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## **HALAL TOURISM IN INDONESIA: EXPERIENCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VIETNAM**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates Indonesia's success in developing Halal Tourism and explores applicable lessons for Vietnam's emerging tourism market. As one of the leading global destinations for Muslim-friendly travel, Indonesia offers a valuable model for integrating Islamic principles into tourism policies, infrastructure, marketing strategies, and community education. Drawing on a qualitative content analysis of academic literature, policy documents, and institutional reports, this study examines Indonesia's multifaceted approach, including its Halal certification systems, strategic marketing efforts, and public-private partnerships. The findings underscore the gaps in Vietnam's current readiness for Halal Tourism and propose recommendations to enhance its competitiveness in this growing sector. Adopting Indonesia's strategic practices, Vietnam can diversify its tourism offerings and position as a welcoming destination for Muslim travellers.*

**Keywords:** *Halal Tourism, Halal tourism development, Indonesia tourism, Muslim-friendly travel, Vietnam tourism.*

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## **DU LỊCH HALAL Ở INDONESIA: BÀI HỌC KINH NGHIỆM VÀ ĐỀ XUẤT CHO VIỆT NAM**

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### **Lịch sử bài báo**

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### **Tóm tắt**

*Nghiên cứu này dựa trên việc phân tích sự thành công của Indonesia trong việc phát triển du lịch Halal và khám phá các bài học có thể áp dụng cho thị trường du lịch của Việt Nam. Là một trong những điểm đến hàng đầu toàn cầu về du lịch thân thiện với người Muslim, Indonesia cung cấp một mô hình có giá trị để tích hợp các nguyên tắc Islam giáo vào chính sách du lịch, cơ sở hạ tầng, chiến lược tiếp thị và giáo dục cộng đồng. Dựa trên phương pháp phân tích tài liệu định tính, bài viết này xem xét các nguồn chính như tài liệu chính sách, báo cáo thể chế và khuôn khổ pháp lý bên cạnh các nguồn thứ cấp như tài liệu học thuật và các nghiên cứu liên quan để xem xét cách tiếp cận nhiều mặt của Indonesia, bao gồm hệ thống chứng nhận Halal, nỗ lực tiếp thị chiến lược và quan hệ đối tác công tư. Những phát hiện này cho thấy Việt Nam đối với du lịch Halal cần nhiều cải thiện từ đó đề xuất các khuyến nghị có mục tiêu để nâng cao khả năng cạnh tranh của Việt Nam trong lĩnh vực đang phát triển này. Bằng cách áp dụng các thực tiễn chiến lược của Indonesia, Việt Nam có thể đa dạng hóa các dịch vụ du lịch của mình và định vị mình là một điểm đến chào đón khách du lịch là người Islam giáo - Muslim.*

**Từ khóa:** *Du lịch Halal, du lịch Indonesia, du lịch thân thiện với người Muslim, phát triển du lịch Halal, du lịch Việt Nam.*

## **1. Introduction**

Halal tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments in the global tourism industry, driven by the increasing demand for Muslim-friendly services. With a significant Muslim population worldwide, there is a rising awareness of the need for travel experiences that align with Islamic values (Junaidi, 2020), including Halal food, prayer facilities, and gender-sensitive accommodations. Countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey have successfully positioned themselves as leading destinations for Halal tourism. However, a critical competitive landscape is also emerging from non-OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) nations. Destinations like Thailand, Japan, and South Korea have proactively invested in Halal-friendly infrastructure and targeted marketing campaigns to attract Muslim travellers. This dual competition, from both traditional OIC leaders and agile non-OIC adopters, intensifies the urgency for Vietnam, which currently lags behind both groups in capturing this lucrative market. According to the Global Muslim Travel Index 2024, the global Muslim travel market is projected to reach USD 410.9 billion by 2032 (CrescentRating, 2024), highlighting its growing economic significance. Indonesia, in particular, has made remarkable progress in Halal tourism development, leveraging its sizeable Muslim population, government support, and private sector engagement to enhance its competitiveness in the market (Mahardika, 2020).

The Indonesian government has started Halal certification programs, built accommodations for Muslim travellers, and run promotional campaigns to attract visitors from Muslim-majority countries. These efforts have boosted Indonesia's tourism, promoted cultural exchange, and brought economic benefits. Meanwhile, despite rising global demand, Vietnam has yet to establish itself as a major Halal-friendly destination. Though Muslim tourist arrivals from Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Middle East are increasing, the lack of Halal-certified facilities, limited awareness, and absence of supportive policies have hindered growth. Vietnam can learn Indonesia's model and adopt strategies to attract Muslim tourists.

