

*Halal Tourism: What Is Next For Sustainability?***Mohamed Battour**

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**Abstract**

Sustainability is a global topic that touches every element of human life, including economics, the environment, and social issues. Likewise, tourism is now one of the major sectors of markets where sustainability is becoming highly significant. Halal tourism is a relatively new concept in the tourism sector that presents new and unique potential for sustainability. It has an impact on biodiversity from an economic, environmental, and socio-cultural perspectives. This conceptual paper advances the scope of research into additional aspects of the Halal industry and sustainability. The paper provides suggestions to tourism operators and service providers to effectively adopt sustainable Halal tourism.

**Introduction**

The issue of embedding sustainability in the business model has become a must in many companies in different industries including the hospitality and tourism industry for many reasons. First, sustainability has been playing a growingly important role in defining both corporate and tourists' preferences in the tourism industry. Second, and thanks to the United Nations and then efforts from the media, the awareness of environmental issues has been increasing within the tourism industry and tourism destinations. Thirdly, the negative impacts emerging from the tourism industry on the climate and the environment have exerted intense pressure on this industry to adopt the idea of sustainability. Fourth, because tourism has such a large economic, environmental, and social influence in today's globe, its growth is tied to all three dimensions of sustainability (Streimikiene et al., 2021). Therefore, sustainability in hospitality and tourism is emerging as a topical issue influencing the success of tourism destinations (Garrigos-Simon, Narangajavana-Kaosiri, & Lengua-Lengua, 2018). Particularly, the hallmark of sustainability is not only the wellbeing of tourists, but the wellbeing of all stakeholders across the value chain has come to the fore. Future travellers, especially those who are younger, will be willing to reward tourism destinations for offering quality services that are more eco-friendly and culturally respectful of travellers. Travellers who have environmental awareness can pay a premium for enjoying tourism products and services that are environmentally respectful.

Sustainable tourism is adopted by the hospitality and tourism industry to mitigate the adverse effects of tourism on the environment, enhance the welfare of surrounding societies and promote social justice by imposing strict environmental regulations on the tourism industry. Therefore, the concept of sustainable tourism is gaining popularity around the world. In line with that, sustainable Halal tourism might be implemented by destinations that are willing to meet Muslim tourists' needs (M. Battour, Rahman, & Rana, 2019; M. Battour, Salaheldeen, & Mady, 2021). As global citizens, Muslims are more mindful that sustainable tourism is a constructive approach to improve economic, social, environmental impacts resulting from tourism destinations. Given the importance of global sustainability, it is vital to ensure that Halal tourism is following the proper way (Rhama, 2021). The issuing of a Halal certificate should not be the ultimate objective for tourism organizations, but it is required to ensure long-term sustainability (Meirezaldi, 2019). The Holy Qur'an and the purified Sunnah of the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) provide guidance in terms of many religious obligations that represent the basic pillars of sustainability and govern the human relationship with the environment - indeed, with the earth and the entire universe. For Muslim travellers, meeting religious commitments is not the only motive for supporting sustainability, but Muslim travellers can also be motivated by the global goals of sustainable development such as ending poverty, promoting well-being for people, and mitigating climate change (Rhama, 2021).

Halal tourism Market has recently been believed to be one of the world's biggest promising markets. Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) showed that; as the Muslim tourists are expected to reach 230 million by 2026 locally and internationally with \$300 billion injection in the global economy (see figure1). When it comes to Halal Tourism and its relationship with sustainability, there is a lack of research covering this topic conceptually and empirically. Therefore, this paper is aiming to provide a conceptual account of the connection of Halal-friendly tourism and sustainability. On this matter, this paper has explored the various perspectives related to the synergy between Halal-friendly tourism and sustainability, coupled with a discussion of the implications based on the proposed influences of Halal-friendly tourism on sustainability. Critical assessment of literature of both Halal tourism and sustainability is used to explore this relationship and suggest how Halal-friendly tourism becomes responsible toward sustainability. We tried to fill the missing link between Halal-friendly tourism and sustainability. The aim is to provide tourism operators and service providers with some suggestions to effectively adopt sustainable Halal tourism.

