

## **An exploratory study of opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the perceptions of Stakeholders on the destination.**

**Foday Yaya Drammeh**

School of Business Administration, Innovation and Sustainability, Halmstad University, Sweden,  
[dramkangi@hotmail.se](mailto:dramkangi@hotmail.se)

### **Abstract**

This study is an exploratory study on opportunities for Halal tourism in The Gambia. It seeks the perception of stakeholders to lay a foundation and provide a better understanding of Halal tourism for the tourism industry, researchers, and officials in The Gambia.

The research is qualitative, including an in-depth literature review followed by a self-administered questionnaire answered by managers of tourism operations, tourism officials, and Islamic organisations regarding opportunities for Halal tourism in The Gambia. Content analysis was employed to present the findings using the destination capitals for tourism development, and requirements for Halal tourism as the unit of analysis.

The findings indicates that The Gambia has the socio-cultural capital that might be encouraging for Muslim to embark on holidaying in the country. Awareness of and meanings attached to Halal tourism by stakeholders are in line with the literature, as well as the willingness for product improvement to match with Halal tourism requirements.

The study provides a foundation for a better understanding of opportunities of Halal tourism in The Gambia and encourages stakeholders and researchers to explore new research questions to analyse opportunities for Halal tourism products and services as part of the country's product improvement and expansion initiatives.

**Keywords:** Halal Tourism, The Gambia, Destination Capitals, Stakeholder Perceptions, Organisation of Islamic Conference.

**Introduction**

Over decades, The Gambia has enjoyed growth in mainstream sun, sea, and sand tourism for the past 50 years with tourists mostly from European countries such as The United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway referred to as the traditional clientele base that tourism in the country relies upon as the bulk of its tourist supply. Tourism accounts for 20 percent of The Gambia's gross domestic product (GDP) and is the largest foreign exchange earner, according to the government (World Bank, 2022).

The Gambia's tourism sector is a key contributor to GDP and employment generation. However, it is prone to both, endogenous and exogenous risks that limit the sector's potential for inclusive and resilient growth (World Bank, 2022). Since the inception of tourism in The Gambia, the country has been relying on its sun, sea and sand seasonal all-inclusive tourism which has been criticised for potential risk of economic leakages involved, and the minimal participation of the Indigenous people in the tourism business activities (Drammeh, 2014).

On June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, The World Bank approved a \$68 million grant from the International Development Association (IDA) to support the diversification and climate resilience of the tourism sector in The Gambia. It is therefore essential to explore opportunities that would encourage improvements in the tourism product offering thereby to contribute to efforts to diversify the tourism product in The Gambia. A potential tourism segment to explore for that matter is Halal tourism. It is one of another new and growing market segments, which offers great potentials and opportunities for the tourism industry (Memis, 2017). It emerged as a new sector in the global economy, worth 2.3 trillion USD, currently dominated by Southeast Asia with Malaysia and Indonesia taking the lead, followed by other continents like the United States of America, Europe, and Africa (Sanneh and Kartika, 2021). This segment of the tourism industry is huge with massive purchasing power (Abbasian, 2021).

According to the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), the 15<sup>th</sup> Heads of State and Government Summit to was held in The Gambia, and during his inspection of the ongoing infrastructural developments in preparation for the summit, The President of The Gambia reaffirmed government's commitment to attaining the objectives of hosting the OIC. Some of the projects involved could be very relevant for the development of Halal tourism industry in the country. This segment of tourism would provide opportunities to cater for both Muslims and non-Muslim communities. Its products are not only consumed by Muslims, but the demand also comes from Muslim minority countries too (Nurdiansyah, 2018).

Current trends are emerging, and tourism need to be ready to make the most of such. Therefore, with The Gambia being a potential host for the forth coming Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit, exploring opportunities for the provision of tourism products and services that match the lifestyle Muslim tourists attending such a summit could benefit for the destination as future tourist product contributing to the tourism diversification ambitions of the country. There is now a growing interest in Halal tourism from the perspectives of both the industry and academic research is mostly by authors from Muslim countries with focus on such countries (Abbasian, 2021). Despite its promise and growth, Halal tourism as a research focus is still on its infancy (Jia and Zhang, 2020), and compared to other mainstream tourism concepts, it is still under-researched (Vargas-Sánchez and Moral-Moral, 2019).

African countries, for instance even with a large Muslim population seems to be underrepresented in such research. There is a need for further insight into new norms of travel preferences post-COVID-19 pandemic (Vargas-Sánchez and Moral-Moral, 2019) caused by virus (WHO, 2020) that provides striking lessons to the tourism industry, policymakers, and researchers regarding the effects of global change (Gössling et al., 2020). The situation forced destinations to seized operating following lockdowns, travel bans, bookings cancelations, and limited logistics (Fotiadis et al., 2021; Drammeh, 2024).

Muslims spend on tourism reached \$154 billion in 2022 and reach \$189 billion by 2025, portraying the opportunities available for tourism industry players (Salam Gateway, 2023). Considering the availability of the physical environment, cultural and artificial appeal, and the existence of a large Muslim population in the country, it is essential to investigate the opportunities in such a tourist segment in The Gambia. This might not only enrich the tourism product offering but also contribute to the diversification of the tourism economy and activities in the country.

### **Aim of The Research**

The aim of this paper to explore opportunities for Halal tourism in The Gambia by expanding its product offering to include elements of Halal consumption and lifestyle. It will be built upon the concept of the destination three capitals model for sustainable tourism, which includes sociocultural capital, human capital and environmental (Drammeh, 2014) to explore the perception of tourism stakeholders in The Gambia regarding Halal tourism. It investigates:

1. Stakeholders' awareness of Halal tourism in the tourism industry in The Gambia.
2. Meaning of Halal Tourism.
3. Provision of Halal products and service in the hospitality and tourism industry in The Gambia.
4. Demand for Halal products and services in tourism industry in The Gambia.
5. Opportunities for Halal tourism in The Gambia.

The objective derived from the aim of this research is to identify opportunities for the development of Halal tourism in The Gambia. The research can provide opportunities for the expansion of the tourism product offering, facilitate the long-sorted ambition of diversifying the tourism activities from the dependence on mainstream tourism sun, sea, and sand seasonal tourism to include a non-traditional form of tourism that would be inclusive, as well as encourage new business ventures derived the from destination capitals.

While The Gambia demonstrates potentials to provide other forms of tourism apart from its long dependent on the sun, sea and sand seasonal tourism, ambitions are also high in providing a well-informed strategy in venturing into a diversification strategy to improve the product offering. Halal tourism might fulfill such an ambition. However, a specific study on Halal tourism in The Gambia is so far limited. It is thus essential to conduct exploratory research that provides better understanding of opportunities for Halal tourism for the country.

This research will provide the much-needed informed scientific knowledge regarding opportunities for Halal tourism in The Gambia and a foundation for future research in the area. It will complement efforts around the country's tourism diversification strategy, and highlight needs, requirements and information leading to novel ideas for the expansion of the tourism product offering in the country to include Halal tourism.

## **Literature Review**

Tourism involves a short-term movement of people to destinations outside their usual places of living or work usually for vacation or leisure activities referred to as tourist. They are visitors, and what they do whilst visiting another place may be considered as tourism (Camilleri, 2018). On the basis of movement, they are categorised as domestic or inbound tourists which is meant for people from the same country or area which is their usual place of residence where they stay for short period of time for relaxation, leisure activities, for amusement and other activities different from their usual daily

activities; while the international or outbound tourists involves persons leaving their usual place of residence and temporary visiting a foreign country for relaxation, leisure activities, for amusement and other activities different from their usual daily activities (World Tourism Organisation, 1994).

Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, UNWTO, 2018), and closely linked to development encompassing a growing number of new destinations with dynamics that have turned tourism into a key driver for socioeconomic progress on a destination striving for sustainability.

However, due to the homogeneous nature of tourists, they have diverse needs, interest, behaviours, and lifestyle. Market segmentation is a useful tool to divide the tourism market into diverse groups in terms of characteristics, attitudes, and needs for products or services (Feng, 2022). This is defined as the process of identifying groups of customers who are homogenous, to tailor and develop the products accordingly (Brennan, 2003), classifying them into groups based on needs, characteristics, or behavior (Sarigöllü and Huan 2005). Numerous studies have dealt with tourist motivations and market segmentation based on profiles of target groups and measuring the attractiveness of the market (Zhang and Marcussen, 2007).

Among the new and growing market segment is Halal tourism, offering great potentials and opportunities for the tourism industry (Memis, 2017). There is growing interest in new concepts such as “Islamic tourism,” another concept is “Halal hospitality,” which is akin to the concept of “Halal food,” (Battour et al., 2011). This is a segment that seems to be interesting to explore opportunities for the expansion of tourism in The Gambia and its efforts to diversify from its heavy dependence on winter seasonal tourism.

Muslim friendly tourism is another term that is also used (Suban et al., 2021). “Islamic tourism” and “Halal tourism” are often the two most used terms interchangeably in the literature to denote tourism products and services addressing Muslim travelers' needs (Battour et al., 2011). However, there are some distinctions between the two concepts. The fundamental concept of Islamic tourism has been highlighted in the Holy Quran (Ab-Rahman and Laderlah, 2018), and it is principally a different ‘touristic’ version of pilgrimage that unifies religious and leisure tourism which proposed as an alternative to the hedonic conceptualization of mass tourism (Jafari and Scott, 2013).

Halal tourism on the other hand, is derived from the word “Halal” which is a term exclusively used by Muslims meaning something that is permitted or lawful in accordance with Islamic teachings and

codes of conduct with its source of reference derived from the Holy Quran (Memis, 2017). It is defined as any activity in tourism that is permitted according to Islamic teachings which are directly related to religion and doctrine (Islamic law, Islamic values, principles, beliefs, and Islamic worship) (Battour and Ismail 2016).

Quran encourages Muslims to travel or *ziyarah* (*Muslim pilgrimage*) to fully appreciate the beauty of Allah's world and visit their friends and relatives. Historically, Islamic tourism relates to people travelling to Mecca for pilgrimage practices to perform one of the pillars in Islam, by visiting sacred places (Zamani and Henderson, 2010), to perform Hajj, Umrah, Rihla, and Ziyara for spirituality while participating in leisure travel religiously (Hanafiah et al., 2022). This type of tourism is purely for Muslims and involves taking part in Islamic activities and rites such as worship or visiting Islamic historic places.

