful creations, such as towering mountains, clear springs, pristine seas, and flowing rivers. This fosters peace of mind, refreshes the soul, and deepens faith in the Creator.

## 2. The Revolution from Halal Tourism 1.0 to New Halal Tourism 2.0

The development of the halal tourism concept has evolved through changes in terminology, which can be divided into religious tourism and Sharia-compliant tourism. Major world religions have practised religious tourism for thousands of years. For example, Jews regularly visit Jerusalem, Hindus make pilgrimages to the Ganges River, and Muslims perform Hajj and Umrah in Mecca and Medina (Surur, 2020). Sharia-compliant tourism emerged as part of the broader Islamic economy, which influenced various aspects of life, including banking, insurance, food, and clothing (Fikadu et al., 2023).

However, Sharia tourism emphasized Sharia principles in tourism, thereby limiting its market primarily to Muslims. As the Sharia tourism market expanded and considering the global Muslim population, non-Muslim-majority countries began to explore the potential of this market, leading to a shift in terminology to "halal tourism." The term "halal tourism" became more widely accepted, especially in non-OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) countries. According to Noviantoro and Zurohman (2020) halal tourism is defined as activities supported by facilities and services provided by society, businesses, and governments that meet Sharia-compliant standards.

## 3. Islamic Legal Sources in Halal Tourism

### a. Al-Quran

In Arabic, tourism is called rihlah, which means a journey. Syahriza (2014) defines rich as moving from one place to another for a specific purpose. One instance of this term in the Quran is in Surah Quraysh, Verses 1-4, which refer to the Quraysh tribe's trading journeys during winter and summer. These verses highlight rihlah as a journey, emphasizing the importance of travel for trade. Additionally, safar refers to a journey covering a certain distance, often with a more specific meaning. Several Quranic verses imply safar as a command to travel, such as in Surah Al-Qasas, Verse 29: "When Moses had completed the term and was travelling with his family; he saw a fire on the side of the mount. He said to his family, 'Stay here; I have seen a fire. Perhaps I can bring you some information from it or a burning piece of wood so that you may warm yourselves'".

### b. Hadith

Hadith also supports the concept of tourism. Surur (2020) explains that travelling or embarking on a journey is considered an act of worship in Islam, as travellers can receive the same reward as those performing good deeds at home. This is illustrated in a hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari, where the Prophet said: "When a servant becomes ill or travels, they are rewarded for the good deeds they would have done while healthy or at home."

## 4. The Development of Halal Tourism in Indonesia

Halal tourism is now being developed not only by Muslim-majority countries but also by countries with Muslim-minority populations, such as Japan. Halal tourism is also enjoyed by both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists worldwide (Ramadhani, 2021). According to the 2019 Mastercard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), Indonesia ranked first alongside Malaysia as the most favoured halal tourism destination, with both countries scoring 78% and winning the "World's Best Halal Travel Destination" award. Regionally, Lombok (Nusa Tenggara Barat) topped the Indonesia Muslim Travel Index 2019 with a score of 70%, followed

by Aceh, Riau, Jakarta, and West Sumatra (Crescent Rating, 2019). This success is largely due to the Indonesian government's efforts since 2014 to develop halal tourism. In 2019, the Ministry of Tourism identified 13 provinces ready to become halal tourism destinations, including Aceh, West Java, Jakarta, and Nusa Tenggara Barat (Primadona et al., 2024).

5. Guidelines for Halal Tourism Management based on MUI Fatwa:

a. Tourism Organizers

Tourism organizers must avoid any form of shirk (associating partners with Allah), sinful acts, corruption, wastefulness, and immorality. They should also ensure the promotion of both material and spiritual well-being.

b. Sharia Hotels

The guidelines for Sharia hotels include: (a) The hotel must not provide access to pornography or immoral activities (Haryanto et al., 2024), (b) Entertainment services should not promote shirk, sin, pornography, or immorality, (c) Food and beverages provided by the hotel must have a halal certification from MUI, (d) The hotel should provide adequate facilities for worship, including purification facilities, (e) The hotel's management and staff must adhere to Sharia-compliant dress codes, and (f) The hotel must have standard operating procedures aligned with Sharia principles to ensure the delivery of services accordingly (Abbasian et al., 2024).

c. Tourist Destinations

Sharia-compliant tourist destinations must have accessible and appropriate prayer facilities that meet Sharia requirements. Food and beverages must be certified halal by MUI, and the destination must be free from shirk, superstition, sin, adultery, pornography, alcohol, drugs, and gambling. Any artistic and cultural performances or attractions should align with Sharia principles (Idris, 2024).