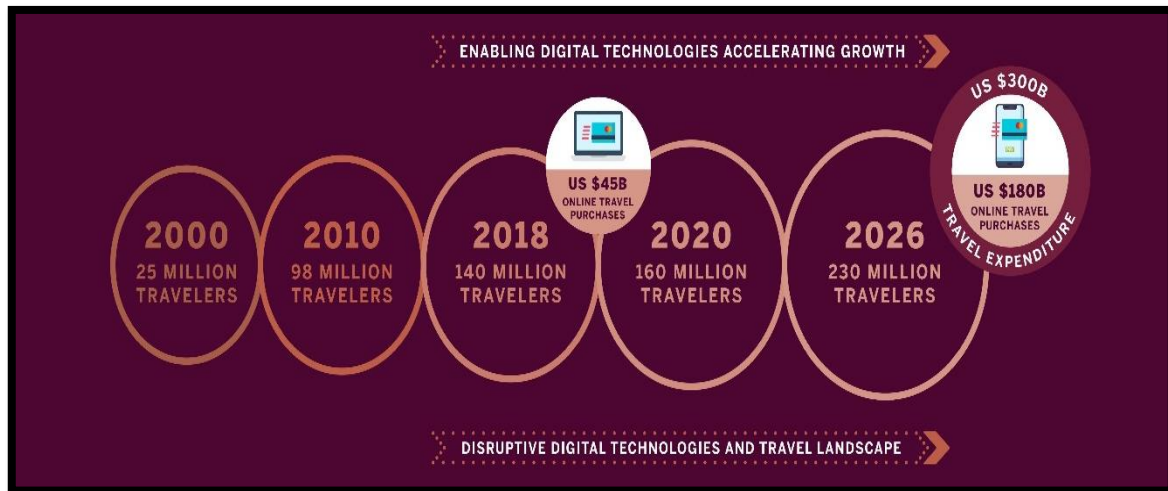


Figure 1. The growth of the Muslim travel market. Source: Global Muslim Travel Index 2019.

## Halal Tourism and Sustainability

Halal-friendly tourism has recently attracted great attention from both practitioners and academic research. In tourism literature, the notion of 'Halal tourism' was initially proposed by Battour in *Scopus journal* in 2010 (M. Battour, Ismail, & Battor, 2010; Ryan, 2016). Recently, Battour et al. (2021) defined Halal tourism "as any tourism object or action that is permissible according to Islamic teachings to satisfy the Muslim traveler's needs and achieve the destination's Muslim-friendliness". Before the use of the term 'Halal Tourism', the term of the 'Islamic Tourism' was used by Henderson (2009) as a standard terminology.

Halal tourism concept goes around Muslim travelers' needs as sometimes these are different compared to other tourists needs. Due to the absence of these needs, Muslim tourists may be reluctant to visit a specific destination. For example, the absence of Halal food and Halal restaurants can increasingly be a source of worry to Muslim travelers and to those with whom they interact. Moreover, some other Muslim traveler's needs might represent challenges for tourism operators and tourism service providers such as sharia-compliant hotels where the emphasis is on not serving alcoholic drinks and providing cultural activities, Islamic attire, Muslim prayer facilities, separated swimming pools, and gymnasium for both genders separately, Islamic entertainments i.e. Muslim TV channel, and segregated gender beaches (Ainin, Feizollah, Anuar, & Abdullah, 2020; M. M. Battour, Battor, & Ismail, 2012; Biancone, Secinaro, Radwan, & Kamal, 2019; Moshin, Brochado, & Rodrigues, 2020; Pamukcu & Sariisik, 2020).

Of late, sustainability has been covered in destination marketing literature (Elmo, Arcese, Valeri, Poponi, & Pacchera, 2020; Han, 2021; Nesticò & Maselli, 2020; Núñez-Ríos, Sánchez-García, Rojas, & Olivares-Benitez, 2020), however, literature relevant to sustainable Halal tourism has not been widely covered. Furthermore, there is still a lot of disagreement about what constitutes sustainable tourism among authors in the academic literature. As both (UNEP, 2004a); WTO (2005, pp. 11,12)

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defined, tourism sustainability is a tourism activity “that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, and the environment and host communities,”. According to this definition, there are three critical interconnected sectors that drive sustainable tourism: Economic, environmental/ecological, and social sustainability.