The impact of religious beliefs on Muslim tourist behaviour comes from two sources; first, clear guidelines on behaviour or practices that are acceptable or allowed in religion (Halal) and not obtained by religion (Haram), Secondly, tourist behaviour is influenced by the fact that religion can shape the culture, attitudes, and values of society (Battour et al., 2011). The requirements of Halal influence the production of a wide range of consumer goods too, and apart from food and drink, it is administered around cosmetics and pharmaceuticals (Fisher, 2008). Although, Muslims are the main groups of people that practice such unique behaviours in terms of food they eat, drink, the type of company they keep, and the activities they undertake (Timothy–Olsen, 2006), they also share common beliefs with the Jewish communities of faith in terms of food and approach to Halal. Halal products are open for both Muslims and non-Muslim consumers, many people including politicians, and even researchers in the field of Halal consumption tend to believe that concept is for Muslim consumption.

### **Halal Tourism**

Halal tourism is described as Muslims traveling for pleasure or business to tourist sites in non-Islamic and Islamic nations are not specifically prohibited by Islamic Sharia (Bogan and Sarnsik, 2019). Apart from food and drink, it is also administered around a wide range of products, the requirements of Halal influence the production of a wide range of consumer goods too (Fisher, 2008). Consumption of alcohol and other intoxicants is prohibited, and Quran says, “leave it aside in order that ye may succeed” Chapter V, Verse 9. It is a new concept of tourism that needs special attention even for

countries that represents Islamic behaviors (Rhama and Alam, 2017). Products and services provided in hotels and restaurants, and recreation facilities are of concern to tourists seeking for Halal and requires forming their products and services according to the needs and lifestyle of Muslim tourists (Memis, 2017).

Recognising that tourism is a form of capitalist endeavour manifested in market-led production and consumption of tourism products, services, and experiences, it has been suggested that the 'destination capitals' perspective provides the most appropriate framework for optimising the economic benefits of tourism to the destination (Sharpley, 2009). Halal and non-Halal covers all spectrums of Muslim life, not limited to foods and drinks only, but also for safety, animal welfare, social justice, and sustainable environment (Baharuddin et al.,2015). Halal products, such as confectionary and food ingredients, which adheres to the Islamic system have attracted much attention among members of Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) countries (Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) (2016).

The concept provides products and services that meet the needs of Muslim travelers, facilitating worship and meeting dietary requirements of Muslim travelers conforming to Islamic teachings (Vargas-Sanchez and Moral-Moral, 2019). Such requirements are usually found within the destination capitals for tourism development. Basically, the Halal industry consists of three main sectors: food, non-food, and services (Syahril et al.,2020), and while the food sector includes all kinds of food, such as processed foods, canned food, meats, meat-based products and animal slaughtering sites, products such as cosmetics, health care products, pharmaceuticals and skin products are also included as part of the non-food sector. The services sector within the Halal regime includes banking, capital markets, tourism, hospitality, logistics and marketing (Aziz, and Vui, 2012).

The environment in which Halal tourism is practice is of vital importance for this market segment. It requires Halal-compliant facilities and services with emphasis on Muslim prayer facilities (masjid), not serving alcoholic drinks, or food that are prohibited for Muslims to consume such as pork meat or pork products, blood, animals, and birds that were killed and horned by predators, animals that died due to ill-treatment, food that contains any combination of alcoholic beverage, gender separated swimming and gym facilities. 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 (Battour et al, 2021).

According to MasterCard and Crescent Rating (2016), Muslims are increasingly looking at destinations with important levels of services which considers their unique needs, including products and services that adhere to the principles of Halal requirements. More than 50 Muslim countries and about 2 billion Muslims are the potential consumers from this lucrative tourism market worth 2.3 trillion USD (Syahrial, et al., 2020). The global Muslims will make up 27 % of the world's total projected population of 8.3 billion in 203, is projected to increase rapidly in the decades ahead, growing to 2.8 billion in 2050 (Pew Research Centre, 2015).

Halal tourism has attracted the attention of many countries, it is a new concept of tourism practice, and not surprising that its activities are highly concentrated in Muslim majority countries. With Islam being fastest growing and most youthful religion in the world, this trajectory is expected to continue (Abbasian, 2021). Therefore, research on the phenomena is only widespread with Islamic profiled countries (Abbasian, 2021). However, non-Muslim majority countries are also said to be offering Halal tourism. South Africa, for instance is listed as the third most 'Halal friendly' country in the non-Muslim world (Crescent Rating, 2013). The growth and demand for such products is felt in the international tourism industry as Muslims travel more (Battour et al., 2011).

Although the term "Halal" is used by non-Muslims mostly to refer to forbid for swine meat and alcohol, or way of slaughtering and preparation of meat according to Islamic teachings, its meaning within Islam is far broader than that. Its economic and social development 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 (Battour et al, 2021). It expresses the concept of sanitation, wholesomeness, and being considerate to society, the environment, and animals (Rezai et al., 2015). Thus, food manufacturing and processing will address environmental issues, as well as ensuring that the product is safe and clean for consumption (Rezai et al., 2015; Battour et al, 2021). Incorporating environmental issues into the tourism business model is important to sustain competitiveness (Streimikiene et al., 2021).

Halal tourism has been a new topic in tourism research for two decades due to its growing market (Razalli et al., 2012). During the Global Islamic Economy Summit 2013, experts observed that the Halal travel and tourism industries in non-Muslim countries are doing much better than in Muslim countries and consequently asked the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to concentrate their focus on the potential of the industry (*Eat-halal.com, in Islamic Information Portal, 2013*). According to prior pilot surveys in The Gambia, more than 85% percent of the population supports the



development of a Halal business (Sanneh and Kartika, 2021), meaning a strong demand for Halal products and services in the country. Many countries want a share of this market, including the non-Muslim majority countries.

## **The Gambia**

The Gambia is a small country in the west coast of Africa that stretches for approximately 400 km, with width from 24 to 48 km along its riverbanks. The Gambia is 11,300 square km; with land covering 10,000 Sq.km, and water 1,300 Sq.km, with topography dominated by The River Gambia stretching through the entire length of the country. Its climate is tropical with dry and wet seasons. The dry season is between November and May.

The country's geographic location combined with the extensive wetland systems result in a wide range of habitat types supporting diverse plants and animal species. It is home to a variety of birds, fishes, and mammals. Such resources are important resources of survival for local communities in The Gambia and are now part of the tourism product in the country (Drammeh, 2014). Land and water resources are central to Gambian life, and irrigation agriculture (tidal or mechanized) is the highest user of the river water.

The river Gambia and its tributaries are central to the country's water resources running the entire length of the country and provide vital socioeconomic, cultural, scientific, aesthetic, and environmental values. The country has no mineral resources and only one sixth of the land is arable (Drammeh, 2014). The vegetation ranges from open savannah to woodlands and shrub land which are important sources of food and other means of subsistence.

Temperatures in the cool dry season vary between 70oF (21oC) and 80oF (27oC) with relative humidity between 30% and 60% (Jaiteh, 2007). This is the period for tourism activities in The Gambia referred to as "the tourist season" (Drammeh, 2014). The wet season is in the summer months from June to October when farmers begin work on their farmlands.

The population of The Gambia is estimated at 2,8 million people in 2024 (Worldometer, 2023). Within this population are different ethnolinguistic groups including Mandinka, Wolof, Fulla, Jola, Serahulay, Aku, Manjago and other Indigenous languages are also spoken living in the same communities harmoniously. English is the official language but there are also few people who speaks other languages such as French and Arabic.

The country has a Muslim majority population constituting 96 % of the people, some 3 % are Christian, and 1% practice other religions (including African Traditional Religions). It is one of the poorest countries in the world with lowest per capita GDP. According to the most recent poverty survey, 48% of the population is considered poor (below the national poverty line), of which 70% are living in rural areas (Ecowas Bank for Investment and Development (EBID), 2022). A large majority of the people are engaged in agriculture and in raising livestock including cattle, goats, sheep, and chicken.

Along with groundnut production, other chief crops include rice, millet, sorghum, corn, manioc, yams, taro, plantains, and beans. Recent economic growth indicates growth in the services sector including tourism, financial services, telecommunication, and construction (The *Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency* (GIEPA) 2022). The most important source of energy in The Gambia is the fuelwood fetch from the woodlands on which many the population depends on for domestic cooking, building construction, hunting, and medication. A large variety of fruits are grown including mangos, bananas, pawpaws, limes, oranges, coconut, and grapefruit. Vegetables include okra, pumpkin, cucumbers, onions, bell peppers, and tomatoes. The main exports of the country are peanuts, fish, and cotton.

The Gambia has a narrow economic base, and an external sector that is heavily dependent on re-exports, tourism, and remittances from overseas (World Trade Organisation,2022). It has an active private sector, including both local and foreign direct investments. The tourism industry plays a substantial role in supporting economic growth and development and provide opportunities for industrial linkage in the country. It is one of the country's top sources of foreign exchange, industrial development and employment opportunities for youths and women.

### **Tourism in The Gambia**

The UN has classified The Gambia under the Least Developed Countries category in 1975 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Economic Analysis, 2022), and among the 49 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for whom tourism is emerging as an important development opportunity and recognized as a priority development sector for poverty alleviation. Over the years, the country has become a well-established tourism destination, which is a key contributor to the GDP and employment generation. It developed its tourism industry around its built environment, it people and

their cultures, fauna and flora, sea, sand beaches, and sun, and large stretches of coastline from the mid-1960s.

The Gambia is designated the “Smiling Coast” of Africa using the hospitality of its people to attract tourists. The country has been advertised as a destination with “A climate that has been designed as one of the best in the world, mile upon mile of Sun splashed beaches, tall coconut palms, blue tropical skies, and a river that can take you right into the heart of Africa” (Ministry of Tourism of The Gambia, 1995). Its aim is to develop its tourism industry for economic growth, as well as to promote her cultural values and heritage globally, and as to expand it trying industrial development which resulted to the development of infrastructure, industrial development, and the growth of the social and cultural sectors in the country.

