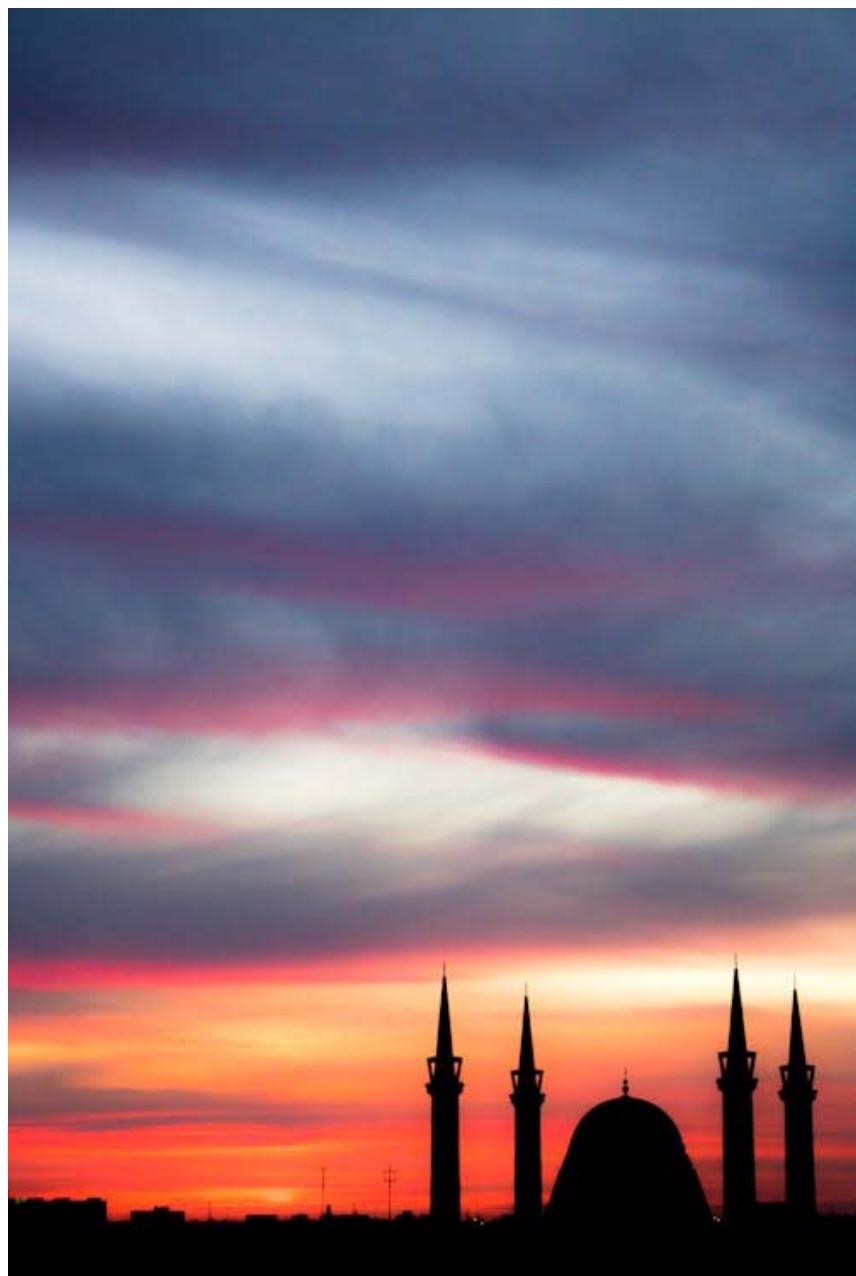


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## **Contents**

Muslim Tourist Satisfaction: A Review of Influencing Factors and Implications for Vietnam .....	4
Sustainable Tourism in Muslim Countries: Mapping Features, Challenges, and Emerging Trends in Eco-Islamic Travel in Indonesia, Oman, and Algeria.....	27

## **Muslim Tourist Satisfaction: A Review of Influencing Factors and Implications for Vietnam**

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### **Abstract**

Muslim-friendly tourism has emerged as a significant segment of the global tourism industry, driven by the increasing number of Muslim travellers seeking destinations that accommodate their religious and cultural requirements. While Malaysia, Indonesia, and the UAE have established themselves as leading Muslim-friendly destinations, non-Muslim-majority countries such as Vietnam remain relatively underexplored in this regard. Although Hanoi city in Vietnam has experienced a growing influx of Muslim tourists, the development of Muslim-friendly tourism infrastructure remains limited. This study aims to identify the key factors influencing Muslim tourist satisfaction through a systematic literature review of 109 studies on Muslim-friendly tourism. The findings highlight several critical determinants, including the availability and quality of Halal food, the provision of prayer facilities, service quality, cultural awareness among hospitality staff, destination image, perceived Muslim-friendliness, and perceived value. By addressing these factors, this research contributes to academic discourse on Muslim-friendly tourism while also offering practical insights for enhancing Vietnam's tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Muslim Friendly, Satisfaction, Halal Food, Prayer Facilities, Service Quality, Vietnam.

### **Introduction**

Muslim-friendly tourism is an emerging sector within the global tourism industry, catering specifically to the needs of Muslim tourists by providing Shariah-compliant services, including Halal-certified food, prayer facilities, and gender segregated amenities (Chantarungsri et al., 2024; Wijaya et al., 2025). The number of Muslim tourists is expected to surpass 230 million by 2028, making Muslim-friendly tourism one of the fastest growing segments. This growth is driven by the increasing spending power of Muslim tourists, particularly from Southeast Asia, the Middle East,

and North Africa (Battour et al., 2021; Fauzi & Battour, 2024). As Muslim tourists seek destinations that respect their religious and cultural values, countries around the world, including non-Muslim-majority nations, are adapting their tourism offerings. Leading Halal friendly destinations such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, and the UAE have implemented policies and infrastructure that ensure a seamless tourism experience for Muslim tourists (Wahyono et al., 2020).

Vietnam has witnessed a steady rise in international Muslim tourist arrivals, particularly from Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Middle East. However, unlike Malaysia or Thailand, Vietnam is still in the early stages of developing Muslim-friendly tourism. Hanoi, as the capital city, serves as a key destination for international tourists, offering a blend of historical, cultural, and culinary experiences. However, Muslim-friendly tourism infrastructure remains limited, with challenges such as the scarcity of Halal-certified restaurants, making it difficult for Muslim tourists to find authentic Halal food, and the lack of prayer facilities in major tourist areas. In addition, limited awareness among tourism service providers results in gaps in catering to Muslim tourists' specific needs. Despite these challenges, there has been increasing interest in developing Muslim-friendly tourism in Hanoi. Several hotels and restaurants have obtained Halal certification, and government initiatives have started to promote Vietnam as a Muslim-friendly destination. However, there is still limited academic research on how satisfied Muslim tourists are with their experience in Vietnam, particularly in Hanoi.

The concept of tourist satisfaction has been widely studied in tourism literature, often linked to destination image, perceived value, service quality, and loyalty (Abror et al., 2019; Suhartanto et al., 2021). In the context of Muslim-friendly tourism, several theoretical frameworks have been applied, which examine the gap between expected and perceived service quality in Muslim-friendly tourism services (Alimusa et al., 2024; Fauzi & Battour, 2024). The Muslim-friendly tourism Framework highlights key factors influencing Muslim tourism decisions, including Halal food, prayer facilities, Islamic morality, and gender segregation (Ekka & Bhardwaj, 2024; Gautam et al., 2024).

This study aims to identify the key factors influencing Muslim tourist satisfaction by conducting a literature review of previous research in the field. By synthesizing findings from prior studies, the research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how different elements impact Muslim tourist experiences. The objective is to analyze existing literature to uncover patterns, gaps, and insights that can contribute to both academic knowledge and practical improvements in Muslim-friendly tourism development.

## **Literature Review**

### **Muslim-Friendly Tourism And Muslim Tourists**

The concept of Halal, meaning “permissible” in Arabic, originates from Islamic law (Shariah) and encompasses not only food and beverages but also broader aspects of daily life, including finance, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and tourism (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Soonsan & Jumani, 2024). In the tourism context, Halal tourism refers to tourism activities that are compliant with Islamic principles, ensuring that Muslim tourists can maintain their religious obligations during their journeys (Suhartanto, Dean, et al., 2021).

Muslim-friendly tourism (or Islamic tourism) is a growing sector within the global tourism industry, catering specifically to Muslim tourists who seek experiences that align with their religious and cultural values (Alimusa et al., 2024). The concept of Muslim-friendly tourism extends beyond the availability of Halal food to include accommodations, entertainment, transportation, and overall tourism experiences that comply with Islamic principles (Marlina et al., 2024). As a result, destinations worldwide, both in Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries, are adapting their tourism offerings to attract Muslim tourists.

Several studies have explored the defining characteristics of Muslim-friendly tourism and the expectations of Muslim tourists (Ekka & Bhardwaj, 2024; Marlina et al., 2024). Muslim-friendly tourism is driven by the need for religious compliance, including Halal-certified restaurants, prayer facilities, gender-segregated recreational areas, and alcohol-free environments (Ekka & Bhardwaj, 2024). Meanwhile, non-Muslim-majority countries such as Thailand, Japan, and South Korea have also made significant efforts to accommodate Muslim tourists by introducing Halal-certified establishments and Muslim-friendly tourism policies (Wahyono et al., 2020).

Muslim tourists represent a unique segment within the tourism industry. Unlike conventional tourists, their tourism behavior is significantly influenced by religious obligations (Soonsan & Jumani, 2024). Studies highlight that Muslim tourists prefer destinations that not only provide Halal-certified products but also offer an Islamic-friendly atmosphere, where their religious needs are respected and accommodated (M. Rahman et al., 2020; Soonsan & Jumani, 2024). Their decision-making process is shaped by factors such as the availability of Halal food, prayer facilities, modest dress codes, and ethical tourism practices. Moreover, social and cultural aspects, such as the attitude

of locals toward Muslim tourists and the level of inclusivity in tourism services, also affect the attractiveness of a destination (Hariani et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2023; Suhartanto et al., 2021).

Muslim tourists represent a distinct group of tourists whose needs and preferences are deeply influenced by the principles of Islam (Suhartanto, Gan, et al., 2021). Their tourism experiences are not solely about sightseeing and leisure but must align with religious requirements, particularly in terms of dietary laws (Halal food) and prayer obligations. These fundamental needs shape the way they choose destinations, accommodations, and services, making Islamic tourism a specialized segment within the broader tourism industry (Rahman et al., 2020).

One of the primary considerations for Muslim tourists is food (Sthapit et al., 2024). Halal certification is essential, as it guarantees that food is prepared according to Islamic dietary laws. Many destinations struggle to provide adequate Halal food options, which has historically limited the attractiveness of certain locations for Muslim tourists. However, as the demand for Muslim-friendly tourism grows, more businesses, from international hotel chains to local restaurants, are adapting by offering certified halal meals. In addition, prayer facilities are another crucial factor. Practicing Muslims pray five times a day, often requiring access to clean and quiet spaces. Airports, shopping malls, and hotels in many Muslim-friendly destinations have responded by providing prayer rooms, but many non-Muslim-majority countries still lack these facilities. The availability of mosques and designated prayer areas greatly influences destination choice, making it a key consideration for tourism planners targeting this market.