To address this gap, this study aims to analyse Indonesia's model for advancing Halal tourism, elucidating key lessons and recommendations applicable to Vietnam. Specifically, this paper aims to address the following research question (RQ): RQ1. What key strategies and policies (regarding governance, infrastructure, marketing, and education) has Indonesia implemented to successfully develop its Halal tourism ecosystem? RQ2. What is the current situation, including key challenges and potentials, for Halal tourism development in Vietnam? RQ3. What specific lessons can Vietnam learn from Indonesia's model to build its national strategy and enhance its competitiveness in attracting Muslim travellers? By fortifying the country's Halal tourism infrastructure, Vietnam can elevate its international competitiveness and facilitate the diversification and sustainability of its tourism industry.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Concept of Halal Tourism**

Halal tourism is a growing global sector, defined as a concept that caters to the needs of Muslim travellers by prioritising Islamic values and aligning with Sharia principles across all aspects of the travel experience, from services and facilities to accommodation, cuisine, and destinations. It is essential in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey, where efforts are being made to develop Halal-friendly infrastructure. The demand is also increasing in non-Muslim countries, which are seeking to attract Muslim tourists by offering suitable services. Furthermore, this concept emphasises the importance of "ghirah" (enthusiasm) and "tadabbur alam" (contemplation of nature) as outlined in the tafsir of Thantawi Jauhari. This approach encourages Muslims to appreciate and protect the environment while engaging in recreational

activities that also foster spiritual meaning and sustainability, moving beyond mere worldly gains to include moral and spiritual dimensions (Azibur Rahman, 2024).

One of the fundamental aspects of Halal Tourism is Halal food, which must adhere to Islamic dietary laws as prescribed in the Quran (Al-Teinaz, 2020). This means that food served in halal-certified restaurants, hotels, and eateries must be free from prohibited ingredients, such as pork and its derivatives, alcohol, and non-Halal-certified meat products (Islam & Ashton, 2024). Halal food is not only about the ingredients but also the methods of preparation, storage, and serving, ensuring that cross-contamination with non-halal substances does not occur (Al-Teinaz, 2020). Many Halal-certified restaurants and food establishments are monitored and accredited by official certification bodies, assuring Muslim travellers (Usman et al., 2023). Additionally, as part of a broader Muslim-friendly approach, some destinations offer dedicated halal food guides and lists of certified restaurants to help tourists find suitable dining options.

Beyond food, Halal Tourism also emphasises Halal accommodation, which refers to hotels and lodgings that align with Islamic principles (Irawan & Nur, 2024; Islam & Ashton, 2024). These establishments typically do not serve alcohol, provide prayer facilities, and may even offer separate swimming pools, gyms, or spa services for men and women (Islam & Ashton, 2024; Prilly & Tyas, 2024). In some Halal-friendly hotels, guests can find prayer mats, copies of the Quran, and qibla indicators (directions for prayer) in their rooms. Many hotels also ensure that their entertainment options follow Islamic values by refraining from providing inappropriate media content. Some destinations go even further by offering fully Halal resorts, where every aspect of the stay, from room service to recreational activities, is designed to accommodate Muslim travellers.

Another crucial component of Halal Tourism is the availability of Muslim-friendly services, which enhance the travel experience for observant Muslims. These services include dedicated prayer areas in public spaces such as airports, shopping malls, and tourist attractions, allowing travellers to perform their daily prayers conveniently (Nurjaya et al., 2021). Additionally, many destinations offer flexible scheduling to accommodate fasting during Ramadan, such as adjusting hotel mealtimes or providing sahur (pre-dawn meal) and iftar (breaking of the fast) options. Tour operators catering to Halal Tourism also design itineraries that take into account prayer times, ensuring that tourists can visit mosques and other places of worship as part of their travel experience. Furthermore, gender-segregated recreational facilities are available in specific destinations, enabling men and women to participate in leisure activities while adhering to Islamic guidelines (Islam & Ashton, 2024; Prilly & Tyas, 2024). The growth of halal tourism reflects an increasing recognition of its economic potential, as Muslim travellers seek destinations that respect their beliefs and offer high-quality experiences. Governments and businesses worldwide invest in Halal Tourism infrastructure to attract Muslim tourists. For example, Thailand, Japan, and South Korea have introduced halal certification programs for restaurants, airport prayer facilities, and special tour packages designed to accommodate Muslim visitors (Karisma & Susmono, 2024; Marlinda et al., 2024; Nurdiansyah, 2018). As the industry continues to evolve, the development of Halal Tourism is expected to create more inclusive and diverse travel experiences that cater to the needs of Muslim travellers while promoting cross-cultural understanding and global tourism growth.