Since its inception in the country, coastal tourism has been attractive to international tour operators who brings tourist to the country leading to the establishment of all-inclusive hotels attracting Scandinavians and other European low budget tourists. Tourism activities, and foreign investment became particularly strong in the development of accommodation facilities, catering outlets, tour operating and travel businesses around the Kombo St Mary area along the Tourism Development Area (TDA) concentrated on a 10 km strip along the Atlantic Ocean from Cape Point in Bakau and eventually spread to Fajara, Kotu and Bijilo in the coastal areas (Drammeh, 2014). About 80 km long of which almost 2.5 km lie around the bay shaped mouth of the Gambia River estuary and the rest directly faces the Atlantic Ocean. The area became completely out of bound for residential purposes declared for the development of tourists’ facilities only. Foreign companies started to heavily invest in the tourism sector in the country concentrating their activities around the TDA where they control most of the tourism related operations. Hotels, guest houses, lodges, bars and restaurants, and souvenir shops are provided, and local people employed as unskilled workers. The area designated as the tourism development area (TDA) comprising of Bijilo, Kololi, Kotu, Fajara and Bakau outlining an area designated for tourism development around the coastal region.

The Gambia’s tourism industry is primarily seasonal, and most tourists travel during the Northern Hemisphere winter primarily relying on the charter market, with most tourists on package tours. Most tourists visiting the country come from European including UK, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway referred to as the traditional clientele base that The Gambia relies upon for the bulk of its tourist supply. The main tourist suppliers to the country are still tour operators from abroad supplying almost 90% of the tourist accommodation available in the country, including the 20 large

hotels, and other tourist facilities spread throughout the country (Ministry of Tourism and Culture of The Gambia). All tourists visiting The Gambia are holidaymakers and 84% of them on package tours that include flights, transfers and bed and breakfast accommodation in a hotel with a 77 percent concentration on the period between November and March (The Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The number of hotels has increased significantly over the past decades, and there is still considerable room for expansion (Ministry of Tourism, Drammeh, 2014).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2022), travel and tourism is responsible for creating employment for circa 140,000 people or 19% of total employment in the country. Tourism is estimated to account for 22% of GDP, rising since the early 90s surpassing the export of groundnuts, which has historically been the country's biggest income earner for The Gambia. It represents about 16-20% of national income and over 30% of all export earnings (Ministry of Tourism and Culture of The Gambia).

However, with the focus on cheap holidays has constrained profitability and discouraged investment in product improvement as well as in new accommodation and product diversification (The Gambia Tourism Development Master Plan, 2006). For years, The Gambia has been dependent its mainstream on all-inclusive dominated by European tour operators serving low-end European mainstream holiday package tourists (Mitchell and Fall, 2007). Full accessibility to people is difficult to achieve and should be seen as a concern to make tourism services more accessible and focused on the specific and individual needs of people as tourists (Rebelo et al., 2022).

The existing destination strategies can no longer satisfy market requirements (Weiermair 1998). In many advanced economies, tourism is increasingly becoming a knowledge-based activity with an immense potential for the development of place- and practice-based innovation strategies, which depend on the human skills and natural and cultural resources available in specific places and regions (Romão and Nijkamp, 2018). It is appropriate to notice a destination as a territory offering a certain set of services that meet the needs of the tourist, satisfying his demand for transportation, accommodation, food, entertainment, as the purpose for travel (Zigern-Kom, 2018), with strong dependency on cultural and natural resources, its competitiveness depends on the sustainable use of territorial assets (Weidenfeld, 2018).

As the global tourism now opens-up after the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential support efforts in bringing back and increase the number of new visitors to the destination, as well as open for new opportunities along-side the traditional main-stream customers. With the current competitive

structures, and demand for other forms of tourism, The Gambia have potentials to develop alternative forms of tourism different from the mainstream sun, sea, and sand tourism it is currently offering. It is argued that the type of tourism developed and consequently the visitors attracted, and with the type of companies that organise and arrange the trips, will impact strongly on the opportunities that tourism can offer (Meyer, 2003).

According to pilot surveys in The Gambia for instance, more than 85% percent of the population supports the development of a Halal business (Sanneh and Kartika, 2021), meaning a strong demand for Halal products and services in the country. There is a growing consensus that tourism is a social good of first necessity, constituting an essential aspect in quality of life, and should, therefore, be available to all people, regardless of their physical, economic and/or social conditions (Devile, in Rebelo et al, 2022). Efforts have been made to develop strategies to promote such a tourism segment in several countries, by diversifying tourism products to allow tourists to freely choose the products they want (Carboni et al., 2016). The segment is currently dominated by Southeast Asia countries with Malaysia and Indonesia taking the lead, followed by other continents like the United States of America, Europe, and Africa (Sanneh and Kartika, 2021). Mastercard and CrescentRating (2017), provides the top preferred destination of Muslims in Africa.

**Table 1: Top 30 preferred touristic destinations for Muslims in Africa.**

Nr	Country	Score	Nr	Country	Score	Nr	Country	Score
1	Morocco	68.1	11	Somalia	44.9	21	Cameroon	38.3
2	Egypt	64.1	12	Sierra Leone	44.7	22	Guinea-Bissau	37.7
3	Tunisia	61.1	13	Tanzania	44.3	23	Mozambique	37.1
4	Algeria	59.4	14	Guinea	42.1	24	Gabon	36.6
5	Senegal	54.5	15	Mauritius	41.6	25	Togo	36.6
6	South Africa	53.6	16	Mali	41.6	26	Benin	34.9
7	Sudan	49.2	17	Nigeria	41.2	27	Uganda	33.3
8	Djibouti	48.5	18	Niger	39.1	28	Chad	31.3
9	Comoros	45.7	19	Côte d'Ivoire	38.9	29	Swaziland	31.0

10	The Gambia	45.1	20	Kenya	38.4	30	Zimbabwe	30.8
----	------------	------	----	-------	------	----	----------	------

Source: Mastercard and CrescentRating, 2017

Tourism should have a multiplier effect across economic sectors – such as accommodation and food services, agriculture, retail, and transport – and when sustainably managed can contribute to economic diversification, enhance local culture and products, promote local enterprises and support job creation (International Labour Organisation, 2022). Therefore, apart from the long sandy beaches along the Atlantic, all-year round sunshine, colorful birds and fishing, historical heritage, and hospitality and cultures of the people, The Gambia should explore opportunities and the possibilities to improve the tourism facilities and operational standards to conform with the standard requirements for Halal tourism.

Hosting the OIC summit would add value to this ambition as it will raise awareness about Halal consumption including tourism, finance, food, and drink (9<sup>th</sup> OIC Halal Expo, 2022). During his inspection of the ongoing infrastructural developments in preparation for the summit in August 2022, The President of The Gambia reaffirmed government's commitment to attaining the objectives of hosting the OIC. The summit is expected to host heads of states and governments with the arrival of around 1000 delegates from 57 OIC member states including heads of states and governments officials. Another event is the Conference of African Ulama that brought together Ministers of Religious Affairs, Islamic scholars, policymakers, students, organizations, and community leaders across Africa to discuss and advance Islamic values promoting peace and tolerance held in The Gambia 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

For a country to be regarded as Muslim friendly (Halal tourism), three main criteria are considered: safety and quality of holidays for tourists coming with their family; quality of Halal services and how the tourists are received upon arrival (ease of access to places of prayer, accommodation, and restaurant options); as well as communication and marketing related to Halal tourism (Mastercard and CrescentRating, 2017).

The increasing demand for Halal products, including goods and services, especially for food and beverages, has resulted in a growing need for products with Halal guarantees (Pratikto et al., 2021). Food safety, health, naturalness, enjoyment, convenience, information, and ethical considerations such as environmental friendliness in food production and consumption have become increasingly important for Muslim tourists (Battour et al, 2021).

Most of The Gambian population are Muslims living such lifestyle including their relationship to the natural environment in terms of spirituality passed down from generation to generation through Islamic ways of living. The Islamic characteristics of the population is a good precondition and part of the sociocultural capital of the destination that could make the country attractive for both domestic, regional, and international Halal tourism. The Gambia possesses potentials to be a destination that can offer diverse products that complements its sun, sea, and beach tourism. There is need to explore such opportunities for tourism in the country.

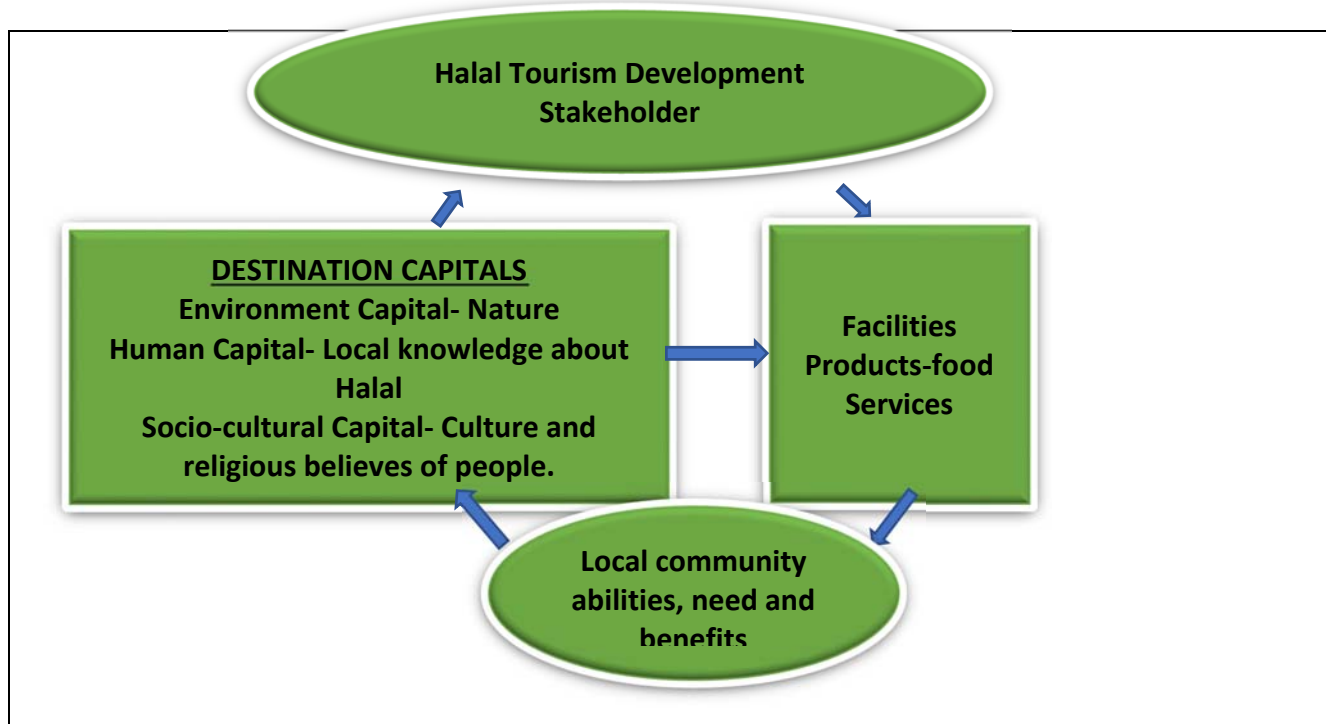
### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this paper is built on the destination capitals model suggested by Sharpley, (2010) which is modified to describe the provision of products and services around the concept of Halal tourism, namely the environmental, human, socio-cultural, economic, technological, and political capital of destination that investors relied upon to create tourism business activities. It focuses on the destination capitals three components of the model including the environmental capital, sociocultural capital, and the human capital for sustainable tourism that destinations such as Gambia can have full control over to enable them to operate their tourism business environment based on the (Drammeh, 2014).