Beyond food and prayer, Muslim tourists also seek experiences that align with their values. Privacy, modesty, and family-friendly environments are important (Suhartanto et al., 2021). For instance, women-friendly beaches, gender-segregated spa services, and alcohol-free entertainment are increasingly offered in destinations catering to Muslim tourists. In contrast, destinations known for nightlife and alcohol consumption may be less attractive unless they offer dedicated halal-friendly services.

Historically, businesses viewed Muslim-friendly tourism as a niche market with too many restrictions. However, with the increasing purchasing power of Muslim tourists and the rise of the global Muslim middle class, the industry has started to recognize its vast potential (Fauzi & Battour, 2024). According to recent market trends, the Muslim-friendly tourism industry is projected to grow rapidly, driven by increasing tourism from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Europe (Fauzi & Battour, 2024; Marlina et al., 2024).

To successfully cater to this market, businesses must go beyond simply offering Halal food. A truly halal-friendly tourism experience considers cultural sensitivities, religious obligations, and ethical tourism practices. This requires a strategic approach, including staff training, proper certifications, and tailored marketing strategies. Destinations that embrace Muslim-friendly tourism not only attract more Muslim tourists but also create an inclusive and welcoming environment for diverse cultural experiences. As competition in the tourism industry intensifies, ignoring the needs of Muslim tourists is no longer an option. The growing demand for Islamic tourism presents a lucrative opportunity for businesses willing to adapt. Those who proactively integrate Halal-friendly services into their offerings will not only benefit from a rapidly expanding market but also enhance their reputation as inclusive and globally aware tourism providers.

### **Muslim tourist satisfaction**

Tourist satisfaction is a key determinant of destination competitiveness and long-term sustainability. In the context of Muslim-friendly tourism, satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors, including service quality, religious compliance, destination image, perceived value, and overall tourism experience, etc. (Abror et al., 2019; Haryanto et al., 2024). Studies in this area have emphasized the role of Halal-friendly services in shaping Muslim tourists' perceptions and tourism behavior (Ekka & Bhardwaj, 2024).

One of the most critical factors affecting Muslim tourist satisfaction is the availability and quality of Halal food. Muslim tourists prioritize destinations where Halal food is easily accessible and clearly certified. The absence of reliable Halal food options often leads to dissatisfaction and negatively impacts the overall tourism experience. Similarly, the presence of prayer facilities in hotels, airports, and public spaces enhances tourist satisfaction, as it ensures that religious obligations can be conveniently fulfilled.

Service quality also plays a crucial role in shaping Muslim tourists' experiences (Absah et al., 2024). Several studies have applied the SERVQUAL model to Muslim-friendly tourism, examining the gap between expected and perceived service quality (Abror et al., 2019; Haryanto et al., 2024). Research suggests that Muslim tourists have higher satisfaction levels when hotel staff and tour operators demonstrate awareness and respect for Islamic customs, such as providing gender-segregated swimming pools and family-friendly environments. Destination image is another significant factor in Muslim tourist satisfaction (Absah et al., 2024; Permana & Adam, 2024). Studies indicate that

Muslim tourists are more likely to revisit destinations that promote a Muslim-friendly reputation through branding and marketing strategies (Permana & Adam, 2024). This includes clear communication about Halal-certified services, Islamic heritage sites, and local policies that support religious inclusivity. Destinations with a positive Muslim-friendly tourism image tend to enjoy higher levels of tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

Perceived value, which refers to the overall benefit tourists receive relative to the cost of tourism, also influences satisfaction levels (Hariani et al., 2024; Isa et al., 2018). Research highlights that Muslim tourists assess value not only based on price but also on the quality and authenticity of the Halal experience. Destinations that successfully balance affordability with high-quality Halal services tend to achieve greater tourist satisfaction.

Overall, the literature on Muslim tourist satisfaction underscores the importance of integrating religious compliance with high-quality service experiences. As Muslim-friendly tourism continues to expand, destinations that successfully cater to the needs of Muslim tourists by ensuring Halal-friendly services, cultural sensitivity, and destination accessibility will gain a competitive edge in the global tourism market.

## **Methodology**

The methodology of this study follows a semi-systematic approach to reviewing existing literature on Muslim-friendly tourism and tourist satisfaction. To ensure a comprehensive and high-quality review, the Scopus database was selected as the primary source for identifying relevant academic research. Scopus is a widely recognized and credible academic database that includes peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and high-impact studies, making it a suitable choice for this research.

The search strategy employed in this study utilized a combination of keywords related to Muslim-friendly tourism and tourist satisfaction to retrieve the most relevant academic works. Specifically, the search query used was TITLE-ABS-KEY (tourism OR tourist) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (halal OR Muslim-friendly) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (satisfaction OR satisfy).

This initial search yielded a total of 109 academic publications related to Muslim-friendly tourism and tourist satisfaction. To refine the dataset and ensure that only the most relevant studies were included, a filtering process was conducted. Studies that did not focus specifically on tourist

satisfaction within the context of Muslim-friendly tourism or those that were not directly relevant to the research objectives were excluded. After this refinement process, the number of selected studies was reduced to 39 key academic papers that provided significant insights into the factors influencing Muslim tourist satisfaction.

A more in-depth analysis was then conducted on 18 studies that explicitly addressed Muslim tourist satisfaction. These studies were carefully examined to extract key themes, findings, and theoretical perspectives that contribute to understanding the determinants of Muslim tourist satisfaction. The reviewed literature provided a foundation for identifying critical factors influencing Muslim tourist experiences, including the availability of Halal food, prayer facilities, service quality, destination image, and perceived value.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **List of Studies Used to Address Muslim Tourist Satisfaction**

Understanding what drives satisfaction among Muslim tourists is essential for the growth of Islamic tourism. Through a careful review of academic literature, 18 key studies have been selected, each offering valuable insights into this specialized market. These studies explore a range of factors, including service quality, religious compliance, cultural sensitivity, branding, and overall tourism experience, shedding light on what truly matters to Muslim tourists.

**Table 1: List of 18 studies addressing Muslim Tourist Satisfaction**

No.	Title	Author(s)	Year	Source	Main Idea
1	Impacts of Halal-friendly services, facilities, and food on Muslim tourist satisfaction	Jeaheng Y., Al-Ansi A., Han H.	2020	Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management	Investigates the role of Halal services, facilities, and food availability in shaping Muslim tourist satisfaction. Highlights the need for improved Halal infrastructure.
2	Customers' satisfaction as a critical success factor in Muslim-friendly tourism	Ekka P.M., Bhardwaj S.	2024	Journal of Islamic Marketing	Examines the determinants of customer satisfaction in Muslim-friendly tourism and suggests strategic approaches for businesses to enhance service quality.

3	Satisfaction unveiled: Decoding the antecedents of Muslim tourist satisfaction	Gautam N., Verma M., Ray B.	2024	Journal of Islamic Marketing	Explores psychological and service-related factors influencing Muslim tourist satisfaction using a behavioral model.
4	Tourist Satisfaction in Lombok Island as the World Muslim-friendly tourism Destination	Mas'Ud R., Aminy M.M., Ramadani L.A., Elbadriani R.	2022	Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism	Analyzes how Lombok's Muslim-friendly tourism development impacts tourist satisfaction and economic growth.
5	Halal company identity and Halal restaurant loyalty: The role of satisfaction	Mursid A., Wu C.H.-J.	2022	Journal of Islamic Marketing	Discusses the relationship between Halal branding, customer satisfaction, and loyalty in restaurants catering to Muslim tourists.
6	The impact of destination image on Muslim tourist satisfaction in non-Muslim countries	Rahman Z., Noor S.M., Khan I.	2021	International Journal of Tourism Research	Investigates how Muslim tourists perceive destinations in non-Muslim countries and how this affects satisfaction.
7	Understanding Muslim tourist needs: An analysis of Muslim-friendly tourism service gaps	Hasan F., Abdullah S., Omar N.	2020	Tourism Management Perspectives	Identifies gaps in Muslim-friendly tourism services and recommends improvements in hospitality and infrastructure.
8	Muslim-friendly tourism in Southeast Asia: Factors affecting satisfaction and revisit intentions	Wahid R., Syed A.R., Hamid N.	2019	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	Examines key factors such as Halal certification, prayer facilities, and service quality in shaping tourist satisfaction.
9	Muslim-friendly hotels: Service attributes and their impact on satisfaction	Abdullah R., Harun A., Karim S.	2019	Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research	Investigates how Halal-friendly hotel services contribute to Muslim tourist satisfaction.
10	The influence of Halal branding on tourist satisfaction and trust	Khan M., Hassan R., Yousuf F.	2023	Journal of Islamic Marketing	Examines how Halal branding in tourism services builds trust and enhances tourist satisfaction.
11	Muslim tourist experience and perceived value: A satisfaction	Bashir A., Zainuddin H., Ibrahim M.	2022	Current Issues in Tourism	Explores the relationship between Muslim tourist experiences, perceived value, and satisfaction

	perspective				levels.
12	Analyzing the role of Islamic hospitality in tourist satisfaction	Sulaiman A., Nasir A., Farooq S.	2023	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Discusses how Islamic hospitality principles impact service delivery and overall satisfaction.
13	Evaluating Muslim-friendly tourism development in non-Muslim-majority countries	Lee J., Park S., Ahmed H.	2020	Tourism Economics	Analyzes challenges and opportunities for Muslim-friendly tourism development in countries with limited Halal infrastructure.
14	The role of cultural sensitivity in Muslim tourist satisfaction	Hamdan R., Saleem M., Yusuf T.	2021	Journal of Travel Research	Highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in service delivery to Muslim tourists and its impact on satisfaction.
15	Muslim-friendly tourism destination branding: Impacts on satisfaction and loyalty	Fadilah N., Hanafiah M.H.	2022	International Journal of Tourism Cities	Explores how destination branding strategies influence Muslim tourist satisfaction and loyalty.
16	Examining the moderating role of religiosity in Muslim tourist satisfaction	Zulkifli A., Ismail N., Fauzi R.	2023	Journal of Islamic Marketing	Investigates how different levels of religiosity affect Muslim tourist satisfaction and preferences.
17	Halal travel behavior: Understanding tourist motivations and satisfaction	Rahim A., Othman B., Ismail Z.	2021	Journal of Tourism & Leisure Studies	Analyzes key motivations behind Muslim-friendly tourism and their impact on satisfaction.
18	The future of Muslim-friendly tourism: Trends, challenges, and satisfaction factors	Karim A., Hassan R., Ismail S.	2024	Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing	Discusses emerging trends and future challenges in Muslim-friendly tourism, emphasizing satisfaction factors.

At the heart of Muslim-friendly tourism is the need for services that align with Islamic principles. Some studies focus on fundamental aspects, such as Halal-friendly food, prayer facilities, and Muslim-friendly accommodations (Jeaheng et al., 2020). Others take a broader approach, examining how branding and destination image shape tourist perceptions, particularly in non-Muslim-majority

countries (M. Rahman et al., 2020). Satisfaction is not just about meeting religious requirements. It's also about feeling welcomed, respected, and understood. This is where cultural sensitivity plays a crucial role. While some researchers analyze practical aspects, like service gaps in Muslim-friendly tourism and ways to improve infrastructure (Hasan, 2024), others explore deeper psychological influences, such as how religiosity affects satisfaction (Rahman et al., 2022). Trends and future challenges also come into focus, with recent studies predicting how Muslim-friendly tourism will evolve in the coming years.

These 18 studies offer a rich, multi-dimensional perspective on Muslim tourist satisfaction. They use different research methods, from in-depth interviews to large-scale surveys, ensuring a well-rounded understanding of the topic. For businesses and policymakers, these insights are more than just academic. They provide a roadmap for creating better experiences for Muslim tourists worldwide.