It is important to distinguish between Halal Tourism and Halal-friendly tourism. While Halal tourism (also known as Sharia-compliant tourism) refers to travel services that strictly adhere to Islamic law, including alcohol-free environments, gender-segregated facilities, and Sharia-compliant finance, Halal-friendly tourism (or Muslim-friendly tourism) adopts a more flexible approach that caters to the basic needs of Muslim travellers without enforcing strict

religious requirements (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Han et al., 2019). According to Stephenson, Halal-friendly tourism often emerges in non-Muslim-majority countries, aiming to attract Muslim travellers by offering partial compliance with Islamic principles, such as providing Halal food, prayer facilities, and culturally sensitive services (Stephenson, 2014). This distinction is crucial, especially for countries like Vietnam, where the socio-cultural and institutional environment may not be conducive to fully implementing Sharia-compliant tourism. As Jafari and Scott noted, varying interpretations and levels of implementation of Islamic tourism create challenges in establishing uniform standards across diverse national contexts (Jafari & Scott, 2014). Therefore, this paper adopts the term Halal-friendly tourism when referring to the development direction for Vietnam, as it reflects a more realistic and contextually appropriate strategy.

As a result, Halal Tourism, which differs somewhat from Muslim-friendly tourism, is centred on principles that align with Sharia law, respect for Indigenous cultures, and a deep understanding of the Islamic faith (Khairuldin et al., 2024). Halal tourism promotes ethical behaviour by respecting local values and traditions, including Halal food, prayer facilities, and gender-segregated services. However, interpretations vary across countries, causing inconsistencies. Terms like “Islamic tourism” and “Sharia tourism” are often used interchangeably, despite their differences. Overall, there is a consensus on what constitutes halal (permitted) and haram (forbidden) experiences in this context (Jafari & Scott, 2014; Prayag, 2024). Muslim-friendly tourism is a concept that involves a more flexible approach, balancing religious and cultural elements in tourism, and promoting mutual understanding, interfaith dialogue, and tolerance. Ultimately, Halal Tourism enhances local economies, improves destination perceptions, and encourages educational and cultural exchanges within the tourism industry.

## **2.2. Trends in Halal Tourism Development**

Halal tourism has emerged as a rapidly growing sector within the global travel industry, driven by increasing demand from Muslim travellers seeking destinations that cater to their religious and lifestyle needs. According to CrescentRating, a leading authority on Halal tourism, Muslim tourist arrivals are expected to reach approximately 140 million in 2023 (CrescentRating, 2023), and 160 million in 2024 (CrescentRating, 2024), and this figure is expected to continue rising as more destinations recognise the economic potential of this market. Halal tourism is growing due to rising incomes in Muslim-majority nations, the expansion of middle classes, and a growing focus on ethical, faith-based travel. Major destinations, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, and the UAE, have built extensive infrastructures for Muslim travellers. These countries offer Halal-certified dining options, prayer facilities in key tourist areas, Muslim-friendly accommodations, and policies that align with Islamic principles, making them attractive to Muslim travellers worldwide (Ahlawat et al., 2024).

Many non-Muslim countries, like South Korea, Japan, and Thailand, are investing in Halal tourism to attract Muslim travellers (Ahlawat et al., 2024). These efforts include Halal restaurants, prayer rooms, and Muslim-friendly hotels. Japan, for instance, offers Halal food and prayer spaces in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, while training its hospitality staff (Karisma & Susmono, 2024). South Korea has introduced Halal options to cater to visitors from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Gulf countries (Marlinda et al., 2024; Ramadhan et al., 2024). Thailand has expanded Halal services in Bangkok, Phuket, and Pattaya, making Muslim tourists feel welcome (Nurdiansyah, 2018). This trend suggests that the travel industry is increasingly prioritising inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. Countries that adopt Halal-friendly services will likely attract more Muslim travellers and strengthen their tourism economies. Likely to

gain a competitive advantage in attracting Muslim travellers and boosting their tourism economies.