These capitals that obtains within the destination may be exploited in ways which meet the need for environmental sustainability reflecting on local development objectives and which take advantage of opportunities offered by the external market (Sharpley, 2009). It allows the identification of components of the destination capitals that can contribute to sustainable tourism (Drammeh, 2014). This is the tourism which is economically viable and does not destroy the resources on which the future of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fabric of the host community.” (Swarbrooke, 1999: 13).

A destination’s development of tourism must be sustainable, not just economically and ecologically, but also socially, culturally, and politically as well as to focus on long-term economic prosperity as the yardstick, industry level attributes as well as mainstream tourism destination’s attractiveness attributes destination’s competitiveness and sustainability (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). Therefore, the environmental, socio-cultural, and human capitals, which are readily available to locals on the destination, are important components of Halala tourism.

**Figure 1 Destination three capitals**



Adopted from Drammeh, 2014 The destination three-capitals model for sustainable tourism development in LDCs.

To operate Halal tourism in Gambia, it is essential for the tourism ecosystem to be able to provide the required facilities, such as the accommodation facilities, amenities and services that adheres to Halal tourism requirements in accordance with the teachings of Islam.

The Gambia is a country known for its hospitality with a rich historical heritage, where over 90% of the population are Muslims. This is part of the sociocultural component of the destination capitals encompassing human capital that stakeholders in tourism can rely on explore opportunities for tourism product development or improvement (Sharpley, 2009).

Stakeholders are a groups or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation to fulfil their own goals and on whom, the organisation can also depend upon (Johnson, Scholes, and Whittington 2006), as employees, customers, suppliers, stockholders, banks, environmentalists, government, members of the communities, governments (Freeman, 1984). They represent 'a group that the company needs to exist, particularly customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders, and communities' (Dunham, Freeman, and Liedtka, 2006). Stakeholders can impact directly or indirectly on tourism planning and development (UNWTO 2005), and in connection with formal, official, or contractual relationships and have a direct economic impact or without which the organization cannot survive (Freeman, 1984).



The environmental capitals which is part of the resources that could be part of the Halal tourism attraction, may be exploited in ways which meet the need for environmental sustainability reflecting on local development objectives (Sharpley, 2009). These destination capitals are easily accessible to locals and through their knowledge of Halal requirements, can create the required Halal tourism products and services in accordance with demand and needs of tourists to fulfil such development aspirations of the destination. Environmental approach considers the core of Islamic values that put emphasis on respect to nature, protect and care for the environment (Battour et al., 2021).

The country is chosen as the forth coming host of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). The organisation puts emphasis on the emerging Halal Tourism market with potential to give OIC Member States a competitive edge in this sub-sector and called on both public and private players is the tourism industry to invest more in Halal Tourism. According to prior pilot surveys in The Gambia, more than 85% percent of the population supports the development of a Halal business (Sanneh and Kartika, 2021). The concept of destination capitals will be explored in context of The Gambia for opportunities for the provision of Halal tourism in the country.

## **Research Method**

This study explores the potentials for Halal tourism in Gambia is carried out first by reviewing the literature on the phenomena, the tourism development strategies of the government, the social and religious setting of the country, reports from international organisations relating to Halal products and services, and scientific journal articles on Halal Tourism and expert opinions. A self-administered questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended questions that provides respondents the freedom to choose how to answer the research questions was developed with items are built from the literature.

In this regard, a total of 70 questionnaires are sent out to managers of tourism operations, tourism officials, and Islamic organisations to answer questions regarding opportunities for Halal tourism in Gambia. Considering the current global issues, that the world is still facing a health risk of the COVID-19 virus at the time with recommendation and restrictions to limit the spread of infection including maintaining physical distance, using the blessing of electronic survey was considered appropriate to collect the needed data to answer the research questions. This method is to be useful in the COVID-19 era (Faggiano and Carugo, 2020), and was less costly to investigate the psychological impact of COVID-19 on hotel employees in Ghana (Mensah, 2021). The self-administered questionnaire through

electronic surveys is an important data collection tool in clinical practice and epidemiology (Faggiano and Carugo, 2020), partly due to its ability to minimise the spread of disease.

This method of data collection is less resource-intensive than other data collection methods, and ideal for achieving wide geographical population coverage and for dealing with sensitive topics (Faggiano and Carrugo, 2020). Technological advances and the proliferation of the use of internet can be credited for such advancement and progress in data collection methods. The nature of this study is explanatory, with data collected through extracting information from respondents using quantitative questions regarding what is known in terms of respondent's knowledge of the tourism business environment and the destination capitals for Halal tourism.

In the absence of technological, financial and political capital which are the major development challenges that most least developed countries are confronted with, there are possibilities through local knowledge to utilize the three destination capitals; *environmental, human and socio-cultural capitals* that are available and easily accessible to locals enabling them to create activities that could become part of the tourism *products, facilities and services* on the destination in accordance with *local community needs* thereby encouraging sustainable tourism development in LDC (Drammeh, 2013). The study was done in natural settings of the respondents interpreting the phenomena and its meanings to the people (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003), to help understand new phenomena better (Malhotra, Birks, and Wills, 2012). It seeks to unearth thoughts and the perceptions of the research respondents, meanings attached to the phenomena, experiences, seeking insight, and identifying the social structures or processes that explains approach, facilities, and possibilities for the provision of Halal tourism in the Gambia. The survey questions asked and answered are arranged in five thematic areas including awareness of halal tourism, Meaning of Halal Tourism, Demand for Halal products and services in tourism industry in The Gambia, Provision of Halal products and service in the hospitality and tourism industry, and Opportunities for Halal tourism in The Gambia.

The study offers new insights that presents unexplored opportunities such as Halal tourism in the in The Gambia with focus on the destination three capitals for tourism development allowing the identification of the components that can contribute to a sustainable tourism in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) (Drammeh, 2013). It provides an in-depth discussion of the written information gathered from the secondary data, as well themes, patterns, meanings, and assumptions from written documents (Berg and Latin, 2008).

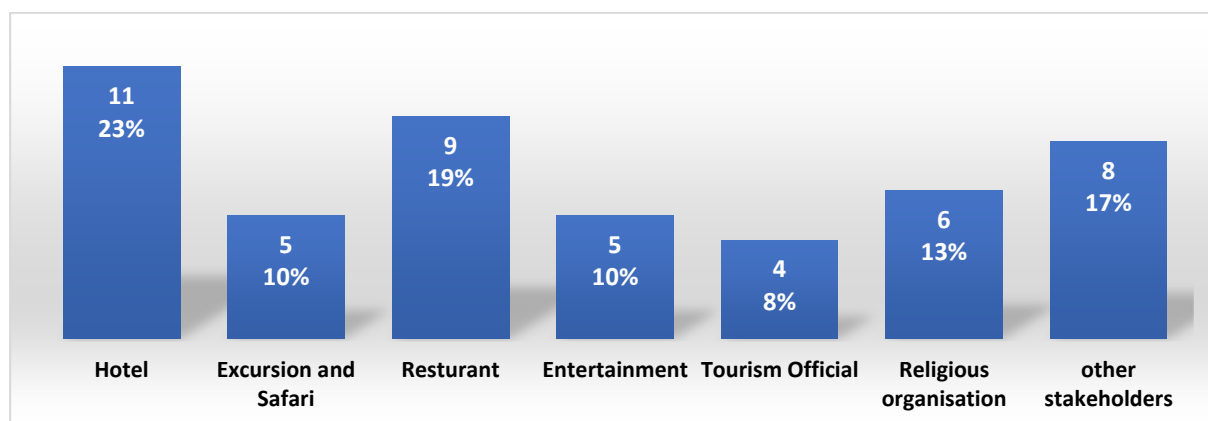
The primary data includes social and human processes and what has been obtained from the questionnaire that is interpreted quantitatively. As part of the methodological approach in the study, content analysis of the elements of the obtained data from the research questionnaire against the perceptive of the Holy Quran and Hadith as references in the analysis of the opportunities for Halal tourism in Gambia were conducted.

### **Research Findings and Analysis**

The research findings guiding the analysis are captured from the responses of stakeholders based on an exploratory study of opportunities for Halal tourism in Gambia. The data is obtained from qualitative insights, which includes graphic format illustrating details that would have been longer textual information (Verdinelli and Scagnoli, 2013).