A Halal business model is conceived of as a strategic model in which sustainability could be exploited to ensure conducting business practices according to the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) (Karia & Asaari, 2016). As per Islamic teachings, the Islamic economic system distinguishes between lawful (halal) and prohibited (haram) goods and transactions (Raimi & Yusuf, 2021). The term “Tayyib” is frequently used as a synonym of halal, which is referred to as wholesome, i.e. harmless, healthful, or non-hazardous to health (Haleem et al., 2020). As the Muslim community also looks forward to achieving sustainable tourism development, there is no reason to believe the matter is diverse in the setting of Halal tourism (Aman et al., 2019). According to Hossain & Omar (2019), Halal tourism might lead to long-term tourism that has a positive impact on sustainability. Muslim tourists must be invited to participate in initiatives to build community empowerment in order to promote the development of sustainable tourism in Halal locations in this scenario (Lagarene, 2018). The elements of sustainability in relation to Halal tourism are discussed as follow:

### **Environmental sustainability**

Despite the fact that tourism is focused on health and the environment, it frequently has a negative influence on both. With the rapid growth of the tourism industry, the environment and public health can be subject to be endangered with several serious threats such as ecological degradation, global warming, waste of natural resources (Pulido-Fernández, Cárdenas-García, & Espinosa-Pulido, 2019). Moreover, eco-tourism destinations have recently become an optimal choice, especially for those who have mostly high consciousness towards the environment (Romão et al., 2014). Therefore, economic initiatives are crucial for tourism destinations, albeit incorporating environmental issues into the business model has been extremely important to sustain their competitiveness (Streimikiene et al., 2021).

The comprehensive Islamic view of sustainable development requires that this development not take place in isolation from religious and moral controls. There is also an environmentally friendly approach at the core of Islamic values that respects Mother Nature and also protects and cares for the environment. There are many Qur’anic verses that set some general rules for preserving natural resources, as Islamic teachings direct towards environmental sustainability. When it comes to tourism, Islam considered that the Muslim traveler is considered a servant of nature, and must coexist in harmony with all other creatures, and corruption of all kinds, including environmental corruption, which includes industrial pollution, environmental damage, and waste of natural resources, are hated by God Almighty, where He said God Almighty in the Holy Qur’an:

*“And they strive throughout the land [causing] corruption, and Allah does not like corrupters.”*  
Al-Ma’ida-64

The level of religiosity of Muslim tourist is at the heart of Halal tourism and the religious belief of Muslim travelers plays an important role of adopting an environmental sustainability approach and green behavior in tourism (Kaplan & Iyer, 2021). According to a study conducted by Saxena et al. (2020) in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, tourists' religious practises and spiritual beliefs are essential in fostering dedication to measures of environmental sustainability and community well-being. Understanding people's motives for adopting sustainable behaviors will help not only businesses and consumers, but also the environment (Minton, Kahle, & Kim, 2015). Although its role in sustainability is mixed (Kaplan & Iyer, 2021). Halal, which is at the heart of Halal-friendly tourism, expresses the concepts of sanitation, wholesomeness, and being considerate to society, the environment, and animals (Rezai et al., 2015). Food safety, health, naturalness, enjoyment, convenience, information, and ethical considerations such as environmental friendliness in food production and consumption have become increasingly important to Muslim tourists. Thus, Halal food manufacturing and processing will address issues such as sustainability and the environment, as well as ensuring that the product is safe and clean to consume (Rezai et al., 2015).

Tourism products and services should prioritize sustainable consumption issues in meeting environmental sustainability challenges (Streimikiene et al., 2021). There are several future recommendations for sustainable tourism, with key environmental indicators for the tourism sector such as climate change mitigation, pollution reduction, renewable energy use, waste disposal, and so on (UNEP, 2004b; UNWTO, 2013, 2014, 2017). Halal-friendly tourism where Islamic faith and ideology play a crucial role, must also consider these indicators while developing general guidelines and as part of Halal certification. In line with that, according to Rhama (2021), Halal tourism should start developing sustainable principles, establish more sustainable connections with communities and the environment, provide suitable and limited infrastructure for unsustainable tourist activities, and increase visitor surveillance methods. Innovations, research, and technology development, can also provide major solutions for dealing with the environmental difficulties of tourism development (Streimikiene et al., 2021).