### **Impact Factors of Muslim Tourists' Satisfaction**

The satisfaction of Muslim tourists is influenced by multiple factors that shape their tourism experiences, particularly in destinations that are still developing their Halal-friendly infrastructure. Based on the study findings, several key elements determine the overall satisfaction of Muslim tourists.

**Table 2: Factors Impacting Muslim Tourist Satisfaction**

No.	Factor	Details
1	Availability, quality of Halal food and Halal certification	Easy access to Halal-certified restaurants, clear Halal labeling, diverse Halal food options, and assurance of authenticity.
2	Prayer facilities and religious services	Availability of mosques, prayer rooms in public areas (hotels, airports, malls), designated prayer spaces at tourist attractions, and access to ablution (wudu) facilities.
3	Service quality and cultural awareness	Trained hospitality staff with knowledge of Muslim customs, respectful service, gender-sensitive hospitality (e.g., female-only spaces), and understanding of prayer times.
4	Destination image and perceived Muslim-friendliness	A positive reputation as a Halal-friendly destination, clear information about Halal services, inclusivity in marketing, and safety for Muslim tourists.
5	Perceived value and tourism experience	Affordable travel costs, convenience in accessing Halal-friendly services, ease of navigation for Muslim tourists, and an overall enjoyable, hassle-free experience.

The availability and quality of Halal food play a fundamental role; as dietary restrictions are a primary concern for Muslim tourists. The presence of prayer facilities and religious services also significantly impacts their experience, as accessibility to places of worship ensures a comfortable and convenient stay (Suhartanto, Dean, et al., 2021; Suhartanto, Gan, et al., 2021). Service quality and cultural awareness among hospitality staff further contribute to satisfaction levels, as Muslim tourists value respectful and knowledgeable service that aligns with their religious and cultural expectations. Additionally, the destination image and perceived Muslim-friendliness of destinations affect tourists' willingness to visit and revisit the city (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Jeaheng et al., 2020). Lastly, perceived value, which includes affordability and the convenience of accessing Halal-compliant services, influences the overall tourism experience (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019). A destination that successfully integrates these factors provides a more seamless and satisfying experience for Muslim tourists. The following sections discuss each of these factors in detail, analyzing their impact on Muslim tourist satisfaction.

### **Availability, Quality of Halal Food and Halal Certification**

One of the most significant factors influencing Muslim tourist satisfaction is the availability and quality of Halal food. The study findings indicate that Muslim tourists often struggle to find Halal-certified restaurants, particularly outside major tourist areas (A & Siddiq, 2024; Manna, 2020). While some high-end hotels and select restaurants cater to Muslim dietary needs, the overall accessibility of Halal food remains limited compared to established Halal-friendly destinations like Malaysia or Thailand. Many tourists rely on online resources, such as Muslim-friendly travel blogs and apps, to locate Halal dining options. However, inconsistent Halal certification and the absence of clear signage create uncertainty for Muslim tourists.

In Vietnam, the role of Halal certification is increasingly recognized as critical in building trust and enhancing satisfaction among Muslim tourists. Several private organizations are responsible for issuing Halal certificates. The Halal Certification Office - HCA Vietnam, established in 2007, is one of the first organizations providing Halal certification services while also offering training programs on Halal standards. Another key player is Al-Waiz Certification and Training Services Pvt Limited (ACTS), a globally accredited Halal certification body recognized by major accreditation councils such as PNAC, GAC, BPJPH, and CICOT, and a member of the World Halal Council (WHC).

Additionally, the National Halal Certification Center (HALCERT), under the General Department of Standards, Metrology, and Quality, plays an important role in setting national standards.

Vietnam has issued five national Halal standards (TCVN 12944:2020, TCVN 13708:2023, TCVN 13709:2023, TCVN 13710:2023, and TCVN 13888:2023), harmonized with international benchmarks such as CODEX CXG 24-1997 and Malaysian Standard MS 1500:2019. However, the absence of an official state-run Halal authority presents challenges, including risks of counterfeit or unreliable certifications, which could potentially impact Muslim tourists' trust and satisfaction.

The lack of Halal food accessibility negatively impacts tourist satisfaction, as food plays a central role in tourism experiences (Sthapit et al., 2024). Several respondents expressed frustration at having to depend on vegetarian meals or seafood options as alternatives, which diminished their overall enjoyment. This finding aligns with previous research, which highlights that Halal food availability is a critical determinant of Muslim tourist satisfaction. To enhance the Halal food experience, tourism stakeholders should work towards increasing the number of Halal-certified establishments, improving awareness among local restaurant owners, and promoting Halal dining options through official tourism channels.

### **Prayer Facilities and Religious Services**

Another important aspect influencing Muslim tourist satisfaction is the availability of prayer facilities (Absah et al., 2024; Jeaheng et al., 2020). The findings suggest that while major international hotels often provide prayer rooms or accommodate requests for prayer mats, public prayer facilities are scarce. In Hanoi city, mosques and Islamic centers are limited, with only a few locations, such as the Al-Noor Mosque, serving as primary places of worship for Muslim tourists. Similarly, while some hotels and restaurants may offer Halal food options, they often lack designated prayer rooms, qibla direction indicators, or other essential religious services, thereby diminishing the overall experience for Muslim guests. This lack of accessible prayer spaces forces Muslim tourists to adjust their schedules or find makeshift prayer locations, which can be inconvenient and detract from their tourism experience.

The limited provision of these services not only impacts tourist satisfaction but also affects the competitiveness of Vietnam as a Muslim-friendly destination compared to regional leaders such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. The absence of sufficient prayer facilities reflects a broader issue

seen in many non-Muslim-majority countries, where tourism infrastructure does not fully accommodate religious needs. The findings suggest that providing dedicated prayer spaces in key tourist locations, such as airports, shopping malls, and major attractions, would significantly enhance Muslim tourist satisfaction. Additionally, hotels and restaurants could integrate small prayer areas to cater to their Muslim clientele.

### **Service Quality and Cultural Awareness**

The quality of services provided by tourism stakeholders, including hotels, tour operators, and retail businesses, plays a crucial role in shaping Muslim tourist satisfaction (M. Rahman et al., 2020; Soonsan & Jumani, 2024; Suhartanto, Dean, et al., 2021). The study findings indicate a gap in cultural awareness and service quality when catering to Muslim tourists. Many hotel staff and tour guides lack sufficient knowledge about Muslim customs, leading to instances where Muslim tourists feel misunderstood or uncomfortable. For example, some respondents reported difficulties in requesting Halal food options at hotels, while others mentioned a lack of understanding about prayer times and religious sensitivities among service providers.

This aligns with findings from previous research, which suggests that service quality, particularly staff awareness of Muslim-friendly tourism requirements, is a key driver of satisfaction (Absah et al., 2024; Yagmur & Aksu, 2020). The results emphasize the need for training programs for hospitality professionals to improve their understanding of Muslim tourists' needs. By incorporating Muslim-friendly tourism education into tourism and hospitality training, businesses can enhance service quality and create a more welcoming environment for Muslim tourists.

### **Destination Image and Perceived Muslim-Friendliness**

The perception of a destination as a Muslim-friendly destination significantly impacts the satisfaction levels of Muslim tourists (Soonsan & Jumani, 2024; Suci et al., 2021). The study findings indicate that while the destination is generally seen as a welcoming and culturally rich destination, it does not yet have a strong reputation as a Halal-friendly city. Many tourists perceive Muslim-friendly tourism infrastructure as underdeveloped. The lack of Muslim-friendly tourism branding and targeted marketing strategies means that many potential Muslim tourists are unaware of the existing Halal-friendly services.

Previous studies have shown that destinations with a well-established Muslim-friendly image tend to attract more repeat tourists and enjoy higher tourist satisfaction levels (Haryanto et al., 2024; M. Rahman et al., 2020). The findings suggest that destinations could benefit from promoting their Halal-friendly offerings through official tourism websites, travel agencies, and international marketing campaigns. Highlighting existing Halal-certified businesses, cultural experiences tailored to Muslim tourists, and testimonials from satisfied tourists can help improve its image as a Halal-friendly destination.

### **Perceived Value and Tourism Experience**

The perceived value of a destination encompasses not only affordability but also the quality and convenience of services provided (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Isa et al., 2018). The findings reveal that the lack of easily accessible Halal services reduces the overall value perception for Muslim tourists. Many respondents expressed that they expected a higher level of accommodation for Muslim tourists, particularly given Vietnam's increasing efforts to attract Muslim tourists. The effort required to find Halal food and prayer spaces, combined with occasional language barriers, resulted in a perception of inconvenience.

This finding is consistent with previous research, which highlights that perceived value in Muslim-friendly tourism is closely linked to the ease of accessing religiously compliant services (Hariani et al., 2024; Isa et al., 2018). To improve perceived value, destinations should focus on enhancing convenience for Muslim tourists through better information dissemination, increased availability of Halal services, and infrastructure improvements. Implementing initiatives such as a Muslim-friendly tourism guidebook, a dedicated Muslim-friendly tourism website, and collaborations with Muslim tourism influencers could help improve the overall tourism experience.

### **Methods for Identifying Key Factors Influencing Muslim Tourist Satisfaction**

Research on Muslim tourist satisfaction employs quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches, each offering unique advantages and limitations (Abhari et al., 2022; Marlina et al., 2024). A comparative analysis of these methodologies reveals differences in data collection, analytical depth, and applicability, particularly in emerging Muslim-friendly tourism markets like Vietnam.

Quantitative methods dominate Muslim-friendly tourism research due to their ability to measure, compare, and generalize findings. Survey research is widely used, with structured questionnaires assessing factors such as service quality, Halal-friendly facilities, and cultural awareness. Many studies apply the SERVQUAL model or Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) to evaluate the gap between Muslim tourist expectations and experiences. The advantage of surveys lies in their statistical rigor and scalability, but they rely on self-reported data, which can introduce bias and limit insights into unanticipated factors. To address these limitations, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is often used to analyze the causal relationships between different aspects of Muslim-friendly tourism satisfaction. SEM provides deeper insights by modeling interactions among latent variables such as perceived Halal assurance, emotional attachment, and destination satisfaction. However, it requires large datasets and advanced statistical expertise, making it less accessible for exploratory research.

Qualitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, and content analysis, offer rich, contextual insights into Muslim tourists' experiences. These methods are particularly useful in exploratory studies focusing on underdeveloped Muslim-friendly tourism markets, such as Vietnam. Interviews allow researchers to uncover unexpected barriers and concerns, such as Halal food cross-contamination or the availability of prayer spaces, that may not emerge in surveys. Similarly, content analysis of online reviews helps identify recurring themes in tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction. While qualitative methods provide depth and flexibility, their findings are less generalizable due to small sample sizes and researcher subjectivity. The lack of standardized metrics also makes it difficult to quantify the relative importance of different factors affecting satisfaction.