The analysis invokes ‘thick’ description (Geertz, 1973) which describes phenomena not only through conveying facts, but also meanings and interpretations allowing an explanation and understanding of the social context. A total of 48(69 % response rate) answers were received for this explorative survey that was sent to 70 recipients including practitioners in the hospitality and tourism industry, tourism officials, and Islamic organisations for obtaining information and opinions from these different and independent professionals in the industry, experts in the field of tourism, and knowledge of Islam regarding opportunities for Halal tourism in The Gambia. The collective views of the respondents will be useful in capturing answers to the questions. This is followed by a discussion and conclusion, and finally the limitations of the research.

**Figure 1: Stakeholders for Halal Tourism in Gambia.**



This research includes categories of stakeholders with interest in tourism including professionals from hotels, tourism and excursion, restaurants, entertainment, tourism official, religious organisations. About 15% of respondents are female and 85% are men. Gambia is a poor country whose people depend solely on subsistence farming, animal rearing, fishing, hunting, small scale businesses, and other domestic works for survival, thus there is a high need of teaching and clarification of Halal principles for public guidance and safety (The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS) and ICF International, 2014; Sanneh and Kartika, 2021).

Excerpts from answers given by respondents are almost similar with reference to the religious believe of tourists, including awareness of Gambia hosting the forth coming OIC summit, availability of praying facilities at the airport, family-friendly Halal accommodation, non-gambling, gender separated swimming pools facilities and beach areas, general concern about Halal products and services including food and drink, prayer mats and Quran in hotel rooms.

### **Awareness of Halal Tourism**

The awareness of Halal is the level of knowledge Muslim consumers to find and consume Halal products in accordance with Islamic law (Sharia) (Shaari and Arifin, 2010). Halal and non-Halal covers all spectrums of Muslim life, not limited to foods and drinks only, but also for safety, animal welfare, social justice, and sustainable environment (Baharuddin et al., 2015). The success of destination competitiveness relies on the efforts of all the stakeholders that contribute to creating the total tourism experience (Chamidah et al., 2020).

Consequently, stakeholders' knowledge and awareness of the tourism product is vital importance regarding product development or improvement. Engaging stakeholders at such level of analysis provides understanding of what is already known and can help research to find solutions in increasing awareness regarding the phenomena being studied.

Stakeholders are asked about their awareness of Halal tourism, in which 36 of respondents (75%) are aware, 5 respondents (10%) are not, while 7 respondents (15%) answered neither yes nor no. The finding reflects the social set-up that defines Gambian society as a majority Muslim population, and obvious as most of the respondents are themselves Muslims and lives within the context of Halal consumption. The findings show that respondents are aware of the existence of Halal tourism, but the

product is not offered as part of the tourism offering in the country. This finding allows the research to make further observations about the meaning of “Halal Tourism to the respondents.

### **Meaning of Halal Tourism**

Islam provides guidelines in every conduct of human life in which tourism is not an exception. There has been a growing interest in Halal food, with more people seeking out halal-certified products in supermarkets, restaurants, and hotels that provide Halal products and services. As defined, a Halal tourism product needs to comply with the Islamic laws based on the Holy Quran and Sunnah to be fulfilled (Chintiyatmi and Mahfud, 2013).

Stakeholders are asked about the meaning of Halal tourism, in which most of the respondents highlighted the importance of the type of animal that is slaughtered, how it is done and prepared as food complying with the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBH) (Sunnah), non-alcoholic drinks, decent clothing, and behaviours as a requirement for the Halal tourism product and services are expected to comply with Islamic requirements. Emphasis is made on availability of praying facilities for guests around hotels. The meaning of Halal of tourism is expressed as:

*” This type of tourism respects Islamic ways of living, behaviour, dress code and food”*

*“It is provided for Muslim tourists, and even other tourist who are not Muslims.”*

*“It means tourism that caters for Muslims, there should be mosque, separate facilities for Men and women”*

*“It is like ethical tourism... encourages good behaviour, healthy eating, no alcohol and respect for people.”*

*“Encourages what is rightful and lawful and forbids what is not according to both Islamic and other religious or life-style principles.”*

*“Separate accommodation for families, married couples, and single individuals.”*

However, the concept also is further from non- pork food products, blood, or non- alcoholic consumption, but may also relate to general lifestyle of others with concerns like Halal products and

services. The paper went further to enquire the level of demand for Halal products and services in the industry stakeholders are aware of.

### **Demand for Halal Products and Services in Tourism Industry in Gambia**

Halal tourism is a new concept in the tourism industry that opens new and exciting opportunities for enhancing economic growth (Battour and Nazari Ismail, 2015). The window of opportunity is therefore apparent, as reflected in the growing demand of the Islamic-based sector, namely culinary, Islamic finance, insurance, fashion, cosmetics, pharmaceutical and entertainment industries (Andriani 2015). Respondents were asked about the demand for Halal products and services by their customers.

Around 15% of respondents (7) suggest that Halal dietary such as food and drink is sometimes requested by tourists, which includes 5 respondents (10%) from the hotel sector and 2 respondents (5%) from the restaurant sector. The low demand for Halal products in the tourism industry in The Gambia might be due to type of tourism that is advertised and the tourist segment that is attracted to the country.

### **Provision of Halal Products and Service in The Hospitality and Tourism Industry**

While knowledge and availability of organisational support for Halal products and services is evident, however, the findings indicate the limited provision of such products in the hotel and hospitality industry in Gambia. Regarding the question if respondent's organisation provides Halal products and services to tourist, only 6 % (3 respondents) responded that they do, and 8 % (4 respondents) says that they do sometimes.

The finding suggests that only 9 % of the research participants do provide products and services to tourist in according to Islamic standards. By assigning the answers to the different respondents, the findings shows that only the hotels and restaurant categories answered to the question while the rest of the respondents abstain from answering. The answers given would be expected as they seem to reflect upon the current tourism offering in The Gambia, in which Halal compliance is not part of the tourism product development agenda. The paper proceeded with an enquiry about the opportunities for Halal tourism operation in Gambia.

## **Opportunities for Halal tourism in Gambia**

High-profit opportunities in the market, abundant population, and increasing purchasing power of several OIC countries motivated several local, regional, and international brands to develop products and services to cater to the needs of the market (Organisation of Islamic Conference, 2021). In the context of tourism, food and drink has a vital role in touristic experience, with different meanings attached to it by different people.

Although current demand for Halal tourism in Gambia is not visible which might have been the effect of the current practice in the country, nevertheless indications are the country possesses the destination capitals and features necessary for such type of tourism, and when combined with the current offering, there is a definite scope for policy makers, investors, and developers to provide products and services that will appeal to the taste of tourists searching for a Halal friendly destination. This paper suggests that the provision of such tourist products and services in the hospitality and tourism industry is limited in the context of Gambia.

However, regarding sociocultural capital and awareness of Halal in Gambia, there are potential opportunities for the development of Halal tourism in the country shown by the research respondents. Awareness of a particular product or service and resulting in purchase decisions depend on the information consumers are able to gather and the credibility of such information (Raitz and Dakhil, 1989). Therefore, stakeholders' knowledge of the tourism business environment is especially important for tourism product development.

The perceptions of most the respondents (75%) are that there is awareness of Halal tourism in tourism industry in the country. Although, 96% of the Gambian population is Muslims, this might not be necessarily considered as evidence that they all have knowledge of Halal tourism. However, this is part of the factors that can enhance a destination's values that attract Muslims tourists (Shafaei and Mohamed, 2015), adapting to requirements that meet the needs of Muslim tourists (Ali, 2020), including the economic, socio-cultural, and religious aims (Al-Hamarneh and Steiner, 2004). It is a key component of the sociocultural and human capital of the destination that is essential for tourism development (Drammeh, 2014). A tourist's destination would be attractive to Muslims if most of the population the country identifies themselves as Muslim, has prayer facilities, and availability of Halal food and non-alcoholic beverages.

Furthermore, emphasis on the meaning of Halal tourism by respondents also indicates their level of knowledge on the phenomena thereby showing potentials for the development of the product in the tourism industry in Gambia. The findings suggests that there is easy accessibility to places of worship for tourists, including 54% of respondents suggesting that facilities such as a praying and ablution room are available at the airport, as well as the national dishes are all Halal dishes permitted to be consumed under Islamic dietary guidelines.

A strong product knowledge can be useful in providing a good match of the current tourism product offering with Halal products and services and a prerequisite for promoting and marketing Halal tourism products for Gambia. In this regard, the sociocultural capital required for the development of Halal tourism is available in the country, hence an opportunity to be explored by the tourism industry. Around 69 % of respondents suggests that Halal compliance and regulations are essential to support Halal tourism.

A strong requirement of Halal tourism also includes meals that aligns with the teachings of Islam. This include all animals and birds that are not mentioned on the haram food list in according to Islamic law, all plants that are not detrimental to human health, and foods and beverages that are pure, clean, nutritious, and palatable, while haram or banned items that believers should abstain from include pork flesh, meat from a dead animal that has not been slaughtered according to the appropriate Islamic manner, food that contains invocations other than Allah's name, blood, and alcohol (Sanneh and Kartika, 2021).

Apart from the possibilities for the availability of Halal food and drinks, respondents also mentioned attractions and places of worship that could be part of the tourism offering, including the King Fahad Mosque in Banjul, and Gunjur Sand Dune Mosque (Kenye-Kenye Jamangwoo) which is considered as a UNESCO World heritage site that Muslim tourists can enjoy while visiting the country. They also suggest the sandy beaches, and the river Gambia which has historically been a safe-haven and home for people searching for peace and a spiritual retreat, fishing activities, as well as for bird watching. Most respondents are optimistic about opportunities that the OIC summit in Gambia would mean for the tourism industry in the country. Around 77% of respondents suggests that the summit will encourage the coming of more potential Muslim tourists to Gambia and will provide opportunities to expand the tourism product offering and foreign direct investment both in the hospitality and tourism industry, and in other sectors of the economy.



Ninety percent (43 respondents), suggests that the food culture in Gambia is based on Halal requirements. Islamic compliant food and drink, good moral behaviour, decent clothing, and praying facilities for Muslims tourists are central in the association of meanings attached to Halal tourism. Emphasis is also made on separate accommodation for families, married couples, and single individuals. Ethical behavior and decent dress code, healthy eating, life-style principles as well as activities that are accepted in society are encouraged. Several terms are used, such as sharia tourism, Islamic tourism, halal-friendly tourism destination, halal travel, Muslim-friendly travel destinations, halal lifestyle, and several other terms adjusted to the country's policies that developed it (Hasan, 2019).