6. Guidelines Based on GMTI

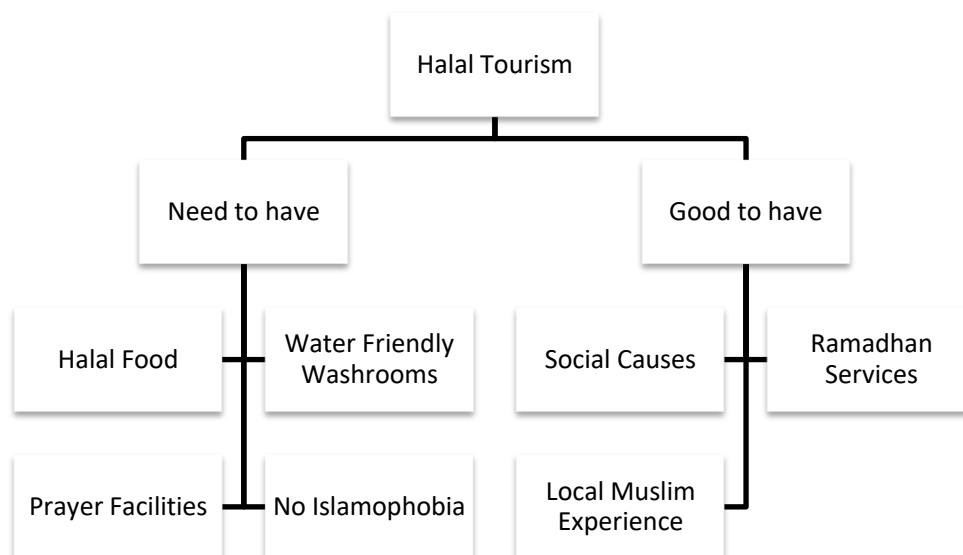


Figure 2. Halal Tourism Based on the Global Muslim Travel Index

The Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) assessment includes four categories with different weightings: (a) Access (10%): Includes visa requirements, connectivity, and transport



infrastructure; (b) Communication (20%): Covers destination marketing, communication skills, and stakeholder awareness; (c) Environment (30%): Evaluates safety, faith-related restrictions, visitor arrivals, and overall climate, and (d) Service (40%): Focuses on core needs such as halal food and prayer facilities, core services like hotels and airports, and the provision of unique experiences.

The concept of halal tourism, according to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), is based on two main criteria: "need to have" and "good to have," as shown in Figure 4 above. The "need to have" aspects refer to essential elements that must be provided to offer halal tourism services in line with the needs of Muslim travelers (Hendrik et al., 2024). These include halal food, prayer facilities, water-friendly washrooms, and an environment free from Islamophobia. On the other hand, "good to have" aspects are those that, while not essential, greatly enhance the experience for Muslim travelers if provided (Soonsan & Jumani, 2024). These include support for social causes, services during Ramadan, and the opportunity for local Muslim cultural experiences (Lada et al., 2024).