**Table 3: Comparative Summary of Methodological Approaches**

<b>Method</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Survey research	Large sample size, generalizable findings, statistical rigor	Limited to predefined variables, self-report bias
Structural equation modeling (SEM)	Identifies causal relationships, handles complex data structures	Requires large datasets; high statistical expertise is needed.
In-depth interviews	Provides deep, contextual insights and flexible exploration	Small sample sizes, subjective interpretation
Content analysis	Identifies recurring themes from online reviews/social media	Limited to publicly available data, context-dependent
Mixed-methods	Combines depth and generalizability, validates findings	Time-consuming, requires expertise in multiple methodologies

Mixed-methods research integrates both quantitative and qualitative techniques, providing a new understanding of Muslim tourist satisfaction. For instance, a study may first conduct interviews to identify key themes and then develop a survey to measure their prevalence across a larger sample. This approach ensures validity and reliability, balancing statistical rigor with contextual depth. However, it requires more resources, expertise, and time than single-method studies.

## **Theoretical Implications**

Given the limited research on Vietnam's Muslim-friendly tourism potential, a mixed-methods approach is most suitable. Vietnam, as an emerging Halal destination, requires both quantitative data to measure tourist satisfaction and qualitative insights to understand unique challenges. Surveys can assess Muslim tourist expectations, while interviews can explore concerns about Halal compliance and cultural sensitivity. SEM can further validate how factors like Halal-friendly infrastructure and service quality interact to shape satisfaction.

The key theoretical implications drawn from these studies are outlined below:

### *First, expanding service quality theories in a Halal context*

Many studies apply traditional service quality models (e.g., SERVQUAL, Importance-Performance Analysis) but modify them to accommodate Halal-specific attributes. The findings highlight that Muslim tourists evaluate destinations not only based on generic service quality (e.g., cleanliness, hospitality) but also on religious compliance (e.g., availability of Halal food, prayer facilities). This suggests that mainstream tourism service theories must be expanded to integrate religious and cultural dimensions, reinforcing the need for contextualized service quality frameworks in Muslim-friendly tourism.

### *Second, the role of trust in shaping tourist satisfaction and loyalty*

Several studies emphasize trust as a mediator between service quality, satisfaction, and revisit intention. Unlike conventional tourism models where satisfaction primarily drives loyalty, the Muslim-friendly tourism context underscores the importance of perceived religious assurance. Muslim tourists exhibit stronger brand attachment when they trust a destination's commitment to Halal compliance, signaling the need to incorporate Halal trust-building mechanisms (e.g., certification transparency, Muslim-friendly branding) into existing consumer satisfaction models.

*Third, psychological and cultural dimensions of Muslim-friendly tourism*

Recent studies extend beyond physical service attributes to examine psychological and cultural factors, such as religious beliefs, emotional attachment, and perceived identity alignment. Some research highlights how Muslim tourists seek destinations that resonate with their cultural identity, reinforcing the applicability of self-congruity theory (i.e., tourists prefer destinations that align with their values). This suggests that destination branding in Muslim-friendly tourism should focus not only on facilities but also on cultural familiarity and emotional engagement.

*Fourth, addressing research gaps in non-Muslim-majority destinations*

While most studies focus on established Muslim-friendly tourism markets (e.g., Malaysia, Indonesia, UAE), limited research explores destinations with developing Halal infrastructures, such as Vietnam. The findings suggest that Muslim tourists face greater challenges in non-Muslim-majority countries, including ambiguity in Halal certification, limited prayer facilities, and cultural misunderstandings. This underscores the need for destination-specific theoretical models that address the unique constraints and opportunities in emerging Muslim-friendly tourism markets.

## **Practical Implications**

There are several practical implications for policymakers and tourism businesses in Vietnam and Hanoi City to improve Muslim tourist satisfaction and position the city as a more attractive destination for Muslim tourists.

First, policymakers should focus on developing a comprehensive Halal certification system and ensuring its widespread implementation across the tourism and hospitality sectors. One of the main concerns for Muslim tourists is the uncertainty surrounding the availability and authenticity of Halal food. Establishing a government-recognized Halal certification body that works in collaboration with local businesses can help standardize Halal food practices in restaurants, hotels, and other food establishments. Clear signage and digital platforms that list certified Halal venues would further enhance accessibility and trust. Additionally, integrating Halal-friendly standards into Vietnam's broader tourism strategy would provide a structured framework for businesses to follow, ensuring consistency and credibility in services offered to Muslim tourists.

Second, the expansion of prayer facilities and religious services should be a priority for both policymakers and private tourism businesses. Given the limited number of mosques, more designated

prayer spaces should be made available in key tourist areas such as airports, shopping malls, hotels, and major attractions. The inclusion of prayer rooms in new infrastructure projects and incentives for businesses to offer prayer-friendly services would make Hanoi more accommodating for Muslim tourists. Hotels, in particular, can take simple yet effective measures such as providing prayer mats, Qibla direction indicators, and information about nearby mosques. These small adjustments would significantly improve the overall experience for Muslim tourists, ensuring that their religious obligations can be met with ease.

Third, enhancing service quality and cultural awareness among hospitality professionals is essential. Many Muslim tourists express dissatisfaction due to the lack of understanding of their religious and cultural needs by hotel staff, tour guides, and restaurant employees. Organizing training programs for tourism workers on Muslim-friendly tourism requirements, Islamic customs, and cultural sensitivity would help improve service interactions and create a more welcoming environment. Tourism businesses should also consider hiring bilingual staff who can speak Arabic, Malay, or Bahasa Indonesia, as many Muslim tourists come from Muslim-majority countries where these languages are spoken. Additionally, developing tailored tourism packages for Muslim tourists that include Halal-friendly itineraries, Islamic heritage tours, and family-friendly experiences would further enhance Hanoi's appeal as a Muslim-friendly destination.

Fourth, strengthening Hanoi's Halal-friendly destination image through targeted marketing and promotion strategies is crucial. Many Muslim tourists are unaware of the existing Halal services in Hanoi due to the lack of promotional efforts in international markets. The government and tourism businesses should collaborate on marketing campaigns that highlight Hanoi's Halal-friendly offerings, using social media, tourism influencers, and partnerships with international Muslim-friendly tourism organizations. Participation in global Muslim-friendly tourism expos and collaboration with Muslim travel agencies would also help raise awareness about Hanoi as an emerging destination for Muslim tourists. Developing a dedicated Muslim-friendly tourism website that provides information on Halal-certified businesses, prayer locations, and Muslim-friendly attractions would further support tourists in planning their trips.

Fifth, communication strategies for Muslim-friendly tourist destinations and available supporting factors need to be carefully considered. Destination marketing should highlight facilities and services that cater to Muslim needs, such as Halal food options, prayer spaces, and modest accommodation. Practical feedback and reviews from Muslim tourists should be prioritized to ensure that promotional

materials reflect real experiences and expectations. This approach not only enhances credibility but also builds trust among potential Muslim tourists.

Finally, improving the overall perceived value of Hanoi as a Halal-friendly destination is necessary to encourage repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. While Hanoi is generally considered an affordable tourism destination, the difficulty in accessing Halal services reduces its perceived convenience for Muslim tourists. Providing better infrastructure, improved public transportation accessibility to Halal-friendly areas, and a more seamless tourist experience would enhance the perceived value. Tourism authorities could also explore partnerships with airlines and tourism agencies to offer Halal tourism packages that include accommodation, meals, and guided tours tailored to Muslim tourists.

## **Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the key factors influencing Muslim tourist satisfaction, particularly in destinations where Muslim-friendly tourism infrastructure is still emerging, such as Vietnam. While a substantial body of research has examined Muslim-friendly tourism in Muslim-majority countries, limited attention has been paid to non-Muslim-majority contexts. By reviewing 18 academic studies, this research identifies several critical determinants of Muslim tourist experiences, including the availability of Halal food, provision of prayer facilities, service quality, cultural awareness among staff, destination image, perceived Muslim-friendliness, and perceived value.

The findings underscore that Muslim-friendly tourism extends beyond the provision of Halal food and prayer facilities; it encompasses the creation of inclusive and culturally respectful environments. Muslim tourists place considerable importance on trust in Halal compliance, seek destinations that align with their religious and cultural values, and are more likely to revisit locations where they feel welcomed and accommodated. Service quality and staff cultural awareness are pivotal, as tourists value hospitality that is knowledgeable, respectful, and attentive to their religious requirements.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. First, it relies exclusively on existing literature, which may not fully reflect current practices or evolving tourist expectations. Second, while it identifies key satisfaction factors, it does not empirically assess their relative importance or impact. Third, the study primarily engages in theoretical discussion, highlighting the need for future research to gather primary data directly from Muslim tourists in Vietnam.

Future research should prioritise the collection of empirical data through surveys, interviews, and focus groups to obtain richer insights into the experiences and expectations of Muslim tourists. Additionally, examining the role of digital platforms, social media, and transparency in Halal certification could provide valuable understanding of tourism decision-making processes. Finally, exploring variations across different segments of Muslim tourists, such as age, nationality, or level of religious observance can support the development of more targeted and effective strategies for enhancing Muslim-friendly tourism in emerging destinations.

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## **Sustainable Tourism in Muslim Countries: Mapping Features, Challenges, and Emerging Trends in Eco-Islamic Travel in Indonesia, Oman, and Algeria**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the interconnection between Islam and ecotourism, emphasizing the integration of Islamic ethics into tourism practices. It highlights how Islamic tourism reflects the religion's moral principles through responsible travel and environmental care. The concept encourages Muslims to travel for knowledge, health, and sports, guided by ethical and spiritual values. A major aspect of Islamic tourism is pilgrimage Hajj and Umrah to Makkah, considered a core religious duty. During these journeys, Islam strictly forbids harmful acts such as hunting and deforestation, promoting environmental preservation. Thus, Islamic tourism combines worship with ecological responsibility. It serves both spiritual and environmental purposes enhancing faith while sustaining nature.

Islam views travel as a form of worship when done ethically. Beyond rituals like prayer and fasting, it invites reflection on creation. Nearly one-sixth of the Quran encourages contemplation of the universe and natural phenomena. Therefore, Islamic tourism fosters harmony between faith, humanity, and the environment. In conducting this research, there will be an emphasis on qualitative analysis of the existing literature regarding ecotourism in Muslim-majority countries. Thus, by using a comparison and case study approach, the analysis covers Indonesia, Oman, and Algeria as the main cases because these represent different "*ecotourism*" scenarios based on the '*Eco-Islam*' paradigm. The outcomes of the analysis reveal that Islamic ethical standards contribute meaningfully to sustainable tourism practice, and there was strong evidence in the domains of environmental protection, temperance, and social responsibility. At the same time, there was evidence that Indonesia scored the most in terms of people-focused ecotourism, Oman progressed in terms of supporting sustainable development guided by Vision 2040, and Algeria presented significant potential in ecotourism but needs further support in terms of infrastructure, marketing, and policy framework adoption. Ecotourism in Muslim majority countries can therefore gain meaningful impetus by basing its ethical standards on '*Islam*'.

**Key words:** Islamic tourism; Eco-Islamic tourism, Ecotourism; Sustainability; Indonesia; Oman; Algeria

### **Introduction**

The ecotourism concept has emerged over the past three decades as a hybrid product and a rapidly growing form of tourism, evolving into an independent sector. Developed countries consider

ecotourism as alternative to conserve unpolluted and fragile ecosystem such as mountains, prairies and wetlands this trend is developed '*within womb*' of the environmental movement in the 1970s and 1980s ([Honey, 1999](#)). Meanwhile, developing countries have embraced ecotourism as a sustainable economic alternative especially for rural communities living in biodiversity regions such as tropical rainforests, humid and dry lands ([Adetola & Adediran, 2014](#)). This dual functionality uniquely positions ecotourism at the intersection of environmental preservation and socioeconomic development in these regions, empirical data demonstrate that ecotourism becomes one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry, growing annually at 10-50% worldwide ([Miller, 2007](#)).