### **2.3. Review of prior studies**

Much research targets' early adopters - non-OIC nations actively developing policies to attract Muslim tourists. These offer practical implementation examples. Henderson (2016) analyses Japan's efforts, noting infrastructure growth, such as prayer rooms and certified kitchens, but also ongoing cultural understanding gaps. South Korea's case demonstrates initial interest through the "Korean Wave" (Hallyu), but dissatisfaction arises from issues such as a lack of Halal-certified food, which affects perceptions of the country. This shift from "supply" to "demand" helps understand market needs. Battour et al. (2011) identify key Halal-friendly destination attributes, emphasising religious requirements as crucial to tourist choice. Western studies, like Stephenson (2014), highlight barriers such as societal perceptions and Islamophobia. Operational challenges in non-Islamic countries are examined through the case of Thailand (Jeaheng et al., 2019), which highlights high costs and staff training as significant barriers to effective implementation. Vargas-Sánchez and Moral-Moral (2019) reveal misconceptions among hoteliers in Spain, often confusing "Halal" with "Arab" cultural traits, leading to poor service. This review of prior studies reveals that while many non-OIC nations, particularly in Asia, have successfully developed the "hardware" for Halal-friendly tourism, significant gaps remain in the "software", including a deep cultural understanding, reliable certification, and consistent service delivery.

### **3. Research methods**

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, specifically document analysis (Morgan, 2022), to explore Indonesia's experiences in developing Halal tourism and derive relevant lessons for Vietnam. In this approach, a distinction is made between primary and secondary sources. Primary sources, which are original, uninterpreted, and the direct object of analysis, were gathered. These included governmental policy papers, legal frameworks, such as Indonesia's Halal Product Guarantee Law, institutional reports, and publications from tourism authorities and Halal certification bodies. Secondary sources, which consist of interpretations and analyses of primary sources, were used to build the literature review and contextualise the findings. These sources primarily included academic journal articles and relevant literature on Halal tourism theory and development trends.

The analysis process followed a thematic approach (Caplan & Purser, 2019; Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). The selected primary and secondary documents were systematically reviewed and coded to identify recurring patterns, strategies, and policy outcomes. Through an iterative process of coding and categorisation, these patterns were consolidated into four dominant themes that emerged from the data: (1) policy and governance, (2) infrastructure and services, (3) marketing and promotion, and (4) education and awareness. These four themes form the analytical framework used to structure the discussion of Indonesia's experience (Section 4.1). Subsequently, this framework was used to draw comparative insights by contrasting Indonesia's strategies with Vietnam's current tourism policies and infrastructure, thereby highlighting existing gaps and growth opportunities. This qualitative approach enabled a deep contextual understanding (Lim, 2024) of how Indonesia has successfully implemented Halal tourism initiatives and how these lessons can inform Vietnam's development path.

### **4. Results and discussion**

#### **4.1. Indonesia's Model in Developing Halal Tourism**

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, has made significant

advances in Halal Tourism development. It has enormous potential for the Halal industry, driven by its large Muslim population, which makes up 12.7% of the global Muslim population (Chaerunisa & Maulidizen, 2024b). This demographic edge, along with rising global demand for halal products and services, strategically positions Indonesia in the halal industry (Huda et al., 2022). As a significant foreign exchange earner, tourism aligns with trends in Muslim-majority countries (Yahya et al., 2022). The government has launched initiatives like Halal certification for tourism products and services. Bandung leads in Halal Tourism, offering Halal-certified attractions, food, accommodation, and entertainment (Yapanto & Cupian, 2024). Halal tourism caters to Muslim travellers by adhering to Islamic principles, emphasising worship, purification, and travel in line with Sharia (Syamsurizal et al., 2024). Its development aims to help Muslim tourists enjoy their travels while observing their faith, thereby boosting tourism and economic growth in regions such as Indonesia (Madnasir & Binar Cahyani, 2024).

The idea of a “meaningful journey” drives Halal Tourism by creating enjoyable, spiritually enriching experiences through cultural immersion, reflection, and community engagement (Chaerunisa & Maulidizen, 2024a). ESQ Tours and Travel Indonesia exemplifies this by combining spiritual activities, such as Quran recitation and Islamic lectures, with traditional tourism, thereby boosting customer satisfaction and loyalty. This approach emphasises memorable, spiritually enriching experiences, enhancing customer loyalty and satisfaction (Chaerunisa & Maulidizen, 2024a, 2024b).