#### 7. Memorable Tourism Experience

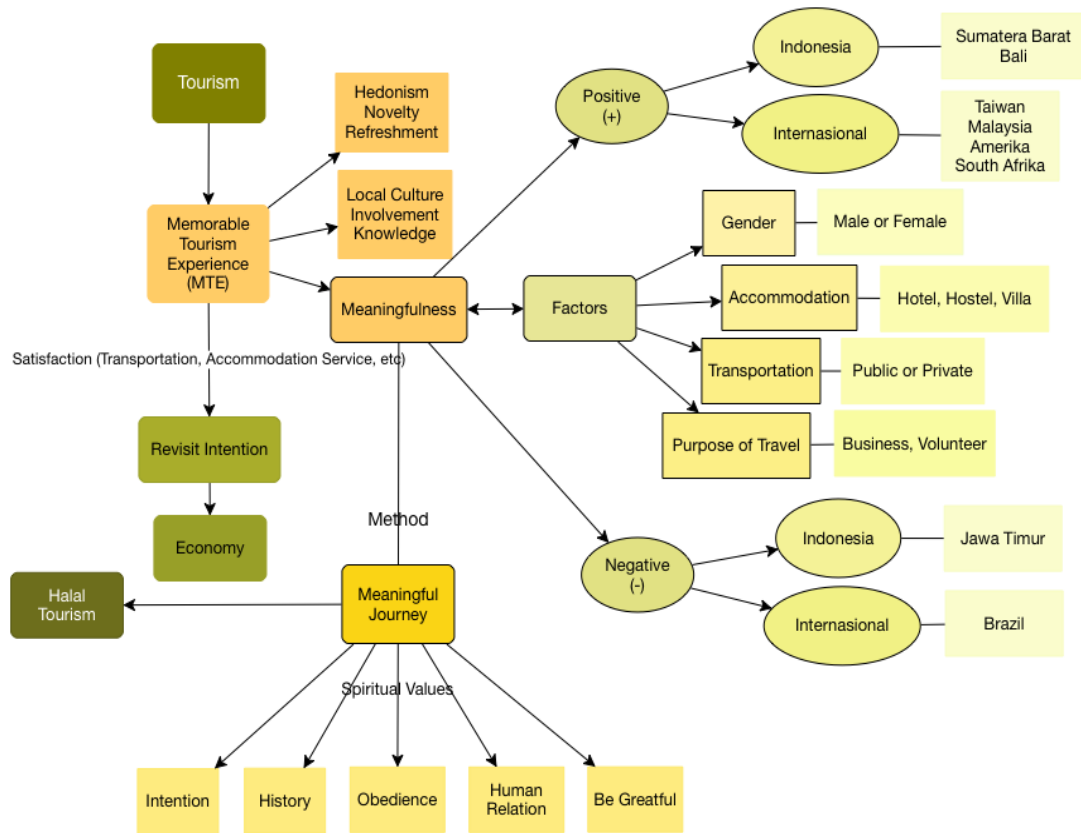
According to Kim et al. (2012), Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTEs) are defined as tourism experiences and predicted after the second event occurs, meaning that tourism experiences can be predicted after they happen for the second time. The importance of the MTE theory comes from the influence of memories on consumers' decision-making (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013). In fact, memories are considered one of the most valuable sources of information when someone chooses a travel destination. Memorable tourism experiences help create a positive perception of the destination, such as hotel services, the warm welcome of the local community, beautiful natural scenery, and more. These memorable experiences can encourage tourists to recommend the destination to friends and family. Therefore, it is beneficial for all tourism stakeholders, including tour operators, business owners, government officials, and local communities, to offer attractions that create lasting memories.

Meaningfulness, identified as a key component of a memorable tourism experience in Figure 3, exerts a positive influence on the long-term sustainability of diverse tourist destinations. This concept is linked to the purpose of travel as a medium for people or communities to willingly leave their homes and jobs to satisfy and bring pleasure to themselves, ultimately enhancing individual performance after the trip. In essence, meaningfulness allows tourists to achieve travel goals through memorable tourism experiences, positively influencing individual productivity.

Kim and Ritchie (2014), emphasize that the importance of delivering significantly memorable tourism experiences has highlighted the urgent need for destinations to effectively deliver MTEs if they are to compete successfully for the increasingly sophisticated traveller's interest. This underscores the importance of creating memorable tourism experiences, which can serve as a competitive advantage if effectively applied to tourists at the destination. Kim Hyeong explains comprehensively that memorable tourism experiences are selectively constructed from subjective experiences based on individual assessments. This suggests that memorable tourism experiences involve cognitive, affective, and behavioural components shaped by seven elements identified by Kim Hyeong: hedonism, novelty, involvement, refreshment, meaningfulness, knowledge, and local culture (Kim et al., 2012).

However, several factors influence the outcomes of meaningfulness. One such factor is gender (male or female), with women being more psychologically influenced by the meaningfulness of a destination. Additionally, accommodation (whether hotel, hostel, or villa) reflects the individual's sense of meaningfulness. Furthermore, those using public

transportation tend to experience a higher sense of meaningfulness during their journey, leading to experiences that are harder to forget.



**Figure 3.** Concept Map of Memorable Tourism Experience  
Source: Processed by the Researcher using NVivo 12 Plus (2024)

### 8. Meaningful Journey

A Meaningful Journey encourages tourists to experience travel with deep significance, with the outcome aimed at enhancing their performance after the journey, in accordance with the guidance found in verses of the Quran that define a meaningful journey. This concept is aligned with Quranic teachings that emphasize the importance of travelling as instructed by Allah SWT. There are ten verses in the Quran that can be interpreted as referring to a meaningful journey, with commentary provided by [Shihab \(2009\)](#).

**Table 1.** Quranic Verses Related to Meaningful Journeys

No	Surah	Meaning	Indicator
1	Al-Mulk, Verse 15	He is Who made the earth subservient to you, so traverse its paths and partake of His provision, and to Him is the resurrection	Intention
2	Muhammad Verse 10	Have they not travelled through the land and seen the end of those before them? Allah brought destruction upon them, and the disbelievers will meet similar ends.	History and Obedience
3	Al Hujarat Verse 13	O mankind, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may	Human Relations