The hospitality and tourism industry are part of the social and cultural phenomenon that closely represents the dimensions of ethnicity and religion (Eid, and El-Gohary, 2015). These are components of the destination capitals that forms part of the tourism experience presenting a potential opportunity for Gambia to improve upon as part of its stive to expand and improve its tourism product with the addition of Halal tourism.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Travelling is an important sunnah of prophet Muhamad (pbuh) and encourages Muslims to seek knowledge even travelling far away indicating that knowledge is borderless, and travelling is an effective way to expand horizon of knowledge and experience (Talha, 2017). Muslim travelers when choosing where to stay, eat or have recreational activities, stress on the importance of the permissibility of sources of food to be consumed (Fadzlillah et al., 2011). As such, this new niche of tourism known as Halal Tourism is becoming popular due to an increase in Muslim tourists in the international tourism segment (Mohsin et al., 2020).

The tourism industry is progressively moving away from mass tourism to segment that address different consumer target market, such as religious tourism, Islamic tourism, spiritual tourism, Muslim-friendly tourism, Sharia tourism, and halal tourism (Sodawan and Li-Wei Hsu, 2022). Although the Gambia is yet to have a systematic Halal industry with assigned regulatory bodies and inspectors, there are currently several strong Islamic institutions who are working hard to introduce a systematic body that will promote the growth of Halal industry in the country through partnership with strong entities that precede Gambia in the field as well as introducing measures to increase the awareness of such products

and services amongst Gambian consumers (Sanneh and Kartika, 2021). Certvalue-Halal, for instance suggests that the type of certifications in the country includes food and beverage, and Catering and Restaurant Scheme, Industrial, abattoir scheme, storage, and product endorsement Scheme.

Based on the foundations established by Islamic entities in the country, there are several institutions working to develop a systematic body to introduce measures that increase the awareness of Halal products and services amongst consumers and promote the growth of Halal industry in the Gambia. With Halal tourism, facilities are developed and funded through legal funds along Islamic requirements, alcohol-free accommodation, no indoor disco or nightlife, conservative indoor dress code for both customers and workers, the availabilities of prayer facilities on site, gender segregated fitness and sport facilities, women floors, and Islamic entertainment programs (Henderson, 2009).

This study provides new insights regarding awareness of Halal tourism, meanings attached to the phenomena, provision of products and service that adheres to Halal principles, demand, and opportunities within the destination's capitals with potential for product improvement or the development of Halal tourism in Gambia. Seventy five percent of respondents in this study are aware of Halal tourism, reflecting on the sociocultural capital of the destination as a majority Muslim population living within the context of Halal consumption.

Ninetyfive percent of the population are Muslims, necessitating consumer awareness of Halal products and services, which has significant impacts on consumers' awareness of standards, spanning from local farmers to food vendors, local consumers, processing industries, and importers (Sanneh and Kartika, 2021). Awareness of Halal tourism is thus apparent and part of the socio-cultural and human capitals that are valuable resource for tourism in Gambia.

Halal consumption is rooted in many communities in the country a result of the Islamic lifestyle of most of the people. Halal industry is highly embraced and uphold in the Gambia due to the religious beliefs of the people (Sanneh and Kartika, 2021). Consequently, meanings attached to Halal tourism in this research reflects upon the needs of Muslim tourists relating to religious principles that should be fulfilled by a destination including halal food, prayer places equipped with clean and ablution places, clean water, services during the month of Ramadan, and the existence of privacy for men and women (Rosyidi, 2018). Apart from products and services that considers the needs of Muslims customers, it also captured and life-style intensions of others within the realms of societal acceptable norms and values.

Consequently, Halal tourism can be said to be beyond food and drink as the minimum requirement, but also include the availability of facilities such as prayer rooms, ablution premises, gender segregated areas such as pools, gym, entertainment, and sporting activities are also part of the requirements (Kodirov et al., 2020). Such standards were central in this research indicating the level of awareness and knowledge of stakeholders of such a product in the tourism industry.

The level of demand for such a tourism product is low in Gambia which might be due to the dominant positioning of the country as winter; sun, sea and sand tourism destination that is offered to tourists. This also reflects on the minimal provision of the product by the hospitality and tourism industry due to its low demand by tourists. However, as a niche market, the Halal industry is said to have witnessed an increasing interest from both the Muslims and non-Muslim countries (Organisation of Islamic Conference, 2021).

Consequently, the diversity of tourism services and special interest tourism, including demand for products and services that aligns with people's religious beliefs, values, and lifestyles such as green consumption, Halal tourism could also be part of such offerings to tourists. In this regard, the product becomes an inclusive way of life, not limited regulation on foods and drinks consumption, but also for safety, animal welfare, social justice, and sustainable environment (Baharuddin et al., 2015). Therefore, as some people considers food as a religious symbol (Giorda et al., 2014), others can also see it as a physiological need (Tikkanen, 2007), a valuable heritage, culture of society (Corigliano and Baggio, 2003; Nazari and Osman, 2020). The term Halal tourism should therefore not be confused with religious tourism that is connected to faith and religiosity.

Businesses wishing to operate in Halal tourism field should form their products and services in accordance with the needs and lifestyle of Muslim tourists (Memis, 2017), and ensuring it is following the proper way as recommended by Islam (Rhama, 2021). Facilities will thus be developed and funded through legal funds along Islamic requirements, alcohol-free accommodation, no indoor disco or nightlife, conservative indoor dress code for both customers and workers, the availabilities of prayer facilities on site, gender segregated fitness and sport facilities, women floors, and Islamic entertainment programs (Henderson, 2009). It should not be limited to religious tourism (Dini Andriani et al., 2015; Adinugraha et al., 2018), but also lifestyle standards (Adinugraha et al., 2019).

Although, Muslims are the main groups of people who tend to practice unique behaviours in terms of food they eat, drink, the type of company they keep, and the activities they undertake (Timothy–Olsen, 2006), they also share common beliefs with other communities such as the Jewish communities of

faith in terms of food and approach to what is permissible for human consumption. The concept is therefore further from banning pork derivatives from food products, or banning alcohol and having halal financial services, but also relates to with common concerns to both local and global issues. It is a part of the tourism industry that is beneficial to both Muslim and non-Muslim countries (Ahmed and Akbaba, 2018), demonstrating a global business trend (Athoillah, 2019).

Halal tourism is thus used by many people because of the universal characteristics of the products and services (Afriwanda et al., 2020), as the scale of demand for such tourism also seems to be pointing to the same direction as in the case of non-Muslim country's showing interest and offering the product to tourists. It can be interpreted as an activity supported by various facilities and services provided by the community, businesspeople, government, and local governments that comply with Syariah provisions (Afriwanda et al., 2020). Such advancements could be due to the emergence of the so-called "new tourists" (Poon, 1993). Consequently, Halal tourism could complement the already established traditional mainstream winter tourism The Gambia offers to the European market by extending its tourism product offering to include this niche market for Muslim tourists.

Demand for products and services in the hospitality and tourism industry can be shaped and encouraged through opportunities within the destination capitals for tourism development representing a mix of attractions. This study suggests that opportunities for Halal tourism in Gambia can rely on the current mainstream tourism activities in the country to identify the needs of Muslim tourists, and individuals who are not directly influenced by their religious believes but having life-style intentions similar to Halal products and services.

The acceptance of Halal Tourism as a niche segment emerges as lucrative segment as it strongly supports sustainability in traveling to destinations (Barnwal et al., 2022). The window of opportunity for Halal tourism thus seems to be apparent, as also reflected in the growing demand of the Islamic-based sector, namely culinary, finance, insurance, fashion, cosmetics, pharmaceutical and entertainment industries (Andriani 2015; Rusli et al., 2018). These capitals obtained within the destination may be utilised and exploited in ways that meet the need for environmental sustainability reflecting on local development objectives and which take advantage of opportunities offered by the external market (Sharpley, 2009). The country needs to develop its tourism industry for continuous economic growth, and to promote her cultural values and heritage globally, as well as expand it trying industrial development through the expansion of its tourism offering.

Opportunities for expanding the tourism product offering in Gambia with inclusion of Halal tourism, would thus require the tourism development strategy to aim at presenting the socio-cultural and religious capital of the destination as part of its indicators, improvement of hospitality and tourism infrastructure, marketing and promotion, training of the human resources especially in the area Halal requirements regarding products and services to be provided to tourists. This geographic perspective of tourism product and services, and demand reflects on facilities and attraction base on the destination capitals.

For instance, hosting The OIC summit which is expected to host many delegates from OIC member states including heads of states and governments officials sharing similar religious believes with that of most Gambians could be an additional pull factor to support ambitions for Halal tourism in the country. The Conference of African Ulamas that brings together Ministers of Religious Affairs, leading Islamic scholars, policymakers, students, organizations, and community leaders across Africa to discuss and advance Islamic values to promote peace and tolerance, that was held in Gambia in 2022, provide great opportunities for the tourism industry in Gambia, and its tourism diversification ambitions for both product development and improvement including Halal tourism.

### **Implications and Limitations**

The study has both theoretical and practical implications for the tourism research literature that has not adequately studied Halal tourism in Africa. The study contributes to the scientific literature by providing new insights into the current academic discussion on the destination capitals for tourism development and requirements set for Halal tourism as the unit of analysis to explore opportunities for Halal tourism for destinations such as Gambia.

The country has the sociocultural capital that is encouraging and reliable for Muslim tourists to embark on holidaying in Gambia. The study therefore encourages tourism researchers in the country to embark on new research questions and analysis of the opportunities for Halal tourism product and services in Gambia. The study provided a foundation as well a better understanding of opportunities for Halal tourism and it is hopeful that this would be encouraging for researchers, stakeholders, and tourism policy makers in the country to consider the further analysis of opportunities of such a tourism product for Gambia as part of its product improvement and expansion initiatives.

The main limitation of the study concerns its methodological choice of using electronic survey. At the time of the study there was an uncertain situation with the outbreak of a virus that recommendations and restrictions were still actual making it difficult to conduct face-to-face interviews. The method was therefore applied because of its easy reach to respondents as well as to minimise the risk of spread of COVID-19.