#### *4.1.1. National Policies and Strategies*

Government policies significantly influence the growth, sustainability, and appeal of Halal tourism to Muslim travellers (Fitria et al., 2024). Indonesia actively develops this sector as a key economic driver, with the National Halal Tourism Development Strategy guiding efforts to boost global competitiveness. It aims to embed Halal principles across accommodations, food, transport, and entertainment for a seamless, culturally comfortable experience. Regions like Lombok, Aceh (Aprullah et al., 2024), and West Sumatra receive targeted support to develop infrastructure aligned with Islamic values. National policies also promote sustainable growth, striking a balance between economic, cultural, and environmental goals. As a result, Indonesia has become a leading Halal tourism destination, attracting visitors from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and beyond.

A crucial component of Indonesia’s Halal Tourism strategy is the establishment of Halal certification centres to ensure that services meet international standards (Suharko et al., 2018). These certification bodies, supervised by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and government agencies, evaluate hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and other tourism-related businesses to certify their compliance with Halal requirements (Nurjaya et al., 2021). This process involves verifying food preparation to ensure that no non-Halal ingredients are used, as well as confirming the availability of prayer facilities and amenities for Muslim travellers. Certification boosts consumer trust and Indonesia’s reputation as a Halal-friendly destination. The government also offers training for hospitality workers on Halal standards and cultural sensitivity. These efforts enhance service quality and support the growth and sustainability of Halal tourism (Maghfira et al., 2022). By maintaining rigorous standards and continuously updating certification processes, Indonesia ensures that its Halal Tourism offerings remain competitive in the evolving global market (Santoso et al., 2022).

Recognising the importance of collaboration, the Indonesian government actively engages with the private sector to promote investment and develop suitable tourism products (Parlindungan & Manurung, 2023). Public-private partnerships finance infrastructure, build Halal hotels, and organise promotional campaigns. The government offers incentives, such as

tax breaks and streamlined regulations, to encourage private investment in Halal Tourism. Joint marketing, digital platforms, and international exhibitions expand Indonesia's reach (Santoso et al., 2022). The private sector innovates with Muslim-friendly packages, Halal spas, and Sharia-compliant financial services (Prilly & Tyas, 2024). By fostering cooperation, Indonesia has built a thriving Halal tourism ecosystem that benefits the economy and promotes cultural exchange among travellers.

It is important to note that Indonesia's path to success was not without its own implementation challenges. The process of standardising Halal principles, particularly in established, non-Muslim-majority tourist destinations like Bali, initially met with resistance from some industry stakeholders concerned about brand dilution or high investment costs (Halim & Baroroh, 2021). The government overcame this by strategically framing Halal Tourism not as a replacement for traditional tourism, but as a means to diversify and expand the market (Suhaimi & Marliyah, 2023). This, combined with sustained community education (as discussed in section 4.1.4) and clear financial incentives from the state, was crucial in achieving the stakeholder buy-in necessary for the program's success.

#### *4.1.2. Infrastructure and Tourism Services*

One of the fundamental aspects of developing Halal Tourism is ensuring that the infrastructure aligns with the needs of Muslim travellers. Halal products refer to RI Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Guarantees for Halal Products. Article 1 states that “products are goods and/or services related to food, drinks, medicines, cosmetics, chemical products, biological products, genetically engineered products, as well as goods used by the public. Halal Products are Products that have been declared halal following Islamic law” (Christanti et al., 2023). So, besides food, there are many other things, including services, that are Halal. Consequently, a key initiative in Indonesia has been the development of Halal-certified hotel networks (Sufi & Vagena, 2024), particularly in destinations such as Jakarta, Lombok, and Aceh. These hotels have obtained official Halal certification, ensuring their facilities and services comply with Islamic principles. Halal-certified hotels cater to Muslim travellers by providing alcohol-free environments, Halal food, and amenities like prayer spaces. Their growing number in Indonesia supports the country's goal to become a leading Halal tourism destination.