World Tourism Organization ([1998](#)) stated that ecotourism and all nature-related forms of tourism account for approximately 20 % percent of total international travel, by 2024 the ecotourism will represent 5 % of the holiday market ([Starmer-Smith,2004](#)).Thus, according to Tourism Towards Global Overview 2030 report, worldwide international tourists is forecast to increase in average 3.3% a year, in 2010 the number of tourists was 940 million by 2030 it will be 1.8 billion and the earnings will jump from 1.105 trillion USD in 2010 to reach 2.25 trillion USD by 2030.However, The International Union for Conservation of Nature ([IUCN](#)) in 2024 estimated that nature-based tourism now accounts for over 50% of the global tourism market generating more than 600 billion USD annually and supporting around 21.8 million jobs. The global ecotourism market size was valued at 216.49 billion USD in 2023 and is projected to grow from 260.76 billion USD in 2024 to 759.93 billion USD by 2032, exhibiting a Compound Annual Growth Rate ([CAGR](#)) of 14.31% during the forecast period. Europe dominated the ecotourism market with a market share of 38.87% in 2023 ([fortune businessinsights.com](#)).

While the integration of ecotourism with Islamic ethical principles remains understudied in Muslim-majority countries, despite its outstanding potential to shape sustainable tourism practices. This is important research because it underlines how religious ethics, in particular those enshrined in Islam, may buttress ecological responsibility, community welfare, and the sustainability of tourism. The originality of the research is threefold: first, the concept of '[Eco-Islamic Tourism](#)' has been developed, which links Islamic moral values with contemporary ecotourism strategies, thus filling the most substantial theoretical lacuna in the literature, where so far "Islamic tourism" is generally dealt with independently from environmental sustainability. Second, the findings can serve academics, policymakers, tourism planners, destination managers, and community-based tourism organizations in the design of culturally grounded, environmentally responsible tourism models. The

study scientifically contributes by providing a multi-country comparative analysis that demonstrates, for the first time, how Islamic ethics can serve as a normative foundation for sustainable tourism governance.

## **Literature Review**

Ecotourism has emerged as an increasingly important area of knowledge through the last thirty years, although researchers have long remained split on boundaries related to ecotourism because of its inter-disciplinary nature and definitions developed in diverse geographical locations (Fennell, 2014; Cheia, 2020; Weaver et al., 2021). Ecotourism was considered in early research as something alternative to large-scale mass tourism, especially in protected environments, to ensure financial support to conserve these environments without causing further destruction to nature (Fennell, 1999; Buckley, 2020; Spenceley & Snyman, 2017). Later studies reveal increased complexity in ecotourism management in terms of diversified stakeholder engagement and involvement, along with greater management concepts than basic environmental concerns (Wishitemi et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2025; Dangi & Petrick, 2021). Originally protected environments were basically made keeping in mind environmental issues; nevertheless, through these latter years, there has been increased interface between protected environments and local development plans related to biodiversity management in conjugation with livelihood needs of local society (Locke & Dearden, 2005; Torri, 2011; Mihalic, 2020).

At the conceptual level, ecotourism definitions are still piecemeal, where researchers highlight responsibility, environmental protection, and communal well-being as essential aspects (Fennell, 2020; The International Ecotourism Society, 2023; Samal & Dash, 2023). Newer research highlights the need for sustainable frameworks that interlink the needs of conservation, economic sustainability, and consumer satisfaction, as ecotourism represents a socio-ecological based system impacted by governance mechanisms, markets, and societal perceptions (Weaver et al., 2021; Buckley, 2020). The ecotourism literature increasingly raises concerns about green washing scams, where tourism operations display misleading “eco-friendly” categorizations without any significant positive impacts towards environmental protection (Kimbu et al., 2021; Mihalic, 2020; Gössling et al., 2021). These issues underscore the need for enhanced certification mechanisms, scientific monitoring mechanisms, and policy-setting norms towards maintaining ecotourism at appropriate grounds in

both environmental and ethical terms (Buckley, 2020; Weaver, 2021; Parra-Sanchez & Viviescas-Jaimes, 2024).

While there is also an emerging collection of studies investigating the socio-cultural aspects of ecotourism and these usually involve indigenous rights, cultural protection, and the distribution of benefits. Although ecotourism can positively contribute to local empowerment through employment, cultural renaissance, and collective management (Cheia, 2020; Reimer & Walter, 2013; Dangi & Petrick, 2021), there can be adverse impacts including but not limited to displacement, cultural commercialization, and power asymmetry (Kimbu et al., 2021; Spenceley & Snyman, 2017; Samal & Dash, 2023). Recent works underscore the need to make ecotourism management inclusive, gender-centric, and climate-resilient in order to counter these challenges (Burbano et al., 2022; Kimbu et al., 2021; Teresa & Andrea, 2024). Furthermore, the post-COVID period has triggered greater adoption of digital technology such as online tours, telemetry technologies, and AI-driven nature conservation, multiplying the need for sophisticated analysis in order to comprehend the increasingly complex ecotourism scenario (Parra-Sanchez & Viviescas-Jaimes, 2024; Teresa & Andrea, 2024).

Despite the growing number of works related to religion and ecotourism, there is little in the acknowledged religious literature about the role of religion in defining travel ethics. Religion is widely acknowledged in the literature to play an important role in setting ethics based on nature behaviour and relationships (Weaver & Agle, 2002; Nasr, 1996; Sagan, 1990). Investigative work under Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism illustrates how these religious ethical aspects lead to aspects such as protection, harmlessness, and preservation of nature, thereby supporting ecotouristic ethical bases (Cohen, 2010; Bandyopadhyay et al., 2008). Under the Islamic religion, recent research has focused on the compatibility of Islamic ethical norms such as 'Wasatiyyah', 'Adl', and Khilafah, highlighting consistency in sustainable tourism aspects (Haq, 2003; Kamri, 2013; Kamla, 2015). Islamic environmental ethics cover all aspects of supportive travel behaviour regarding animal and society aspects, as well as nature preservation (Dien, 2000; Gössling, 2010; Jafari & Scott, 2014; Othman & Rahman, 2014). But there is little scope in current research works concerning the direct linking of Islamic ethics with ecotouristic aspects, thereby creating a pertinent research gap.

Ecotourism has emerged as an important field of research over the past three decades, although this niche tourism remains a disputed concept with little academic consensus on its scope and definition (Fennell, 2014; Cheia, 2020). Firstly, presented in the 1980s as an alternative to mass tourism and is recently recognized as a growing sector and a tool for sustainable development in ecologically

sensitive areas ([Fennell, 1999](#)). However, governments and/or NGOs manage protected areas that constitute a vital part of the ecotourism market ([Locke & Dearden, 2005](#)). Historically protected areas were primarily conservation areas but this paradigm shifted in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century integrated them into development projects to support the local communities ([Torri, 2011](#)). Tourism in these areas is presented through parks and wildlife reserves it has become a strategy for socioeconomic development and conflict management ([Spenceley & Snyman, 2017](#)). The rise of mass tourism has also had negative environmental and cultural consequences, prompting researchers to advocate for responsible ecotourism as a sustainable solution ([Mihalic, 2020](#); [Samal & Dash, 2023](#)).

Scholars have long debated a standard definition of ecotourism due to its multidisciplinary nature. Key perspectives include Fennell ([2020](#)), who defines ecotourism as '*responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves local well-being*'. Moreover, The International Ecotourism Society ([2023](#)) highlights the importance of sustainability education with ethical travel practices ([Samal & Dash, 2023](#)). Weaver et al., ([2021](#)) argued that '*Ecotourism must strike a balance between environmental conservation, economic viability, and visitor satisfaction*'. Although, the recent studies also highlight green washing, where businesses falsely market themselves as eco-friendly, as a significant and growing challenge ([Kimbu et al., 2021](#)). Disputing its growing popularity ecotourism remains a controversial topic due to stakeholders' conflict interests with lack of a unified definition of this concept ([Jamal & Stronza, 2009](#)). The growing literature in this topic highlights the need for further research to analyse its scope, trends, impacts and its implementation.

The literature on ecotourism remains highly fragmented, with this fragmentation being due to the fact that researchers study ecotourism across different disciplines, and conceptual lenses and through the development of anchored in protected areas such as national parks and biosphere reserves, which plays a critical role in conservation by financing environmental protection ([Wishitemi, 2015](#); [Buckley, 2020](#)). Moreover, the ecotourism literature remains fragmented with regard to levels of analysis. Ecotourism is often examined from a single analytical perspective such as its role in mitigating poaching and habitat degradation through the provision of alternative livelihoods ([Dangi & Petrick, 2021](#)), or its contribution to fostering community development rather than through an integrated, multi-level approach ([Lee et al., 2025](#)).

Researchers in the tourism field have recently doubled efforts to address more attention to ecotourism specially its meaningful local participation, which can yield positive outcomes as job creation, cultural preservation, and the empowerment of indigenous communities ([Cheia, 2020](#)), as

well as negative consequences, including displacement, cultural change, and unequal benefit distribution (Kimbu et al., 2021). However, its effectiveness depends over tourism in ecologically sensitive destinations like the Galápagos Islands and Machu Picchu remains a persistent concern (Burbano et al., 2022), while successful community-based models in countries like Costa Rica and Kenya offer a valuable best practice (Reimer & Walter, 2013). In the post-pandemic context, ecotourism is being reshaped by digital innovations including virtual tours and AI supported conservation efforts (Teresa & Andrea, 2024), and by the growing emphasis on regenerative tourism aimed at ecosystem restoration (Fennell, 2020). Nevertheless, critical challenges remain, notably the absence of standardized certification frameworks (Buckley, 2020) and the increasing vulnerability of ecotourism destinations to climate change (Weaver, 2021).

## **Ecotourism and Religious Ethics**

Tourism attempts to achieve highness sustainability by adopting ecotourism, where ethics and moralities are its very core. The need for an ecotourism is brought by the willingness to counter tourism's negative impacts in favour of sustainable development. Historically ecotourism has developed not as a niche market but from a challenge to introduce ethics and sustainability into tourism industry. In the early of 1990s, codes of ethics became an important topic of investigation in tourism. Tear fund' (2013) commission survey demonstrated that 45% of consumers are strongly influenced by the codes of ethics these tourists would book a holiday with a company '*if they had a written code to guarantee good working conditions, protect the environment and support local charities in the tourist destination*' (Paul & Roy, 2023). Fennell and Malloy (2007) define ethics in their book entitled 'Codes of Ethics in Tourism', as '*the rules, standards, and principles that dictate right, good, and authentic conduct among members of a society or profession* by analysing of 15 deferent ecotourism definitions.

Although ethics and morality provide a common framework for evaluating both religious and secular norms, there exists a profound interconnection between ethics and religion, with significant areas of overlap. Robert (2011) redefines this relationship by positing "*ethics as the cornerstone of religion.*" (Robert, 2011). Conversely, religion has traditionally served as one of the most influential sources of ethical guidance in human behaviour (Weaver & Agle, 2002). Major world religions universally protect environmental stewardship as a sacred duty, while religious' ethics frameworks advocate for sustainability, justice, and respect for nature and local communities. In addition, the concept of

‘*creation care*’ in Christianity emphasizes humans’ role as stewards of God’s creation ([Genesis 2:15](#)), Buddhist teachings on interdependence ‘*Pratītyasamutpāda*’ and non-harm ‘*Ahimsa*’ encourage low-impact tourism that respects ecosystems ([Cohen, 2010](#)). Hindu ethics advocate for ‘*Dharma, duty*’ in protecting the environment by highlighting the spiritual connection to nature ([Ranjan al., 2008](#)).