No	Surah	Meaning	Indicator
		know one another. Truly, the most honorable of you with Allah is the most righteous	and Obedience
4	Yusuf Verse 109	We did not send before you, except men to whom We revealed among the people of the cities. Have they not travelled through the earth and seen the end of those who denied the messengers? The home of the Hereafter is better for those who fear Allah. Will you not then understand?	Human Relations, History, and Gratitude
5	Ali 'Imran Verse 137	Many similar ways and laws have passed before you. So travel through the earth and see the end of those who denied (the messengers)	Intention
6	An-Naml Verse 69	Say: Travel through the earth and observe the end of the guilty	Intention
7	Luqman Verse 31	o you not see that ships sail through the sea by the grace of Allah, showing you of His signs? Surely in that are signs for all who are patient and grateful.	Gratitude
8	Ar-Rum Verse 42	Say: Travel through the earth and observe how the end was for those before. Most of them were polytheists	Intention and History
9	Ar-Rum Verse 9	Have they not travelled through the earth and observed the end of those before them? They were stronger than them and cultivated the earth more extensively. Their messengers came to them with clear proofs. Allah was not unjust to them, but they wronged themselves	Gratitude
10	Al-An'am Verse 11	Say: Travel through the earth and observe the end of those who denied the truth	Gratitude

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive case study approach. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring complex phenomena, enabling a deep understanding of research subjects' experiences, behaviours, and motivations (Moleong, 2010). The descriptive approach in this study allows for the collection and analysis of rich, detailed data in the form of words, images, and observations rather than relying on numerical data (Creswell, 2008). The study is designed as a case study focusing on ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia, a company known for integrating spiritual values into its travel services. As Creswell (2008) suggests, case study research involves gathering comprehensive data from multiple sources of information, including observations, interviews, documentation, and reports. This study adopts a case study approach to explore how ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia implements its meaningful journey program and its perceived impact on customers and staff.

The population of this study is defined as the entire managerial staff of ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia. A purposive sampling technique was used, selecting individuals who are directly involved in managing and executing the "meaningful journey" program. According to Sugiyono (2017) purposive sampling allows researchers to focus on respondents with specific knowledge relevant to the research topic. The sample includes eight managerial staff members, led by General

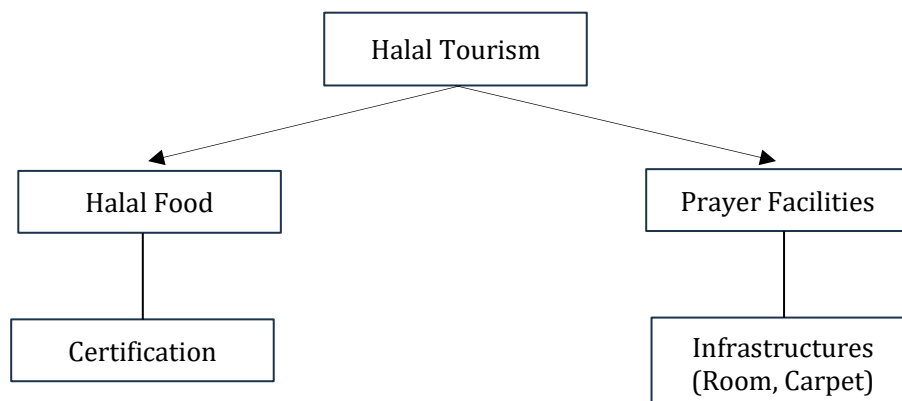
Manager Solihin, who were chosen due to their expertise and involvement in strategic decision-making at ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia.

The study utilizes a combination of primary and secondary data to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Primary data were obtained through (1) In-depth interviews with the General Manager and seven other managerial staff members, focusing on their perceptions and insights into the meaningful journey program; and (2) A questionnaire distributed by ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia to assess the impact of the program, as reported by staff and customers. The questionnaire served to validate the interview responses by comparing them with customer feedback. Secondary data include (a) The company profile of ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia, (b) Customer surveys detailing the spiritual experiences and feedback from participants of the meaningful journey program, and (c) Relevant literature and reports on halal tourism and spirituality in travel, providing context and background for the research (Florid et al., 2024).

The data collection methods follow established qualitative procedures, combining interviews, questionnaires, and documentation to triangulate the findings and ensure the reliability of the results (Sugiyono, 2019). Data analysis was conducted using the NVivo 12 Plus software, which facilitated the coding and organization of the collected data. Coding involves systematically categorizing data to identify patterns and relationships between different themes (Patton, 2006). The analysis process followed a triangulation technique, combining data from interviews, questionnaires, and documentation to ensure validity and consistency (Moleong, 2010). Triangulation helps verify the accuracy of the data by cross-referencing different sources of information. The iterative process of coding involved continuous refinement of data categories, comparing emerging themes, and aligning them with relevant theoretical concepts.