Some setbacks with electronic surveys in environments such as Gambia encountered is that some respondents were not comfortable with using QR-Code that generated the questionnaire on their smart phones as it consumes megabytes that cost. Most of respondents are not that computer literate and downloading the questionnaire from their Epost to register their opinions would have been a challenging endeavor. A face-to-face interview with research participants could have generated a higher a response rate but due to social restrictions at the time this was not possible. The study lays a foundation for the tourism industry, researchers, and tourism officials in Gambia to get a better understanding of the situation around Halal tourism in the country and how it could be developed.

The study encourages a further analysis of the tourism business environment regarding Halal tourism, amenities, facilities, tourism development policy, tourism product development, improvement, and marketing of Halal Tourism in the country.

### **Declaration of competing interest**

The author hereby declares no conflict of interest. This research received no external funding.

### **References**

- Abbasian, S (2021). Good Idea But Not Here! A Pilot Study of Swedish Tourism Stakeholders' Perceptions of Halal Tourism. *Sustainability* V13 N5 pp:1–17. DOI:[10.3390/su13052646](https://doi.org/10.3390/su13052646)
- Ab-Rahman, S and Laderlah, A (2018), Exploring Islamic Tourism in Malaysia. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*. V8, N9, 735-743. DOI: 10.18488/journal.1.2018.89.735.743
- Adinugraha, Hermawan, H and Sartika, M (2019). “Halal Lifestyle Di Indonesia.” An Nisbah: *Journal Ekonomi Syariah* V5, N2 <https://doi.org/10.21274/an.2019.5.2.layout>.
- Athoillah. N.A (2019) *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*. 2019. Economic Development Through Halal Tourism. <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/94834/> N94834; Issue 94834

- Ali, S.M.F (2020). How Global Halal Has Reshaped The Global Tourism Industry. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse>
- Aziz, Y.A and Chok, N.V, (2012), The Role of Halal Awareness and Halal Certification in Influencing Non-Muslim's Purchase Intention, *3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Business and Economic Research*, Bandung, Indonesia. <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:166838395>
- Afriwanda, Syahnur, S and Gunawan, E (2020). How does Halal Tourism Contributes to Community Economy? The Case of Tsunami Museum and The PLTD Floating Ship in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.
- Ahmed, M.J. and Akbaba, A. (2018) The Potential of Halal Tourism in Ethiopia: Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects. *International Journal of Contemporary Tourism Research*, 1, 13-22. <https://doi.org/10.30625/ijctr.397499>
- Andriani, D. K. K. (2015). Final Report of the Study on Sharia Tourism Development. Jakarta: Deputi Bidang Pengembangan Kelembagaan Kepariwisata.
- Al-Hamarneh, A. and C. Steiner, (2004). Islamic Tourism: Rethinking The Strategies of Tourism Development in The Arab World After September 11, 2001. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, V24 N1 pp: 173–182.
- Adinugraha, H. H., Sartika, M., and Kadarningsih, A. (2018). Desa Wisata Halal: Konsep Dan Implementasinya Di Indonesia. *Jurnal Human Falah*, V5 N1, pp: 28–48.
- Athoillah, N.A (2019). Economic development through halal tourism. Online at <https://mpr.aub.uni-muenchen.de/94834> MPRA Paper No. 94834. Accessed 20230602
- Battour, M. M., Ismail, M. N., and Battor, M. (2011). Toward a halal tourism market. *Tourism Analysis*, V15 N4 pp: 461-470.
- Baharuddin, K., Kassim, N.A., Nordin, S.K., and Buyong, S.Z (2015). Understanding the Halal Concept and the Importance of Information on Halal Food Business Needed by Potential Malaysian Entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, V 5 N2, pp: 170-180.
- Barnwal, M., Khan, J., Chowdhary, N and Kumar, V (2022). A Management Development Approach in Halal Tourism Promotion Towards Indian Muslim Travelers. *Journal of Tourism- Studies and Research in Tourism* V22 N1 pp:41.

- Battour, M. and Ismail, M.N. (2016), "Halal tourism: Concepts, Practices, Challenges And Future," *Tourism Management Perspectives*, Elsevier Ltd, Vol. 19, pp. 150–154.
- Battour, M., Maddy, M., Salahedeen, K and Elsotouhy, M.M (2021). Halal Tourism: What Is Next For Sustainability? *Journal of Islamic Tourism*, V1 Inaugural Issue.
- Bogan, E and Sarnsik, M (2019). Halal tourism: conceptual and practical challenges. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*. V.10 N1, pp. 87-96. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-06-2017-0066>
- Brennan, (2003). The Industrial/Consumer Marketing Dichotomy: A Re-Examination. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241851679>
- Berg, K.E and Latin, R.E (2008). *Essentials Of Research Methods In Health, Physical Education, Exercise Science, And Recreation: Third edition*. Wolters Kluwer Health/Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.
- Camilleri, M. A. (2018). The tourism industry: An overview. In *Travel marketing, tourism economics, and the airline product* (pp. 3-27). Springer, Cham.
- Carboni, M., Perelli, C And Sistu, G (2017). Developing Tourism Products In Line With Islamic Beliefs: Some Insights From Nabeul – Hammamet Developing Tourism Products In Line With Islamic. *Journal Of North African Studies*, V22 N1 Pp: 87–108.
- Carboni, M., and Idrissi J, M. (2016). Halal tourism de facto: A case from Fez. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, V19, pp:155–159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2015.12.007>
- Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) (2016).
- Creswell, J.W., 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, And Mixed Methods Approaches*: Sage Publication.
- Crescentrating, 2016. Report-Mastercard-Crescentrating-Global-Muslim-Travel-Index-2016.Pdf. Singapore: Crescent Rating.
- Crescentrating, (2013). 6 faith Based Needs of Muslim Travelers <https://www.crescentrating.com/>
- Corigliano, M. A., And Baggio, R. (2003). Italian Culinary Tourism on The Internet. In J. Collen and G. Richards (Eds.), *Gastronomy And Tourism, Proceedings Of ATLAS Expert Meeting, Sondrio (Italy)*, (Pp. 92-106). Antwerpen: Academie Voor De Streekgebonden Gastronomie.



- Chamidah, N., Guntoro, B., And Sulastri, E. (2020). Marketing Communication and Synergy of Pentahelix Strategy On Satisfaction And Sustainable Tourism. *Journal Of Asian Finance, Economics And Business*, V7 N3 Pp: 177-190. <https://doi.org/10.13106/>
- Chintiyatmi I.T., Nurlela, Mahfud, N (2013) *Journal Al tarbawi Al Haditsah* V1 N 2 pp:1–26 Dunham, R.L., Freeman, E and Liedtka, J (2006). Enhancing Satkeholder Practice. *Business Ethics Quarterly* V16 N1 pp:23-42. DOI: 10.5840/beq20061611
- Denzin, NK., and Lincoln, Y. S (2003). *The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research*. The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications
- Department of State for Tourism and Culture of The Gambia (2006). *The Gambia Tourism Development Master Plan*. African Development Bank. Summary Report. <https://unevoc.unesco.org/>
- Drammeh, F.Y (2014). The perceptions of managers of SMEs operating in the tourism industry on sustainable development in the Gambia. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure* V4 N1. Open Access- Online @ [http://: www.ajhtl.com](http://www.ajhtl.com)
- Dini Andriani, et al. (2015). *Laporan Awal Kajian Pengembangan Wisata Syari'ah*. Jakarta: Kementerian Pariwisata RI.
- Ecowas Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) (2022). *Annual Report*. Transforming ECOWAS Communities. <https://www.bidc-ebid.org/>
- Eid, R., El-Gohary, H., (2015), "The role of Islamic religiosity on the relationship between perceived value and tourist attraction," *Tourism Management*, vol. 46, pp. 477-488.
- Faggiano, A., and Carugo, S. (2020). Can The Implementation of Electronic Surveys With Quick Response (QR) Codes Be Useful In The COVID-19 era? *International Journal of Epidemiology*, V49 N5, 1732-1733. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyaa170> accessed 20230602
- Fadzlillah, N.A., Man, Y.B.C., Jamaludin, M.A., Rahman, S., and Al-Kahtani, H.A (2011). Halal food issues from Islamic and modern science perspectives. *2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Humanities, Historical and Social Sciences IPEDR* vol.17 IACSIT Press, Singapore.
- Freeman, R. E. (1984): *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Boston: Pitman
- Fisher, J (2008). "Proper Islamic Consumption: Shopping Among the Malays in Modern Malaysia." *NIAS – Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series*, No. 113.

- Geertz, C (1973). *The Interpretation of Culture*. New York: Basic Books. Giorda, M. C., Bossi, L., Messina, E., and Risteco, C. (2014). *Food and Religion* (in public food service). Consorzio Risteco, Turin, Italy, pp: 4-6.
- Hasan, H. A. (2019). Ambiguity on Syariah Tourism in Indonesia. *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews*, V7 N5, pp: 609-617.
- Hossain, F. (2019). Food during the Hajj and adjusting Pre-prepared Meals. Makkahnews, <https://www.makkahnews.net/articles/5169747.html>
- Henderson, J.C. (2010), “Sharia-Compliant Hotels”, *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, V10 N3, pp. 246–254.
- Henderson, J.C. (2009). Islamic Tourism Reviewed. *Tourism Recreation Research*, V32 N2, pp: 207-212
- Hanafiah, M.H., Hasan, M.R., and Mat Som, A.P (2022). Managing Modern Muslim Travellers: Emerging Trends and Issues for Islamic Tourism Destinations. *Tourism and Hospitality*, V 3 N4, pp: 908-918; <https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp3040058>
- International Labour Organisation (2022). *The Future Of Work In The Tourism Sector: Sustainable And Safe Recovery And Decent Work In The Context Of The COVID-19 Pandemic*. Sectoral Policies Department, Geneva. <https://www.ilo.org/>
- Jafari J., Scott N. (2013). “Muslim World and Its Tourisms.” *Annals of Tourism Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2013.08.011>.
- Johnson, G., Scholes, K. and Whittington, R. (2006), *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, (7<sup>th</sup> Ed), Prentice hall, Financial Times.
- Jia and Zhang, (2020), Evaluation of Tourism Environmental Carrying Capacity in Diashuihu National Forest Park. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning*. V15 N5 pp:761-766 <https://doi.org/10.18280/ijstdp.150518>
- Kadirov, D., Tjiptono F., Fam K.S. (2020). Halal service research: Definition, domain and dynamics. *Journal of Halal Service Research*, V1 N1, pp:1-10
- Malhotra, N. K., Birks, D., and Wills, P. (2012). *Marketing Research: Applied Approach* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Pearson.