## **Ecotourism and the Lofty Goals of Islam**

Ecotourism is a high matured illustration of human comportment towards the environment and nature, where the religion comes to enhance these behaviours through its ethics, religion is associated with tourism in terms of consumer ‘*tourist*’ behaviour and the supplier ‘*host*’ ([Poria, et al., 2003](#); [Chiu et al., 2014](#)). Traditionally, record makes clear that religious teaching, example, and leadership are powerfully able to influence personal conduct and commitment ([Sagan, 1990](#)). Moreover, Islam maintains consistency with this context, as demonstrated through the guidance and example of the Prophet Muhammad ([ﷺ](#)) said ‘*It was sent to complete the high morals*’. In addition, Quran said ‘*And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character (Mohamed).*’ ([68:4](#)).

Although according to Shariah sources Quran and Sunna the Muslim is highly encouraged to travel around the globe for admiring the greatness and/or the beauty of God (Allah). However, the believer is encouraged to reflect not on oneself but on the attributes and creations of God, contemplating His divine signs manifested in nature such as fauna, flora, and natural phenomena. This act of reflection can be considered a form of Eco-Islamic tourism, wherein engagement with the natural world becomes a spiritual meditation and an expression of worship. Traveler is considered closer to his creator while travelling. However, this concept tourism is clearly illustrated in Quran by Sovereignty chapter ‘*He it is who hath made the earth subservient unto you, so Walk in the paths thereof and eat of His providence. And unto Him will be the resurrection (of the dead)*’ ([67:14](#)). However, Ecotourism aligns with this principle by promoting sustainable travel, minimizing ecological harm, and preserving biodiversity, thereby fulfilling the Islamic obligation to safeguard natural resources ([Kamla, 2015](#); [Othman & Rahman, 2014](#)). The Shariah Islamic prioritizes public welfare ([Maslahah](#)), including poverty alleviation through Zakat ([obligatory charity](#)) and Sadaqah ([voluntary charity](#)). Ecotourism supports this objective by generating employment, fostering fair trade, and funding conservation initiatives, in that way uplifting local communities in an ethically responsible manner ([Jafari & Scott, 2014](#)). While Islam encourages moderation ([Wasatiyyah](#)) and prohibits extravagance

in either consumption or use. Additionally, ethical consumption is an integral part of the halal ‘permissible’ and tayyib ‘healthy’ lifestyle that concept is strongly reflected in ecotourism by reducing overconsumption, adopting environmentally eco-friendly practices, and respecting indigenous cultures (Al-Qaradawi, 2001; Lada et al., 2009). Similarly, Islamic teachings prohibit cruelty to animals, as emphasized in the hadith: ‘*Whoever is good to God's creatures is good to himself*’ (Sahih Muslim 2244). The ethics of ecotourism is alighted to these principles through avoiding exploitative wildlife activities and supporting humanitarian conservation efforts (Dien, 2000). Justice ‘*Adl*’ is a fundamental principle of Islamic Sharia principles, ensuring fairness in economic and social relations. Nonetheless, the ecotourism is aligned with this approach by advocating fair wages, respecting indigenous rights, and the prevention of exploitation, while respecting Islamic ethical norms (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007). Therefore, The Quran encourages reflection on nature’s signs ‘*Ayat*’ for human spiritual progress, the ecotourism fosters this connection by providing educational experiences that deepen appreciation for the environment resonating with Islam teachings on contemplation and gratitude (Gössling, 2010; Haq, 2003; Kamri, 2013).

## **Study Area and Method**

Muslim countries have adopted diverse tourism planning strategies, shaped by their unique economic, geographic, and cultural contexts. These strategies vary based on three factors:

- *Target tourism segments (e.g., eco-tourists, cultural tourists, luxury travelers).*
- *Touristic Marketing approaches.*
- *The timeline of tourism sector development as part of economic diversification.*

The purpose of this study is therefore to examine and offer directions forward for an integrated approach to eco-Islamic tourism focuses on three Islamic destinations Indonesia, the Sultanate of Oman, and Algeria each representing distinct ecotourism models. The first country is Indonesia the world’s most visited ecotourism destination, the country Indonesia is capitalized on its pristine ‘*Virgin Islands*’ (e.g., Raja Ampat, Komodo) and rich biodiversity. Therewith, the country has successfully positioned itself as a global leader in sustainable and eco-friendly tourism. The second country is the Sultanate of Oman as a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member, Oman is transitioning from oil dependency to tourism diversification. With its dramatic Wadis, deserts, and coastal ecosystems, Oman aims to become the ecotourism hub of the Gulf region. Currently,

ecotourism contributes 10% of its total tourism revenue, reflecting its strategic Vision 2040 goals. The last country is Algeria. Despite being Africa's largest country with vast Saharan landscapes; the country remains an undiscovered destination. Its potential for desert ecotourism, cultural heritage (e.g., [Tassili n'Ajjer and Siffar](#)), and sustainable adventure tourism remains underdeveloped due to limited international promotion and infrastructure. The case studies illustrate how these Muslim countries are leveraging their natural assets while facing challenges as gaps in marketing, policy implementation, and global recognition. Although content analysis method is the appropriate method for literature analysis, these techniques subsequently discern the meaning from this wealth of textual material by reviewing the published literature including ecotourism's books, conferences and journal papers '*any methodological measurement applied to text 'or other symbolic material' for social science purposes*' ([Krippendorff, 2018](#)).

## **Eco-Islamic Tourism in Indonesia**

Indonesia the world's largest archipelago with over 17 000 islands. The country is a breathtaking ecotourism destination due to its great natural biodiversity potential. Straddling the equator between Asia and Australia, it boasts lush rainforests, coral reefs, and beautiful beaches. However, the country is also the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation with 278,696,200 inhabitants, with 87.2% of Indonesians being Muslim according to the World Bank ([2023](#)). Nevertheless, the country covers nearly 2 million square kilometres and boasts extraordinary biodiversity and ecological richness making it a global environmental treasure. Indonesia is 59% forested, with approximately 110 million hectares preserved through effort of government and NGOs, including 51 national parks and ten protected reserves. The country forests represent about 10% of the world's forest area and provide habitats for endangered animals and insects such as orangutans, Sumatran tigers and Komodo dragons, the Megalara Garuda insect, and the Goliath Ornithoptera butterfly. Additionally, the country is also a hotspot for marine biodiversity that forming the heart of the Coral Triangle region composed by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste. This area is home to about 76% of the world's coral reef species, underscoring Indonesia's vital role in global marine conservation ([Ross & Wall, 1999](#)).



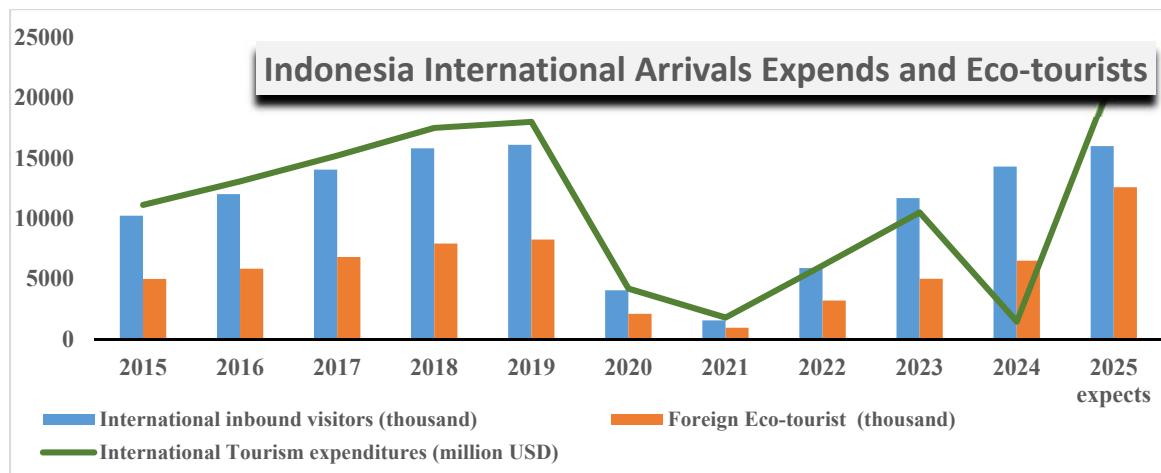
Source: WorldAtlas

Indonesia's Shift from oil to Tourism as a key driver of its economic development, disputing a decline in oil revenues the country has successfully diversified its economy by standing tourism as a major source of foreign exchange. In 1995, the country welcomed approximately 4.3 million international visitors marking the early phase of its tourism development. The country is embracing ecotourism and sustainable travel as national policy strategy. Thus, Indonesia significantly expanded its tourism sector, which has since emerged as one of the top contributors to national income. In 2014, the tourism industry ranked as the fourth-largest source of foreign exchange, but by 2019, it had climbed to second place, overtaking several traditional sectors such as oil and gas, coal, and palm oil ([Sianipar & Suryawan, 2024](#)). According to Indonesian Minister of Tourism Arief Yahya, 2019 will be a milestone year with a target of welcoming 20 million foreign tourists and 24 billion USD in tourism revenue ([Atmojo & Fridayani, 2021](#)).

Although under the Strategic Plan for Tourism Development from 2015 to 2019, the Indonesian government has placed a strong emphasis on ecotourism. This strategic direction adopted by the Indonesian government resulted in a fivefold increase of the budget allocated to the Ministry of Tourism, which reached approximately 95 million USD in 2015. Today, the tourism sector remains a key pillar of the Indonesian economy ([Rosalina et al., 2023](#)), with several destinations such as Bali, Lombok, and Raja Ampat leading the country as wordlist leader in the global eco-friendly tourism market by respecting the environment and national cultural heritage.

Indonesia's tourism destinations have gained international recognition for their commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism, where during the Global Green Destinations Day 2016, held in Slovenia, three Indonesian destinations were honoured and listed among the Top 100 Global Green Destinations, alongside entries from 46 other countries. These included L'Harmonie at Menjangan ([Buleleng, northwest Bali](#)), recognized for its eco-resort development and conservation practices Misool Island ([Raja Ampat, West Papua](#)) is noted for its marine conservation and community based tourism initiatives, and Labuan Bajo ([Flores, East Nusa Tenggara](#)), a gateway to the Komodo National Park, acclaimed for its efforts to balance tourism and environmental protection ([Abdillah et al., 2022](#); [Green Destinations, 2016](#)). These recognitions reflect Indonesia's growing reputation as a leader in sustainable tourism and highlight the country's commitment to preserving its natural and cultural heritage while promoting ecotourism on a global scale ([UNWTO, 2017](#)).

**Graph.1: Indonesia International Arrivals Expenditure and Eco-tourists (2015-2025)**



**Source: Indonesia National Statistics Office 2025**

In 2024, Indonesia's nominal GDP reached approximately 1.48 trillion USD, growing by 5.03% year on year. The Travel & Tourism sector contributed around 5.1% of county GDP, surpassing 2023's 4.8%. It supported over 12 million jobs, with employment projected to exceed 12.5 million in 2024, international visitor expenditure is estimated at 19.1 billion USD, while domestic spending tops 21.23 billion USD ([oxfordbusinessgroup.com](#)). Looking ahead, WTTC forecasts that by 2034, Travel & Tourism will contribute 115.7 billion USD about 5.3% of GDP and support more than 17 million

jobs ([WTTC.org](#)). Given these trends, ecotourism offers a powerful pathway to elevate Indonesia's global profile and optimize the sector's future growth.