The interviews were conducted in person and via video conferencing to accommodate the schedules of the managerial staff. Each interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and was recorded with consent for accuracy. The questionnaires were distributed online and collected over a two-week period. The use of NVivo software ensured that data analysis was efficient, systematic, and replicable, with clear documentation of the coding process and analysis steps. This methodological approach ensures the study's findings are reliable, valid, and provide actionable insights into the spiritual and organizational impact of the meaningful journey program at ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



**Figure 4.** Halal Tourism Concept

Source: Processed by the Researcher with NVivo 12 Plus (2024)

Halal Tourism is a form of halal travel that consists of two key aspects: providing halal food

and scheduling prayers (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Halal travel ensures that the supporting infrastructure, especially these two criteria, is in place (Azis et al., 2023). For example, one participant explained,

*"Ensuring a meaningful journey often involves improvisation, such as transforming a restaurant's vacant room into a prayer space or conducting prayers in the desert. In such situations, we connect physical activity with spiritual reflection to evoke gratitude and mindfulness among participants."* – Sholihin, Tour Leader of ESQ Tours and Travel

This method creates unique and memorable experiences, blending logistical arrangements with deeper moral narratives. Another participant mentioned,

*"During one tour, our guide shared stories of the Prophet's journey through the desert while we prayed in similar conditions. This made me appreciate the blessings in my life and see my travels as a spiritual reflection."* – Ahmad, a traveler with ESQ Tours and Travel

Organizers must find certified halal restaurants or, alternatively, Indonesian individuals residing in the destination country to provide halal meal box packages (Ismail et al., 2023). Implementing the five daily prayers is based on observing the tourist locations. If the location is not conducive to prayer, the agent will attempt to create a suitable environment. One approach is to request an empty room to be used as a prayer space, such as in a restaurant. The availability of a prayer space arranged by the agent often becomes a memorable experience for the tourists. For example, if a prayer space is not available and the prayer must still be performed, even in the desert, this provides an opportunity for the agent to create a meaningful journey. The travel companion will provide guidance to the tour participants about the significance of gratitude through stories from the past (Sa-i et al., 2023). When prayers are performed in the desert, tourists will be told narratives about the Prophet's activities in similar locations during his time (Osman et al., 2024). This creates a memorable tourism experience, providing a sense of meaning throughout the journey.

### **The Relationship between Meaningfulness and the Meaningful Journey Method**

The memorable tourism experience, particularly meaningfulness, as demonstrated in this research, can be achieved through a meaningful journey method. This method is crucial in fostering a sense of gratitude and meaning (meaningfulness) experienced by tourists after completing the tour. The connection between meaningfulness and the meaningful journey method is illustrated in the concept map as presented in Figure 5.

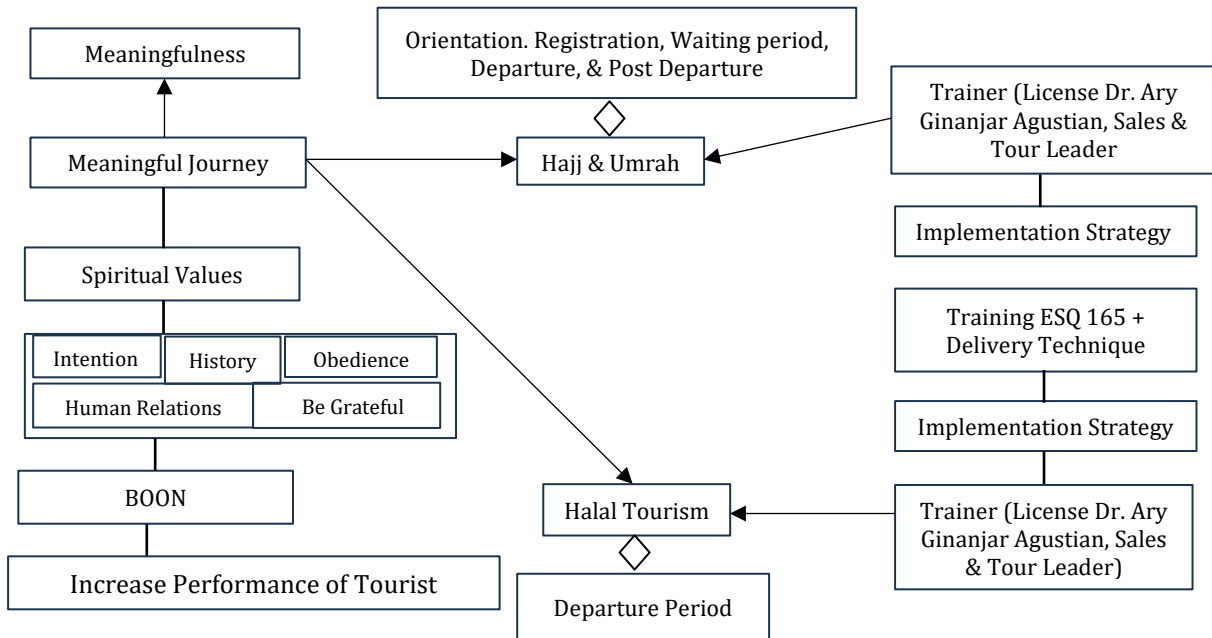
The definition of a meaningful journey can be derived from verses in the Quran that describe travel or a journey as a command from Allah. This is interpreted in five aspects of spiritual values, as explained in Figure 5, as follows:

1. Intention  
In the context of a meaningful journey, this refers to returning to or rediscovering one's inner resolve in life's journey.
2. History  
Refers to the lessons from the past aimed at shaping a better character in the future.
3. Obedience  
Refers to strengthening faith through adherence to what has been commanded and what has been forbidden by Allah.
4. Human Relationships

It is hoped that tolerance will be fostered among individuals after observing the conditions of the environment during the tour.

5. Gratitude

This is the outcome achieved once meaningfulness has been attained.



**Figure 5.** Concept Map of the Meaningful Journey Method  
 Source: Processed by the Researcher with NVivo 12 Plus (2024)

The study identifies a strong connection between a meaningful tourism experience and the concept of a meaningful journey. A meaningful journey encompasses five key spiritual dimensions derived from Islamic teachings: intention, history, obedience, human relationships, and gratitude.

*"The concept of a meaningful journey starts with clarifying one's intentions and continues through learning from history and the environment around us. For me, it was not just a trip; it was a transformation."* – AS, participant in the ESQ Tours' Hajj preparation program

This supports the idea that tourism can serve as a medium for both personal and spiritual growth, aligning with previous research that underscores the significance of spirituality in creating profound travel experiences (Osman et al., 2024).

**Implementation Strategy of Meaningful Journey: Case Study of ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia**

1. Meaningful Journey in Halal Tourism

The implementation of the ESQ Ways 165 Training Method and delivery techniques is used as a strategy by ESQ Tours and Travel to carry out the meaningful journey program, as illustrated in Figure 8 above. The meaningful journey program is conducted by the licensed trainer, Dr. (H.C.) Ary Ginanjar Agustian, and the tour leader. The trainer uses the ESQ Ways 165 Training Method during the departure or journey period, making the trainer a key figure in helping participants achieve wisdom and performance improvement after the tour with ESQ

Tours and Travel. This approach was confirmed by the General Manager, supported by the Partnership Manager and Sales Manager of ESQ Tours and Travel, who emphasized that the meaningful journey method or process of finding meaning is conveyed by a trainer skilled in the training techniques.

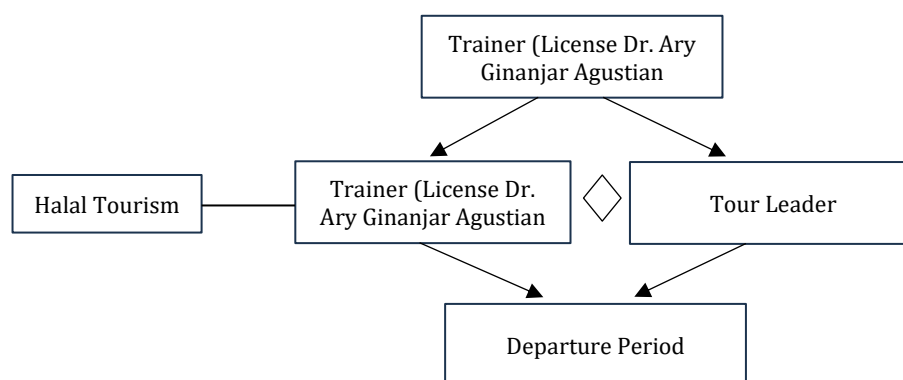
The ESQ Ways 165 training method plays a central role in the successful execution of the meaningful journey program by ESQ Tours and Travel. Licensed trainers, such as Dr. (H.C.) Ary Ginanjar Agustian, facilitate transformative experiences throughout the journey.