In addition to accommodations, the availability of Halal-certified dining options plays a crucial role in the success of Halal tourism (Rusmiati, 2024). Recognising this, Indonesia has actively expanded its network of Halal-certified restaurants in major tourist destinations. These establishments serve dishes prepared in accordance with Islamic dietary laws, avoiding non-halal ingredients such as pork and alcohol. They comply with Halal standards set by Indonesian authorities, ensuring Muslim tourists, both domestically and internationally. In popular destinations such as Bali, Yogyakarta, and Medan, the number of Halal-certified restaurants has increased, making it easier for Muslim travellers to access food that aligns with their religious requirements (Irawan & Nur, 2024). The government and private sector have collaborated to promote dining establishments through digital platforms, Halal food guides, and tourism packages designed for Muslim visitors. This boosts Indonesia's global competitiveness in Halal tourism, attracting more Muslim travellers seeking Islamic-compliant culinary experiences. Beyond accommodation and food services, transportation infrastructure has also been improved to support the needs of Muslim travellers (Rahman et al., 2017). Major Indonesian airports, such as Soekarno-Hatta, Ngurah Rai, and Sultan Iskandar Muda, have been upgraded to serve Muslim travellers better. Improvements include prayer rooms with ablution facilities, a wide range of halal dining options, and multilingual signage in both Arabic and English to facilitate navigation. These Halal-friendly services

enhance Indonesia's reputation as a Muslim-friendly destination, making travel easier and more comfortable for Muslim tourists.

#### *4.1.3. Marketing and Promotional Strategies*

Indonesia's success in developing Halal Tourism depends on digital platforms promoting destinations and services for Muslim travellers. The government utilises social media, websites, and apps to enhance visibility, leveraging platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to showcase Halal-friendly experiences through influencers and content creators, thereby attracting visitors from Muslim-majority countries. Official sites list Halal-certified hotels, restaurants, and attractions, aiding trip planning. Mobile apps with prayer times, Qibla directions, and Halal restaurant locators support tourists. These digital strategies have expanded Indonesia's appeal as a top Halal Tourism destination, increasing its reach and global Muslim travel presence.

Indonesia has formed international partnerships with travel companies to promote Halal tourism worldwide. The government targets Muslim travellers in key markets like the Middle East, Malaysia, and Turkey, where demand for Halal travel is high. These collaborations with airlines, agencies, and hotels develop specialised packages with accommodation, dining, and cultural experiences for Muslim tourists. For example, promotional campaigns in the Middle East highlight Indonesia's Halal-certified destinations (Rusmiati, 2024), such as Lombok and Aceh, emphasising their Islamic heritage, Halal cuisine, and Muslim-friendly infrastructure. Meanwhile, collaborations with travel agencies in Malaysia and Turkey focus on attracting Muslim travellers interested in exploring Indonesia's diverse landscapes, religious sites, and cultural traditions. By engaging with international travel companies, Indonesia expands its reach in key Muslim-majority markets and enhances its reputation as a top choice for Halal tourism.

Indonesia's marketing strategies include organising Halal tourism fairs, such as the Indonesia Halal Tourism Expo, to showcase its potential and attract international stakeholders. These events bring together government officials, travel agencies, hotel operators, and Halal product suppliers, offering networking and business opportunities. Exhibitions showcase Halal travel services, culinary experiences, and Islamic heritage, providing insights into Indonesia's Halal tourism offerings. International buyers and investors promote business growth and encourage companies to develop Halal-certified services for Muslim travellers. These events position Indonesia as a global leader in Halal tourism, attracting tourists and partners while reinforcing its commitment to a sustainable, competitive Halal industry.

#### *4.1.4. Education and awareness*

Education and awareness are crucial for the successful development of Halal Tourism. Many communities, particularly in Muslim-majority regions, are still in the process of understanding and embracing the concept of Halal Tourism. Community-based initiatives, such as workshops and training programs, can play a vital role in raising awareness and building capacity among local stakeholders (Nabila et al., 2024). For instance, in Kaur Regency, Indonesia, community service programs have been implemented to educate local tourism actors and communities about the importance of Halal Tourism. These programs have increased awareness and contributed to the development of sustainable tourism practices in the region.

Indonesia's rich Islamic heritage and culture offer great potential for Halal Tourism by integrating cultural and educational aspects. This enhances visitors' understanding of traditions and Islamic values, meeting rising demand while promoting preservation and education. Initiatives include workshops, performances, and interactive sessions on local customs and

history (Azhar et al., 2024). Indonesia believes Halal Tourism can be further developed by promoting Islamic heritage sites, cultural festivals, and educational programs that showcase Islamic history and traditions (Khairuldin et al., 2024). The government supports Halal Tourism through policies such as the Halal Product Guarantee Law and the development of flagship halal destinations, which can promote cultural and educational tourism (Yoshinta et al., 2024). Policies aligned with Islamic law and involving ulama can further enhance this integration (Sonjaya et al., 2024).