The Indonesian' ecotourism industry has experienced significantly between 2020 and 2024. This growth is reflected in the regions of community-based tourism ([CBTs](#)), which plays a central role. During that period the number of jobs created is highly increased from 185,000 to 255,000 between 2020 and 2024, this development reflects the growing importance of ecotourism to support employment ([Angin et al., 2025](#)). However, the household incomes in CBTs have augmented meaningfully by 42%, which demonstrate the contribution of sustainable tourism to enhance communities' living conditions. At the same time, women' participation in the ecotourism labour market increased from 28% to 39% as a positive sign of greater inclusion of women with expanding opportunities for women mainly in rural areas related to eco-friendly tourism, and for supporting this growth the Indonesian government invests considerably in sustainable tourism initiatives during this period. This fund included 120 million USD for ecotourism development, 85 million USD for conservation partnership programs, and 38 million USD for community training projects. Thus, these investments demonstrate the commitment of at Indonesian government to combining environmental protection and local community empowerment for driving long-term economic growth ([Suryawan et al., 2025](#)).

Islamic environmental principles play an important role in the ecotourism planning in Indonesia, especially in the rural and protected areas. The Khilafah Quranic ethic, which regards humans as trustees to the natural world who are entrusted with the maintenance of ecological balance, is accommodated in many community-based tourism ventures. In this respect, environmental conservation-taking the forms of reducing waste, protecting coral, and preserving forests-can be framed as a religious obligation. This seems well linked with safeguarding God's creation, or Hifz al-Khalq ([Kamri 2013; Gössling 2010; Kamla, 2015](#)). Quite commonly, imams and local Islamic leaders, or Ulama, back up ecotourism through eco-preaching-also known as dakwah lingkungan-a grassroots movement that advocates environmental ethics based on the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. Friday sermons in some provinces, notably Aceh, West Java, and Lombok, overtly urge the community to prevent water pollution, resist illegal logging, and avoid wastefulness, or Israf, proscribed by Islam ([Othman & Rahman 2014; Haq 2003](#)). The country offers a unique model of halal-friendly ecotourism that combines environmental sustainability with Shariah-compliant services. For example, destinations like West Nusa Tenggara, Aceh, and parts of West Sumatra

implement Islamic ethical guidelines that support ecotourism and include the following: (1) prohibition of alcohol and harmful or exploitative entertainments, (2) Respect for local communities' cultural and religious norms, (3) modesty in dress and behaviour, (4) Cruelty to animals is prohibited, considering its protection to wildlife, (5) Consuming food ethically in line with 'halal' and 'tayyib' ([wholesome](#)).

These guidelines enhance ecotourism sustainability by reducing socially disruptive behaviour and fostering respectful interactions among visitors, local communities, and the natural environment ([Lada et al., 2009](#); [Kamri, 2013](#)). Furthermore, various tourism spots of marine ecotourism, such as Misool Eco Resort, Raja Ampat, and community-run coral sanctuaries in Lombok apply Islamic ethical norms in order to avoid overfishing, destructive practices, and exploitation of marine species. This aligns clearly with Islamic injunctions against harming living beings unnecessarily ([Dien, 2000](#); [Sahih Muslim 2244](#)). In addition, Indonesia has been at the forefront of the emerging eco-mosque movement, where environmental education combines with Islamic worship. In Jakarta, Bandung, Aceh, and Yogyakarta, mosques include a rainwater harvesting, solar energy systems, waste recycling, community clean-ups, environmental education classes based on Quranic teachings, and Green Ramadan" campaigns of zero-waste iftar events. These mosques act as centres of ethical ecotourism, by influencing community norms, hosting environment-conscious tourists, and providing spiritual guidance on sustainable travel ([Haq, 2003](#); [Kamla, 2015](#)). Indonesian women participate actively in the eco-Islamic tourism through community welfare, and family well-being, where the involvement of women in ecotourism is on the rise from 28% to 39% between the years 2020 and 2024. Many of the women-led enterprises in eco-villages also focus on Shariah-compliant entrepreneurship, such as halal culinary tourism, ethical handicrafts, and environmentally friendly home stays that help balance economic empowerment with Islamic social values. Many regional tourism boards, especially in Aceh and West Nusa Tenggara, incorporate Islamic environmental values explicitly within their ecotourism zoning, protection of wildlife regulations, and community-based initiatives as an integrating of Islamic Ethics into National Policy Directions.

## **Eco-Islamic tourism in Sultanate of Oman**

Oman is recognized as a popular tourist destination among the Gulf Cooperation Council ([GCC](#)) countries. Situated in the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman's coastline stretches

approximately 1,700 kilometres, from the Strait of Hormuz in the Arabian Gulf, along the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea to the borders of Yemen.

The country has a strategic geographic location at the intersection of three major zoogeographic regions in the West Palearctic, Afro-tropical, and Oriental regions endows the country with a rich diversity of wildlife and flora (Farouk, 2007, p. 190). The Sultanate spans an area of more than 300,000 square kilometres. By June 2025, the country total population is Around 5,303,578 in comprising roughly 3.01 million Omani nationals, which represent 56.7% they are practicing Islam, while 2.30 million expatriates representing 43.3% (Muscat Daily.com.2025/06/11).



Source: Geology.com

Oman was the only Arab country in 2012 included in National Geographic' list of the top 20 tourist destinations worldwide (Darke & Walsh, 2017, 2017, p. 28). The Sultanate emerged as a new tourism destination only in the mid-1990s, largely due to its rich archaeological and cultural heritage, including its historical association with the legendary sailor Sinbad. Globally.

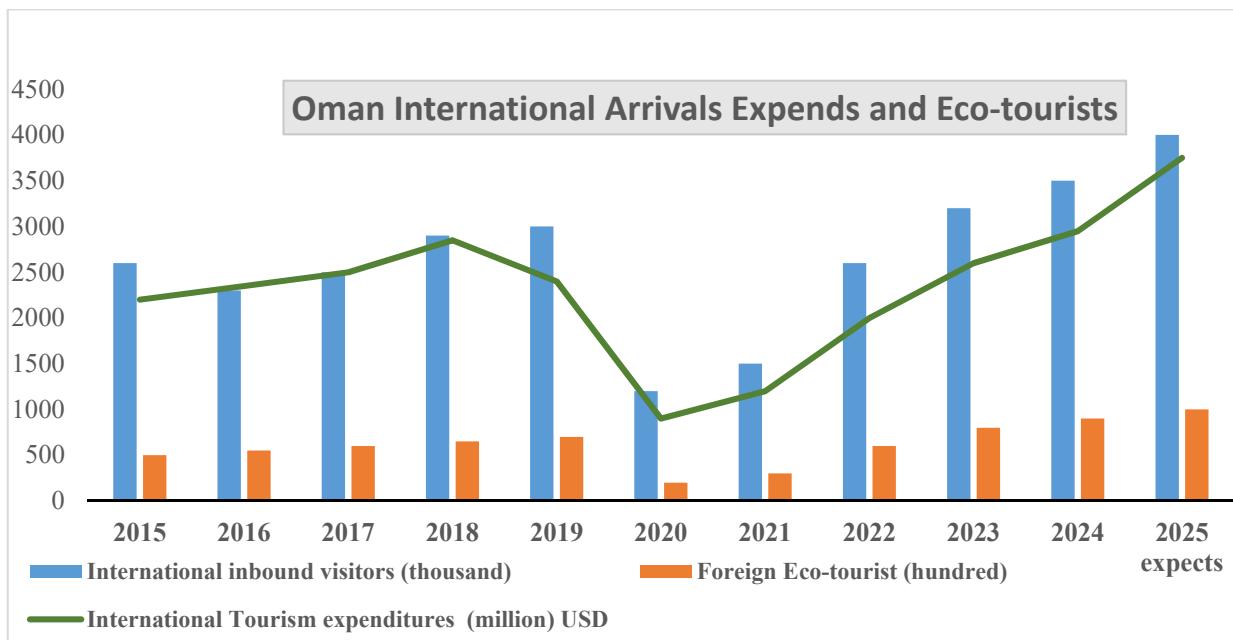
There are more than 30,000 protected areas, covering approximately 8.8% of the Earth's surface. Notably, Oman ranks 19<sup>th</sup> in the world, with 16.1% of its land designated as natural conservation areas, reflecting the country's commitment to biodiversity protection and sustainable tourism development (Hakro, 2019). Although the country effectively balances modernization with cultural and environmental preservation strategy, serving as a likely model for other MENA countries region, particularly through sustainable tourism that emphasizes heritage and eco-friendly natural

preservation. This approach involves initiatives to support local artisans, promote cultural festivals, and engage local communities in conservation efforts. Furthermore, Oman is actively pursuing eco-cultural tourism development, combining ecological and cultural resources to create unique attractions (Oukil et al., 2016). The Sultanate develops a socioeconomic strategy under Sultan 'Qaboos' followed by Sultan 'Haitham' through combining infrastructure expansion, economic diversification, and tourism growth using a strict architectural integrity control with preserving plants and animal biodiversity.

In addition, this balanced approach has allowed the country to modernize without compromising its heritage or ecosystems (Al-Omari, 2019; Financial Times, 2023; Condé Nast Traveler, 2010). Moreover, Oman has consistently maintained high levels of political stability and safety compared to other Arab countries during Arabic Spring due to its neutral foreign policy, low levels of extremism, and strong social programs under the monarchy (Harvard International Review, 2023). The Oman's nominal GDP in 2024 was 114 billion USD (Oxford Business Group, 2024) where the travel and tourism sector contributed about 5.1%, up to 4.8% in 2023. The sector supported about 278,000 jobs, representing nearly 6.7% of Sultanate total employment. Nevertheless, the economic projections are optimistic suggesting continued growth in line with the national tourism development plans (WTTC, 2024). In 2024, the international tourists spending is estimated at 3.5 billion USD, while domestic tourism contributed an additional 2.6 billion USD.

Oman's travel and tourism sector is poised for substantial growth, with revenue projected to increase at a compound annual growth rate of 7.2%. By 2030, the sector's total contribution to GDP is expected to reach 9.5 billion USD representing 7.5% of the national economy (WTTC, 2024). Key drivers include international visitor spending forecasted at 6.3 billion USD, primarily fuelled by luxury ecotourism, cultural heritage experiences, and MICE tourism, while domestic tourism expenditure is projected to hit 4.1 billion USD, supported by rising staycation trends and local eco-adventure demand (Oxford Business Group, 2024). Thus, travel and tourism sector is also expected to become one of Oman's largest job creators, particularly in rural and sustainable tourism, supporting an estimated 400,000 jobs, or 9% of total national employment, including 150,000 ecotourism-specific roles such as guides, conservation staff, CBT home stay operators, and artisans. Omanis' Women participation in the tourism workforce is projected to reach between 45 and 50%, especially in community-based tourism and handicraft enterprises, further advancing gender inclusion (Al Mahrizi et al., 2024).