*"The trainer's role is pivotal. They guide us through a reflective process, using stories and tailored techniques to ensure we experience personal growth during the journey."* – AS, participant in the ESQ Tours' Hajj preparation program

The five stages of ESQ Tours' Hajj and Umrah program—orientation, registration, waiting period, departure, and post-departure—provide a holistic approach to meaning-making. For instance, during the waiting period, participants receive mental and spiritual preparation. A participant remarked,

*"The seven-year wait for Hajj can feel long, but the preparation sessions helped me focus on my goals and strengthened my resolve."* – AS, participant in the ESQ Tours' Hajj preparation program

These insights align with the findings of [Ismail et al. \(2023\)](#) which highlight the importance of consistent spiritual reinforcement in enhancing pilgrims' readiness and satisfaction. The specific method used by the tour leader of ESQ Tours and Travel when delivering meaning during the journey can be likened to guiding participants through a film in a cinema. A story is shared while transforming the atmosphere throughout the trip. This involves varying voice intonations that help participants experience the meaning of the story, connecting each part of the narrative from point A to B to C, ultimately leading to a sense of gratitude that the tour seeks to evoke. The implementation of a meaningful journey in the halal tourism context of ESQ Tours and Travel involves the roles of the trainer and tour leader, as illustrated in the following concept map in Figure 6.



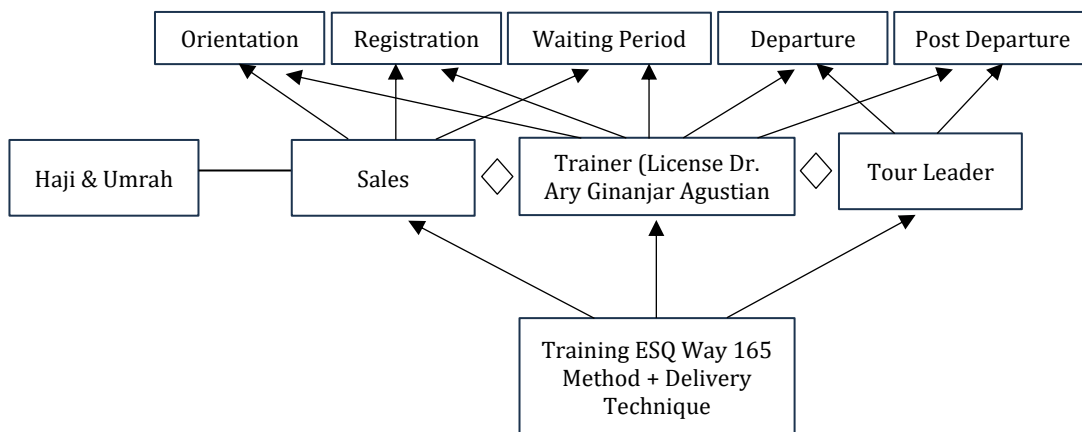
**Figure 6.** Meaningful Journey of ESQ Tours and Travel in Halal Tourism  
 Source: Processed by the Researcher with NVivo 12 Plus (2024)

2. Meaningful Journey of ESQ Tours and Travel in Hajj and Umrah

The implementation of the meaningful journey for Hajj and Umrah by ESQ Tours and Travel

involves the roles of the trainer, sales, and tour leader, with the timing of each phase illustrated in the following concept map, as presented in Figure 7.

In Figure 7 below, the meaningful journey program by ESQ Tours and Travel for Hajj and Umrah is carried out in five stages: orientation, registration, waiting period, departure, and post-departure. According to the Partnership Manager of ESQ Tours and Travel, these five stages represent a total solution provided to the pilgrims. This is because pilgrims must wait for approximately seven years after registering for Hajj. During this time, ESQ Tours and Travel offers mental and spiritual strengthening sessions to prepare the pilgrims. The aim is to ensure that by the time of their departure, pilgrims are ready with the right intentions and goals, so that upon returning from the holy land, they are expected to have performed a *mabrur* (accepted) pilgrimage.



**Figure 7.** Meaningful Journey of ESQ Tours and Travel in Hajj and Umrah

To achieve success in meaning-making for the Hajj and Umrah products, the meaningful journey method must be applied starting from the orientation phase, not only during the departure phase. As stated by the Partnership Manager and Sales Department of ESQ Tours and Travel, the sales team introduced and implemented the meaningful journey method, which is then reinforced by the trainer during seminars in the orientation phase, continuing through the process of dealing. In both the departure and post-departure phases, the trainer and tour leader guide the pilgrims toward meaning-making and achieving the ultimate goal—helping them achieve *mabrur*.

### 3. Feedback from Participants of ESQ Tours and Travel

To understand the feedback experienced directly by tour participants, the General Manager of ESQ Tours and Travel shared in an interview that a survey was conducted regarding the spiritual values received and the impact on the participants. The survey results showed a score of 4.6 out of 5, indicating an excellent rating. The tour participants agreed that the five aspects of spiritual values—intention, history, obedience, human relationships, and gratitude—were felt and had a positive impact on their performance. This indicates the success of the meaningful journey method in achieving the desired outcome for ESQ Tours and Travel with respect to the participants. Furthermore, this aligns with the purpose of tourism, which is to achieve personal happiness and tranquility.