## **4.2. Current Situation and Potential for Halal Tourism Development in Vietnam**

### *4.2.1. Current Situation*

Despite Vietnam's increasing popularity as a global tourism destination, the country's readiness to cater to Muslim travellers remains limited, particularly in terms of Halal-certified services and infrastructure. Currently, Vietnam has a limited number of Halal-certified hotels, restaurants, and service providers (Warjio & Heri, 2015), making it challenging for Muslim tourists to find food, accommodation, and travel experiences that meet their religious and cultural requirements. In cities like Hanoi (Nguyen, 2025), Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang, where international tourist arrivals are concentrated, Muslim visitors often struggle to locate Halal food options, prayer facilities, or Muslim-friendly tour operators. This lack of infrastructure hampers travel and deters repeat visits and word-of-mouth in the global Muslim travel community. While some establishments claim to be "Muslim-friendly", the absence of a national, transparent Halal certification raises concerns about consistency and credibility, especially among observant Muslim travellers from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Middle East.

Furthermore, Vietnam has yet to fully leverage the potential of its local Muslim population in promoting and developing Halal Tourism. Although the Muslim community is relatively small, concentrated in provinces such as An Giang and urban areas like Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi (Nguyen, 2025), these communities represent a valuable resource in terms of cultural knowledge, religious practices, and business potential. However, Vietnam remain primarily excluded from national tourism strategies and local tourism initiatives. Vietnam has a small domestic halal market, but the government supports it through the Halal Certification Agency (HCA). HCA requires technical assistance from similar institutions in ASEAN to establish sufficient credibility for halal certification and standards (Abimanyu & Faiz, 2023). Because Vietnam's strategy is still in its infancy, it lacks a comprehensive strategy for Muslim travellers. This places it behind regional competitors, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, which have invested heavily in the sector. Further hindering its potential is a limited public awareness of Islamic culture, a scarcity of mosques, and service providers unfamiliar with Muslim customs. Without strategic planning and efforts to improve cultural awareness, Vietnam will struggle to compete in the growing Halal tourism market.

### *4.2.2. Opportunities and Potentials*

Despite these challenges, Vietnam holds considerable untapped potential (Baharudin et al., 2016) to become an attractive destination for Muslim travellers, especially given the country's rich cultural heritage, natural landscapes, and strategic geographic location in Southeast Asia. Vietnam boasts a diverse range of tourism assets, including ancient temples, historic towns, UNESCO World Heritage sites, and stunning natural beauty, from the Mekong Delta to Ha Long Bay. These attractions attract many tourists and can be adapted to accommodate Muslim travellers with suitable services. Cities such as Hanoi, Hue, and Hoi An, rich in cultural history, could become destinations for Islamic heritage or Halal Tourism (Nguyen, 2025). By incorporating Halal food options, modest attire choices, and prayer spaces into existing sites, Vietnam can attract more Muslim visitors.

Moreover, although domestic Halal Tourism only meets a fraction of the demand, Vietnam has the potential to produce halal products for Islamic nations (Abimanyu & Faiz, 2023), so HCA is also a bridge to cooperate with the global market (Yaw, 2020). The Muslim travel market is experiencing rapid growth due to rising incomes, increased mobility, and a young Muslim demographic in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Middle East. Vietnam attracts many tourists from these nations, especially Malaysia and Indonesia. With over 300 million middle-class Muslims in Southeast Asia, there is significant growth potential. Muslim travellers seek natural beauty, culture, religious comfort, and social acceptance. Improving Halal readiness can help Vietnam increase its market share and reduce dependence on traditional sources.

In a significant policy development, Vietnam officially established the National Halal Certification Centre (HALCERT) in April 2024 under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The National Halal Certification Centre (HALCERT), established under Decision No. 689/QĐ-TĐC and operating under QUACERT, provides certification and conformity assessment services related to Halal for organisations and individuals in a legally compliant manner. This milestone boosts Vietnam's presence in the global Halal market, especially in food exports and tourism. Though early, HALCERT can certify restaurants, hotels, and services, improving readiness for Muslim travellers. Its creation signals Vietnam's commitment to the Halal economy and supports the development of Halal-friendly tourism.

Vietnam's location in the heart of Southeast Asia also places it in an ideal position to attract regional Muslim travellers (Mohammad & Rahman, 2020). Vietnam's strategic location near Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and Brunei makes it an attractive destination for Muslim tourists, whether visiting for short-term or long-term stays. It is improving air transport and expanding low-cost airlines to enhance regional connectivity. Growing trade, cultural, and diplomatic ties with Muslim-majority countries foster tourism growth. Bilateral agreements, cultural exchanges, and investments could establish Vietnam as a welcoming, accessible, and respectful destination for Muslim travellers.