- Meyer, D. (2003). The UK Outbound Tour Operating Industry and Implications for Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT). PPT Working Paper No.7, Overseas Development Institute, UK.
- MasterCard and CrescentRating (2017). Top 30 Preferred Destinations In Africa For Muslim Tourists In 2017. <https://www.ecofinagency.com/>
- Mensah, C (2021). Using Web-Survey to Collect Data On Psychological Impacts Of COVID-19 On Hotel Employees In Ghana: A Methodological Review. *Cogent Psychology* V8 N1:1880257 DOI:[10.1080/23311908.2021.1880257](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2021.1880257)
- Memis, S (2017) Halal Tourism Practices as a Marketing Type: The Example of Birun Kumbet Mountain Hotel. *TURAN-CSR International Scientific Peer-Reviewed, Refereed Journal*; ISSN: 1308-8041, e-ISSN: 1309-4033; Year: 2017; Volume: 9/SUMMER, Issue: 35 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15189/1308-8041>
- Mitchell, J and Faal. J., (2007). The Gambian Tourist Value Chain and Prospects for Pro-Poor Tourism. Draft Report. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Mohsin, A., Ramli, N., and Alkhulayf, B.A (2020). Halal Tourism: Emerging Opportunities. *Tourism Management Perspectives*. V19 pp: 137-143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2015.12.010>
- Ministry of Tourism and Culture (1995b). National Action Plan for Implementation of the Tourism. Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Banjul The Gambia.
- Nazari, N.M and Osman, S (2020) Reviewing Food as a Tourism Product. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*. www.ijicc.net V 10, N 8.
- Nurdiansyah, A (2018). Halal Certification and Its Impact on Tourism in Southeast Asia: A Case Study Halal Tourism in Thailand. *KnE Social Sciences / The 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on South East Asia Studies (ICSEAS 2016)*/ Pp: 26–43 DOI: [10.18502/kss.v3i5.2323](https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i5.2323)
- Organisation of Islamic Conference Halal Expo<sub>2</sub> (2022). Opening of the 9th OIC Halal Expo in Istanbul: Indonesia Participates In Supporting A Sustainable Halal Trade Ecosystem. Ministry Of Foreign Affairs Of The Republic Of Indonesia.
- Pew Research Centre, (2015). Projected Global Muslim Population 2010-2050. <https://www.pewresearch.org/>
- Poon, A. (1993) *Tourism, Technology and Competitive Strategies*. CAB International, Wallingford, UK

- Pratikto, H. Agustina, Y., Diantoro, M and Churiyah, M (ed) (2021). The Strategic Role of the Halal Study Center in Supporting Halal Product Assurance Policy.
- Razalli, M. R., Abdullah, S., And Hassan, M. G. (2012). Developing A Model for Islamic Hotels: Evaluating Opportunities and Challenges. International Conference on Knowledge, Culture And Society 2012 (ICKCS 2012), Pp:1-5.
- Raitz, K., And Dakhil, M. (1989). A Note About Information Sources For Preferred Recreational Environments. *Journal Of Travel Research*, 27, 45-50.
- Rebelo, S., Patuleia, M and Dias, A (2022). Inclusive Tourism: Assessing the Accessibility of Lisbon as a Tourist Destination. *Tourism and Hospitality*. V3 N2, pp:466-495.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp3020030>
- Rezai, G., Teng, P.K., Shamsuddin, M.N., and Mohamed, Z (2015). Effect Of Perceptual Differences On Consumer Purchase Intention of Natural Functional Food. *Journal Of Agribusiness In Developing and Emerging Economies*, V7 N6. DOI:[10.1108/JADEE-02-2015-0014](https://doi.org/10.1108/JADEE-02-2015-0014)
- Rhama, B (2021). The Halal Tourism – Alternative or Mass Tourism? Indications Of Traditional Mass Tourism on Crescent Rating Guidelines On Halal Tourism. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*. DOI:[10.1108/JIMA-07-2020-0199](https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-07-2020-0199)
- Rhama, B and Alam, M.D.S (2017). The Implementation of Halal Tourism in Indonesia National Park. *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research (AEBMR)*, V43 *International Conference on Administrative Science (ICAS 2017)*. DOI:10.2991/icas-17.2017.11.
- Rosyidi, M.I (2018). The Characteristics of Chinese Tourists in Indonesia and Its Performance in 2013–2017. *Binus Business Review*, V9 N2, pp:145-152. Ritchie, J.R.B and Crouch, G. (2003). *The Competitive Destination: A Sustainable Tourism Perspective*. Wallingford: CABI Publishing.
- Romão, J and Nijkamp, (2018). Spatial Impacts Assessment of Tourism And Territorial Capital: A Modelling Study On Regional Development In Europe. *International Journal Of Tourism Research*, V20 N1. DOI:[10.1002/jtr.2234](https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2234)
- Rusli, M., Firmansyah, R and Pasfatima Mbulu, Y (2018). Halal Tourism Destination Development Model. *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism*. V9 N6  
DOI: [https://doi.org/10.14505//jemt.9.6\(30\).19](https://doi.org/10.14505//jemt.9.6(30).19)

- Sanneh, K and Kartika, B (2021). An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective: Challenges and Opportunities. *Journal of Religious and Social Studies*. V1, N 2: 17-28. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53583/jrss02.0102.2021>
- Salam Gateway, (2023). SGIE 2022 Report: Muslim-friendly travel. <https://www.salaamgateway.com/>
- Sarigöllü, E., and Huang, R. (2005). Benefits segmentation of visitors to Latin America. *Journal of Travel Research*, V43 N3, pp: 277-293.
- Streimikiene, D., Jasinskisa, E., Svagzdiene, B., Simanavicius, A (2021). Sustainable tourism development and competitiveness: The systematic literature review. *Sustainable Development* V29 N6. DOI:10.1002/sd.2133
- Sodawan, A and Li-Wei Hsu, R (2022). Halal-Friendly Attributes and Muslims' Visit Intention: *Exploring the Roles of Perceived Value and Destination Trust*. V14 N19, 12002; <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141912002>
- Swarbrooke, J. (1999) Sustainable Tourism Management. Cabi, New York. <https://doi.org/10.1079/9780851993140.0000>
- Sharpley, R. (2009). *Tourism Development and The Environment: Beyond Sustainability?* London: Earthscan.
- Shafaei, F And Mohamed, B (2015), Malaysia's Branding as An Islamic Tourism Hub: An Assessment. *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*. V11, N1 GEOGRAFIA Online.
- Syahrial, M., Nasution, M. Y., and Tarigan, D. A. A. (2020). Synergy of Stakeholders in the Development of Halal Tourism in West Sumatera. *International Journal of Research*, V7N7, pp: 223–236.
- Suban, S.A., Madhan, K and Shagirbasha, S (2021). A bibliometric analysis of Halal and Islamic Tourism. *International Hospitality Review*. DOI:[10.1108/IHR-05-2021-0038](https://doi.org/10.1108/IHR-05-2021-0038)
- Shaari, J. A. N., and Arifin, N. S. (2010). Dimension of Halal Purchase Intention: A Preliminary Study. *International Review of Business Research Papers*, V6 N4, pp: 444–456.
- The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) 2022). <https://giepa.gm> The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS) and ICF International (2014). *The Gambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013*. Banjul, The Gambia, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: GBOS and ICF International.

- Talha, A (2017). Travelling in Islam. <https://www.daily-sun.com/>
- Tikkanen, I (2007), Maslow's Hierarchy and Food Tourism in Finland: Five cases. *British Food Journal*. V109, N9 pp: 721-734. DOI:[10.1108/00070700710780698](https://doi.org/10.1108/00070700710780698)
- Timothy, D.J., Olsen, H. (2006), *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*. Routledge. Available from: <https://www.scholar.google.co.id/schola>
- UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Economic Analysis, (2022). Least Developed Country Category: Gambia Profile. <https://www.un.org/>
- Vargas-Sánchez, A and Moral-Moral, M (2019). Halal tourism: state of the art. *Tourism Review* V74 N2. DOI:[10.1108/TR-01-2018-0015](https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-01-2018-0015).
- Verdinelli, S and Scagnoli, N.I (2013). Data Display in Qualitative Research. *The International Journal of Qualitative Method.*, V12 pp:359-381 DOI:[10.1177/160940691301200117](https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691301200117)
- Weidenfeld, A (2018). Tourism Diversification and Its Implications for Smart Specialisation. *Sustainability*. V10, N2, pp:1-24. doi:[10.3390/su10020319](https://doi.org/10.3390/su10020319).
- Weiermair, K. (1998). "Threats and Opportunities of Information Technologies: The Case of Small and Medium-sized Tourism Enterprises," Ministry of Culture and Tourism Korea (ed.), *A New Era in Information Technology; Its Implications for Tourism Policies*, OECD-Korea Conference, 10-11 November 1998, pp. 35-52.
- World Bank, (2022). *The Gambia Economic Update: Coming Back Stronger*. The World Bank. Washington DC, USA. [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)
- Worldometer, (2023). Gambia Population. <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/gambia-population/>
- Zamani-Farahani, H. and Henderson, J.C. (2010), "Islamic tourism and managing tourism development in Islamic societies: The cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia," *International Journal of Tourism Research*, V. 12 N.1, pp. 79–89.
- Zigern-Korn N and Kol O (2018) Diversification of Tourism Product as The Proper Way For Regional Tourism Development Strategies. In: 5<sup>th</sup> International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conferences on Social Sciences & Arts-SGEM. Bulgaria: 26 August - 1 September 2018 V18, pp. 19–26), DOI:[10.5593/sgemsocial2018/4.1/S15.003](https://doi.org/10.5593/sgemsocial2018/4.1/S15.003)