The survey conducted by ESQ Tours revealed a 4.6/5 satisfaction rating, particularly in areas related to the five spiritual dimensions of the meaningful journey. However, the qualitative data gathered through interviews provides deeper insight. AS participant shared:



*"I felt a profound sense of gratitude and connection with Allah, especially during the prayer sessions arranged in unconventional spaces." – AS, participant in the ESQ Tours' Hajj preparation program*

Another commented on the challenges,

*"There were minor logistical issues, like delays or accommodations not meeting expectations, but these were minimal compared to the overall experience." – Sholihin, Tour Leader of ESQ Tours and Travel*

The integration of survey data with participant feedback enriches the understanding of the program's impact, as recommended by reviewers. Furthermore, this supports the findings of [Osman et al. \(2024\)](#), who argue that integrating spiritual and logistical elements enhances tourism satisfaction.

This was further supported by an interview with the Deputy Marketing and Sales Department of ESQ Tours and Travel, who noted that most comments, suggestions, or criticisms typically stemmed from technical issues, such as flight delays, accommodation facilities in Makkah being less than expected (e.g., lack of resting areas or beds), and insufficient food availability. However, according to the Operational Hajj and Umrah Department of ESQ Tours and Travel, these issues were reported by only about 1% of the pilgrims.

The meaningful journey method enables tour participants to create memorable tourism experiences and achieve meaningfulness. Beyond this, memorable tourism experiences can foster a desire for participants to relive the experience and develop a revisit intention. As a result, the impact extends far beyond individual participants or their performance; it also positively affects the local tourism economy. However, this meaningfulness can only be fully realized through the meaningful journey method, carried out by ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia, with the guidance of the certified trainer Dr. (H.C.) Ary Ginanjar Agustian, who employs the ESQ Ways 165 training method and public speaking delivery techniques.

#### 4. Novel Contributions and Alignment with Previous Research

This study contributes new knowledge by presenting the meaningful journey method as a structured, spiritually driven approach to halal tourism, distinguishing it from previous research that predominantly focuses on logistical aspects ([Azis et al., 2023](#); [Rahmawati et al., 2023](#)). Unlike earlier studies, which highlight halal tourism primarily as a service-based industry, this research emphasizes its potential for fostering spiritual transformation and personal growth. By incorporating spiritual dimensions such as intention and gratitude into the tourism experience, this study bridges a gap in the literature, providing a framework for enhancing both individual well-being and the ethical integrity of the tourism industry. Moreover, it highlights how this method can increase revisit intentions and positively impact local tourism economies, as supported by participants' feedback.

## CONCLUSIONS

The concept of halal tourism emphasizes two core principles: ensuring access to halal food and facilitating the timely observance of prayers. ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia successfully integrates these principles within their travel experiences by offering certified halal food options and providing clean, accessible prayer spaces. Furthermore, their meaningful journey method, which focuses on five aspects—intention, history, obedience, human relations, and gratitude—

enriches the travel experience by fostering a deeper spiritual connection. Led by certified trainers like Dr. (H.C.) Ary Ginanjar Agustian, the ESQ Way 165 training method effectively conveys these elements, helping participants find personal growth and a profound sense of gratitude during their travels.

Theoretically, this study contributes to understanding how halal tourism can be designed to meet logistical needs and promote personal and spiritual enrichment. It offers a framework that aligns travel experiences with deeper reflection and growth. Practically, the findings highlight the importance for halal tourism operators to incorporate holistic travel programs that cater to both spiritual and emotional needs. By providing meaningful, spiritually enriching journeys, as demonstrated by ESQ Tours, operators can enhance the value of halal tourism, ensuring it serves as a pathway for personal development and not just leisure.

### LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research is based on a case study of ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other halal tourism operators. The specific methods and training programs used by ESQ may not apply universally to all regions or organizations offering halal tourism. Additionally, the study primarily focuses on managerial perspectives, leaving out customer feedback and long-term impact assessments of the meaningful journey method on participants' personal growth. A broader sample, including other halal tourism providers and traveller experiences, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the industry.

For future research, studies could explore the effectiveness of the meaningful journey method across diverse cultural and geographic contexts within halal tourism. Further investigations might also consider quantitative approaches to measure the direct impact of these spiritual and cultural enrichment programs on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and personal transformation. Additionally, longitudinal research could assess the lasting effects of such travel experiences on participants' spiritual development and how it influences their lifestyle choices. These avenues would provide deeper insights and practical guidance for enhancing the effectiveness of halal tourism services globally.

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