### **4.3. Recommendations for Vietnam**

Before implementing Indonesia's successful model in Vietnam, practical challenges must be addressed. A key issue is the limited awareness of Islamic culture and Halal requirements among Vietnamese people and tourism stakeholders, as Vietnam has no large Muslim community like Indonesia. This can lead to misconceptions, inconsistent service, and social unpreparedness, ultimately hindering efforts to achieve success. Developing Halal tourism also demands significant upfront investment in certification and infrastructure, which businesses may hesitate to fund without precise market data, creating a "chicken-and-egg" problem. While Indonesia has a mature certification system, Vietnam's HALCERT is still in development and faces challenges related to credibility and administrative hurdles. Implementing a national strategy requires coordination across ministries, which can be a slow process. Service quality depends on a trained workforce knowledgeable about Islamic laws, which Vietnam currently lacks. Building this capacity is a long-term process. Recognising these challenges is essential to designing a realistic, phased approach. The following recommendations progressively address these barriers, starting with the most fundamental.

#### *4.3.1. Macro-Level Strategic Recommendations (For Government and Policymakers)*

This section outlines high-level strategies requiring state-level direction, coordination, and policy support. *Firstly*, Vietnam must learn from Indonesia's government-led approach by developing a comprehensive National Halal Tourism Strategy, led by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism. This strategy must coordinate clear goals and timelines among all relevant authorities. A critical component is establishing a transparent, internationally aligned

Halal certification process through the new HALCERT, ensuring it is accessible and credible for local businesses that cover food, accommodation, and services. *Secondly*, the government should actively pursue collaboration with international bodies, such as the OIC, IsDB, and ASEAN tourism groups, for technical and financial support. Partnerships with Indonesia and Malaysia are vital for capacity building. This macro-level effort also includes investing in public-facing Halal infrastructure, such as designated prayer rooms and certified food options at airports, transport hubs, and major tourist attractions. *Finally*, enhancing education on a national scale is crucial. This includes launching nationwide public awareness campaigns about Islamic culture and traveller needs. Furthermore, tourism education curricula in universities and colleges should be updated to include modules on Halal tourism and religious diversity.

#### *4.3.2. Micro-Level Operational Recommendations (For Businesses and Private Sector)*

This section details actionable steps that private enterprises (hotels, restaurants, tour operators) can implement to capture the Halal travel market. *Firstly*, businesses should be incentivised to pursue Halal certification. Hotels can implement 'Muslim-friendly' features such as providing prayer mats, Qibla indicators, and removing alcohol from mini-bars. Restaurants should invest in certified Halal kitchens, while tour operators can design itineraries that respect prayer times and dietary needs. *Secondly*, businesses can emulate Indonesia's success in digital promotion. This includes creating multilingual content (maybe using Arabic) for a dedicated Halal Tourism portal, collaborating with Muslim travel influencers, and utilising social media to showcase their certified services. This also involves developing specific products, such as Halal cooking classes or community-based homestays in culturally rich areas. *Ultimately*, the visitor experience depends on the staff. Businesses must invest in culturally sensitive training for their hospitality staff, focusing on Islamic values, dietary requirements, and professional, respectful service protocols to ensure a welcoming environment. Long-term education and awareness are vital for making Vietnam a welcoming place where Muslim tourists feel respected and well-served.

### **5. Conclusion**

Indonesia's model demonstrates that effective Halal Tourism development hinges on strong governmental commitment, robust Halal certification mechanisms, inclusive marketing strategies, and widespread public awareness. These elements have enabled Indonesia to position itself as a global hub for Halal Tourism, attracting millions of Muslim travellers annually. Vietnam, while rich in natural beauty and cultural heritage, currently lacks the necessary infrastructure, policy direction, and stakeholder coordination to meet the needs of Muslim tourists. However, by learning from Indonesia's holistic and strategic approach, Vietnam can bridge this gap. Key recommendations include establishing a transparent Halal certification system, providing targeted policy support, investing in Muslim-friendly infrastructure, offering culturally sensitive training to hospitality workers, and implementing proactive digital and international marketing strategies. Developing Halal Tourism in Vietnam offers economic benefits through market diversification, promoting intercultural understanding and religious inclusion. With deliberate planning and multi-sector collaboration, Vietnam has the potential to become a prominent destination in the global Halal Tourism network.

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