### **Economical sustainability**

The Islamic view of sustainable development is to find a state of balance between the needs of development, both economic and social, on the one hand, and on the other hand, a commitment to ethical behaviour in dealing with the environment. According to Islamic teachings, Muslim believer has to invest to benefit from everything that is available to him. Therefore, economic and social development, according to this concept, is a religious and moral duty and has a civilized dimension linked to ensure a better life for people and the continuity of life components and requirements. The sustainable economy is encouraged by God Almighty, where He said God Almighty in the Holy Qur'an:

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*"And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." Al-Baqara-30*

Here, the evidence is clear from the noble verse, which is that man is the ruler of the land and disposes of what God has endowed with resources and blessings. When it comes to Halal Tourism as a business sector, we expect Halal tourism, in terms of its sustainable economy, to carry out this task by investing in the right opportunities, creating more jobs, and contributing to the national income.

The economic performance of tourism destinations is regarded as the most evident indicator of sustainability (Kristjánsdóttir, Ólafsdóttir, & Ragnarsdóttir, 2018). Sustainable hospitality and tourism through their economic initiatives can contribute to financial support for local communities (Dempsey, Bramley, Power, & Brown, 2011); advance infrastructure and amenities (Briassoulis, 2002); increase inward investment (Ko & Stewart, 2002); and enhancing quality-of-life and living standards for locals (Chhabra, 2005). Therefore, the powerful economic initiatives can act as a driver for developing the lesser-developed regions (Higham, 2007). In line with that, the halal tourism industry is predicted to reach 230 million by 2026 locally and internationally with \$300 billion injection into the global economy. Henderson (2010) states that Halal-friendly tourism seems to achieve the best economic prospects in Majority-Muslim countries, notably in the Middle East. Thus, Halal tourism could foster the economic growth of a country (El-Gohary, 2016). For example, Ghani (2016) stated that thanks to halal tourism, Malaysia has seen a rapid rise in economic growth. Thus, it is expected that destinations are willing to target Muslim tourist and adopt Halal Tourism will achieve a good step towards sustainable economy.

Halal tourism has extended beyond the religious boundary to fulfill the aforementioned demands, the essence of which lies in the wholesome character of consumables (Ayyub, 2015). Furthermore, Halal has become a source of sustainable competitive advantage for tourism destinations, coupled with being the customer-centric approach enabling them to face the cut-throat competition. Given that Halal products and services are subject to strict requirements such as minimizing production, which minimizes the risk of contamination, they are more appealing (Khan et al., 2021). Therefore, as important aspects of the sufficiency economic concept, symbolising "Halal" in tourism leads to a sustainable economy (Hossain & Omar, 2019).

### Social sustainability

Islamic belief system can act as a major reference for Muslims to recognize and copy the social, economic, and ecological issues in their everyday life (Turker, 2016). Islamic paradigm, which is seen as a holistic approach deriving its teachings from both the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) can also provide better guidelines for organizations during conducting their businesses and social responsibilities (Dusuki, 2008). As highlighted by Darrag & E-Bassiouny, (2013), social responsibility of corporations from Islamic perspective is considered a

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corporate value reflected in all their conducts which depends on the notion of “sincerity of intentions” toward *Allah*. In Quran, *Allah* said that:

*“If you give (your) alms openly it is well and good (in itself). But if you keep them secret and give them to the needy it is better for your ownelves.....” Al-Baqara-271.*

This states that concealing charity is better than publicizing it. From Islamic perspective, this “sincerity of intentions” makes corporations perform acts that are desirable, and recommended, but not obligatory (El-Bassiouny et al., 2017). The Islamic “CSR tree” model depicted by Alfakhri et al., (2018) divides Islamic corporate social responsibility into three main parties; private social responsibility (root), internal social responsibility(truck), and external social responsibility(crown). The former part represents corporate values and intentions such as fairness, and equality so it is invisible, albeit extremely important. The second and letter parts represent visible social activities and responsibilities which can be taken by corporations for either employees or society, customers, the environment, shareholders.

The concept of sustainable tourism has recently received ample attention from practitioners and scholars in the tourism field. It is important to not only improve environmental and economic performance, but also enable tourism destinations to provide local society and external communities with social benefits (LEE, OU, & CHOI, 2021). Social sustainability is defined by Colantonio and Dixon (2011) as “social sustainability related to how societies, communities and individuals live with each other and intend to carry out the objectives of the chosen development models while also considering the physical boundaries of their places and planet earth altogether”. In various industries, including tourism, this concept emphasizes the link between societies, communities, individuals, and governments in order to produce a social situation that provides fairness and a high quality of life. Social issues should be embedded in priorities of tourism destinations through emerging tourism products and services aiming increasing social welfare, developing local communities and fulfilling the needs of the society (Streimikiene et al., 2021). Tourism is therefore a condition and process of social sustainability that links the way that tourism groups, communities, individuals and governments work together, and that aims to pursue the goals of sustainable tourism models and to take into account also the physical limitations of the tourist destination and the whole planet earth.

The social aspect of sustainable tourism development is frequently overlooked, but long-term economic development is only possible if attention is paid to meeting the needs of both visitors and locals, ensuring that the environmental impact of increased traffic is minimal, and maintaining destination authenticity by recognizing the value of indigenous culture, customs, and traditions (Curran et al., 2018).When it comes to Halal tourism. it plays vital role not only on economic profit-seeking criteria, but also on social benefits such as preserving Islamic customs and traditions, preserving Islamic identity, creating job opportunities among Muslim youth, introducing Islamic teachings to non-Muslims. Furthermore, the social influence of Halal Tourism on the traveler as well as on the community and the environment will have a beneficial impact in the long term. Halal Travel helps Muslims link their past, their present and their future (Jeaheng, Al-Ansi, & Han, 2019). Muslim tourists

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relive their history and build inspiration from their historical worldwide backgrounds through heritage experiences. Cultural events help Muslims to comprehend and spread the network and worldview of their local traditions. This combination of experience generates fresh narratives that may be shared and inspired by Muslim visitors. Together with the destination and service providers, Muslim travelers work ready possibilities to conduct ethical and sustainable tourism, driven by Islam's significant emphasis on environmental, charitable and communal care (M. Battour et al., 2021; Salaheldeen & Nazri, 2019).

### Conclusion and implication

This paper tried to conceptualize the root of sustainability pillars (economic, environmental, and social) in Halal Tourism. Exploring whether Halal tourism is heading in the right direction is not an easy task. However, the sources of Islamic teachings support the concept of sustainability in Halal tourism. From environmental perspectives, Halal Tourism might contribute to climate change mitigation, pollution reduction, renewable energy use and waste disposal. Economically, the success of Halal Tourism businesses will achieve a good step towards a sustainable economy. Socially, designing Halal tourism programs that pride and adherence to the Islamic identity leads to respect for its civilizational, Islamic cultural values, and the manifestation of Islamic rituals. Adopting the Halal concept in the tourism sector as a business choice contributes to long-term sustainability. The spiritual reward is an extra achievement for Muslim commercial endeavors. As a result, it is critical to comprehend and promote the concept of sustainability in Halal tourism globally in order to boost the growth of the industry. This viewpoint will also encourage all tourists to embrace and accept halal tourism.

Practically, the flower of Halal tourism is still growing as shown in Figure 2, where there are core values should be delivered to Muslim travelers. Facilitating is referring to either needed for service delivery or help in the use of the core Halal tourism products and Enhancing is referring to add extra value for the Muslim customers. The fully grown flower may not exist in reality. When it comes to including sustainability in the flower of Halal tourism, it is difficult to achieve a perfect balance of the three pillars of sustainability when this flower is growing. Social sustainability might have the priority in Muslim friendly entertainments, privacy, and non-Halal Activities. On the other hand, economic and environmental sustainability might have the priority in designing Muslim friendly resorts and hotels. Therefore, the availability of the three aspects should be taken into account when growing the flower of Halal tourism, at least at the minimum acceptable level.

Halal tourism can promote wider implementation of sustainable tourism and is expected to lead towards sustainability issues by providing outstanding services, infrastructure availability, good human resources and policy support (Widyastutia, Parenrengib, & Tuzzaharac, 2019). Enhanced cooperation via research, training and events with stakeholders develops new understanding and appreciation for the entire ecosystem. These may be converted into specific recommendations to help experts in the sector become more informed about sustainability issues. new skills and competencies may be used to better serve Muslim tourists by tourism workers. Future visitors, especially younger



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travelers, will start to recognize locations and firms that can deliver great services while respecting the environment and culture(Scherrer, 2020). They are prepared to pay a premium to enjoy the convenience of their travel experience, knowing that they are environmentally friendly. More firms in the tourism sector understand that sustainable development is a genuine commercial and social advantage (Nocca, 2017).

Muslim tourists are exploring new experiences and destinations that differ from the ordinary. This craving for discovery has made Muslim tourists one of the fastest growing sectors in the global tourism industry. Up till now, it remains a potential market to exploit an enormous opportunity for all stakeholders. To capture these opportunities; governments, tourism service providers and businesses must understand the religious and cultural needs of Muslim tourists to satisfy them. New Technologies such as: artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) are also making an outstanding impact on the Sustainability of the tourism industry. Understanding Muslim visitors' requirements will also inspire innovation which has a beneficial network impact throughout the tourism value chain. This will also produce new jobs and boost the overall sustainable economy(Liat, et al,2020).

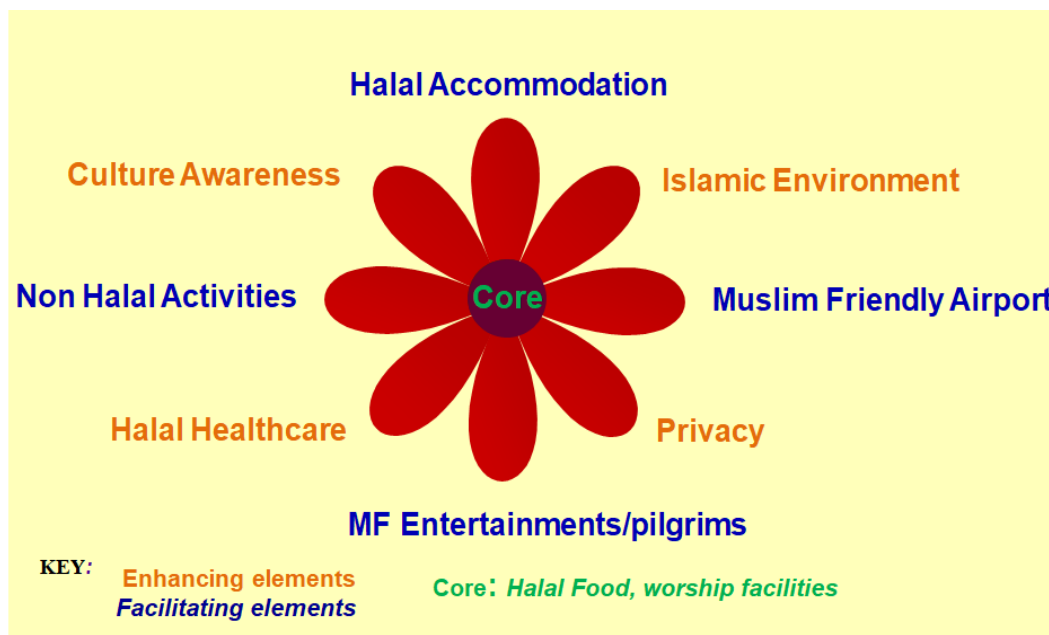


Figure 2. the flower of Halal Tourism. Source: authors

As mentioned earlier, Halal tourism sector as a business choice contributes to long-term sustainability. However, incentives should be given to the companies in this sector to motivate them to conclude sustainability in their business model. For example, the sustainability elements should be considered for certifying Halal friendly tourism products and services. Financial and taxation incentives should be given by Islamic destinations to Halal tourism organizations, as they preserve cultural heritage and Islamic values, and in turn social sustainability would be supported. Training programs should be developed to increase the environmental awareness among SMEs in Halal Tourism industry. Islamic

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banks should play a role in achieving sustainability in the Halal tourism sector by providing the necessary financing for start-up companies. This funding must be from the criteria of granting it taking into account the sustainability of the project.

This paper tried to fill the missing link between Halal-friendly tourism and sustainability. A conceptual account of the connection of Halal-friendly tourism and sustainability is discussed. While prospects in Halal tourism flourish around the world, this is another area where future research could be conducted. For example, empirical research might be conducted to enrich our understanding about this matter. additional opportunities for Halal tourism to contribute to sustainable development might be investigated. The obstacles that face Halal tourism to fully adopt sustainability might be addressed.

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