**Graph.2: Oman International arrivals expends and Eco-tourists (2015-2025)**



Source: National Centre for Statistics and Information 2025

Although aligned with Oman's Vision 2040, the country project to receive more than 11 million foreign tourists annually by 2030. To support this goal Sultana announced an investment of 500 million USD, targeting airports development, eco-resorts, and the development of sites classified as world heritage by UNESCO ([Oman Ministry of Tourism, 2024](#)). It is also noted that 55% of international travelers chose eco-certified accommodations when they visit Oman ([Booking.com, 2024](#)), reflecting a global shift toward sustainability. Segments such as adventure tourism including hiking in Jebel Shams and diving in Musandam are growing at a rate of 12% annually, while health and wellness tourism (e.g., mountain retreats and thalassotherapy) is expected to generate USD 1.2 billion by 2030 ([Oxford Business Group, 2024](#)). In addition, cultural tourism is projected to attract 2.5 million heritage visitors annually, drawn to iconic sites such as Nizwa Fort and Bahla Oasis, reinforcing Oman's unique position as a leading destination for sustainable, experiential, and culturally rich tourism in the Arabian Peninsula. According to '*Ahmed bin Nasser al-Mahrizi*', Minister of Tourism that marketing strategy will be based upon a cluster approach that will create a series of unique tourism experiences in different areas of Oman, reflecting local culture and heritage.

Oman's Sultanate offers a rather strong example of how morality in Islam, heritage, and nature care come together in creating an ecotourism model in the Muslim world. Rooting in Ibadi Islamic norms depicted by moderation policy '*Wasatiyyah*', justice '*Adl*', and societal benefit '*Maslahah*', Oman

combines religious values in nature care and tourism. Applying these ideas from the Islamic religion creates morality in Oman's sustainable development model, relating closely to ecotourism goals (Dien, 2000; Jafari & Scott, 2014; Haq, 2003).

The environmental management in Oman draws much inspiration from the Quranic teaching of Khilafah or stewardship and Hifz al-Bi'ah or human responsibility towards the protection of God's creation. The Quran warns against fasad or corruption in the earth, which guides the management of protected areas in Oman (Nasr, 1996; Kamla, 2015). These ethical considerations translate into many initiatives include: (1) protection of endangered species like the Arabian oryx, sea turtles, and migratory birds, (2) community-based wildlife monitoring based on the Shariah teachings of being kind towards animals, (3) desert and coastal ecosystem protection based on the Islamic custodianship paradigm.

Mosques, local scholars '*ulama*', and Islamic centres can regularly participate in environmental protection and travel-consciousness campaigns, thereby emphasizing the religious aspects of environmental protection and travel. Oman ecotourism demonstrates cultural linkage to Islamic morality under the following aspects such as hospitality and Respect (Ikram al-Dhayf) where traditional Oman hospitality, based on Quranic and Prophetic standards, can facilitate proper and humble tourism. Visitors are advised to maintain modesty (*hayā'*), prevent wastefulness (*isrāf*), and interact with the native population, in accordance with the conduct of sustainable tourism.

The Oman tourism development model avoids "mass tourism excesses" found in other Gulf States in favour of emphasizing these factors such as low-density desert lodges, eco-resorts that blend in with nature, controlled visitor numbers in protected areas, and architectural regulations regarding the prevention of disruption of the land scape, this restriction expresses the Islamic moderation as well as the long-established Oman policy of cultural preservation (Oukil et al., 2016).

Oman has increasingly adopted an ecotourism model that aligns itself with the ethical standards of Islam Halal Compliant (IHC) and eco-friendly accommodations and an absence of alcohol or activities considered to be ethically restricted in many rural and protected areas, and championing community-based tourism for just benefit distribution, protecting wildlife from cruelty, and offering ethical, locally-sourced culinary experiences. Nevertheless, participation of females in these banks will increase to 45–50% by 2030 due to Islamic considerations regarding family welfare, social responsibility, and the distribution of benefits in society (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007; Kimbu et al., 2021). The country fellow Indonesian eco-mosque model, where many of its mosques have

incorporated, solar energy, water conservation systems, environmental preaching (khutbahs about stewardship and sustainability), community cleaning activities in conjunction with Islamic volunteer work (ṣadaqah jāriyah), and awareness programs regarding Quranic environmental ethics. The eco-mosques model help in promoting positive attitudes towards tourism as well as participation in environmental protection activities. Islamic Ethics Ingrained is added in Oman's 2040 Vision Guidelines for Tourism emphasizes factors such as sustainability, cultural preservation, and community empowerment ([UNWTO, 2017](#); [Oxford Business Group, 2024](#)).

## **Eco-Islamic Tourism in Algeria**

Algeria is the nearest Arabo-african country from most European capitals the world's largest tourism market. The country is one of the few countries in the world to have a picturesque touristic potential not yet developed. Algeria is among largest nation in MENA region after Egypt, the country extends on 2.4 million sq. km the population is estimated to 47.2 million ([Algerian National Office of Statistics ONS](#)). Located in North Africa bordering the Mediterranean Sea with 1,620 km of coastline, between Morocco and Tunisia the most popular destination in southern shore of the Mediterranean. Algeria has a fascinating hinterland that includes Atlas Mountains, ski resorts and the world's immense desert (Sahara) which representing 1.2 million sq. km. Furthermore, the country is known for its rich and diverse historical and cultural heritage includes several Berber sites splendour Roman ruins as Timgad the only city in the world that resemble to ancient Rome, several Islamic cities as Casbah town and French colonial design and Algiers is only city with three different architectural styles Arab-Islamic, French and modern one.

The hydrocarbon sector is the backbone of Algeria economy where the income accounts for 97% of export and the sources of foreign currencies; oil taxation represents more than 60 per cent of budget revenues ([Algeria Ministry of Finance](#)). Since 2014 oil prices fall and have had affected the general economy equilibrium as result the budget deficit recorded in 2016 it reached 14% of GDP. The government has decided to adopt austerity policy and has reinforcing some projects to boost the diversification of the country economy through manufacturing, agriculture, construction and tourism.



Source: Lambert Conformal Conic Projection

Meanwhile, Algeria get its first touristic guide on 1836 and produce its first advertisement post in 1900 draws by the famous French painter '[Paul-Elie Dubois](#)' during French occupation ([1830-1962](#)). However, since 1839 Algeria has its first touristic tour and the first car rally on 1922 from Algeria to Mali through Tombouctou, during 1920s some kind of touristic fever takes therefore Algeria ([Zytnocki, 2013; 2016; Berthonnet, 2006](#)). Before the Second World War Algeria received more than 250 000 foreign tourists that was among the first destination visited in the Mediterranean Basin. Thus, in 1932 the first film scenes '*Tarzan the Ape Man*', included reportedly shot at the Jardin d'Essai du Hamma in Algiers, which was used to represent the African jungle due to its lush vegetation and exotic landscape ([Bouquet, 2013, p.179](#)).

According to Trip connexion by 2025, the foreign tourist spends during his stay in Algeria on average 151,98 USD per night. Indeed, for the economic indicators there are 19,000 new jobs created in this sector very year, which represent 9% of total national employment ([Brahimi & Rouaski](#),

2020). However, the Minister of Tourism and Crafts Mr. 'Hacène Mermouri' admits that the sector of tourism is not yet developed, he said '*Tourism revenues represent only 2% of the GDP, while in other countries it represents about 11% of their GDP*'. Algeria after the independence adopted marketing strategy oriented toward an inbound tourist the main destination was beach during summer season and Sahara tourism from autumn to spring. Moreover, recently there is emergence of a new market of tourism, which is business tourism due to high petroleum revenue the country is under the reconstruction with several projects' sites. In fact, the country destination is lack in services and facilities for four reasons compare to other Mediterranean countries:

- *The economy is highly dependent on the hydrocarbon rents.*
- *Preserve the country from crises and political instability where tourism is an important vector of ideas of freedom case of Arabic Spring.*
- *The tourism marketing strategy is oriented to adaptation (domestic tourist) not standardisation.*
- *The political instability in which the country was badly hit by the unrest of the 1990s in consequence the number of foreign tourists fall from 300 000 a year to 18 000 that representing a decrease of 95%.*

**Graph.3: Algeria International Arrivals Exports and Eco-Tourists (2015-2025)**



Source: calculated on the data of ministry of tourism and crafts

Algeria has actively encouraged community-based ecotourism ([ECCC](#)) by involving local populations in different tourism initiatives by supporting the preservation of the natural and cultural environment while generating economic benefits for these communities. This approach is part of the Algerian Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy ([SDAT](#)) 2030, this strategy is launched in 2008 by the Algerian government planning to position Algeria as a competitive sustainable tourist destination in the Mediterranean basin. The key axis of this strategy is the promotion of reliable and environmental eco-friendly tourism, in particular targeting local visitors. However, the Saharan regions knowing in cultural heritage and ecological diversity are the cornerstone of this vision. Whilst, for supporting this sustainable tourism strategy there are 197 tourism expansion zones that have been identified and prioritized ([Ghidouche & Ghidouche, 2019](#)). Despite these efforts, there are challenges that persist, including the low level of ecological awareness among tourists and stakeholders. To address this, the government is promoting ecological education programs and participatory practices to reduce the negative impacts of mass tourism in biodiversity areas but highly sensitive.

Algerian ecotourism sector is still in its early stages and is also deeply influenced by the national context spatially Islamic cultural heritage and environmental protection traditions rooted in Qur'anic teachings. Being an Islamic majority state with rich Maliki and Ibadi law heritage. The Algerian environmental paradigm encompasses ideas such as Khilafah ([stewardship](#)), Maslahah ([community welfare](#)), Wasatiyyah (moderation), and 'Adl ([justice](#)) in addition to many other notions that naturally and intuitively relate to ecotourism goals ([Dien, 2000; Haq, 2003](#)). These ethical considerations are reflected in the socio-cultural realities of the Sahara, Kabylie, Aurès, and M'zab environments where religious leaders, zawiyyas (Islamic teaching centres), and social organizations promote environmental protection behaviour like water conservation, collective land management, and pasture-rationing in line with Islamic teachings against waste ([Israf](#)) and environmental destruction ([Fasad](#)). In many Saharian societies, traditional resource management partnerships like the foggaras irrigation systems in the M'zab Valley or Adrar oases are organized in accordance with Islamic doctrines about justice and mutual responsibility, providing an historical example of "Islamic environmental management" in practice. In turn, these can function in complement to modern ecotourism to protect low-intensity desert environments alongside support for "*community-based tourism*" based in cultural and ethical authenticity. At the same time, "conservation in Tassili n'Ajjer and Ahaggar fits Islamic themes about the treatment of animals, respecting the Prophet Muhammed's

hadith: ‘one who shows kindness towards God’s creations demonstrates kindness towards him/herself.’

In an urban or coastal setting, Algerian mosques begin to integrate environmental sermons, cleaning operations in the community, and educational campaigns about water savings based on Quranic scripture, giving rise to a growing phenomenon regarding the adoption of an “Eco-Islam” environmental ethos. In addition to that, the “zero waste” initiative led by civil society during the holy month of Ramadan showcases consumption responsibility in terms of recycling and reducing plastic waste in line with the Islamic principle of moderation or “halal” and “*tayyib*” consumption. These ethical bases of Islam are also found in the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy ([SDAT 2030](#)), whose main concerns include the conservation of natural heritage, the active engagement of the host communities, and justice in the distribution of benefits, in line with the ethical requirements of justice and the public benefit in Islam. In the Algerian government’s efforts towards the development of ecotourism in the Sahara, mountain, and cultural environments, the role of environmental ethics in Islam can help embed sustainable tourism in Algerian society ([Farouk, 2007](#)).

Meanwhile, Algeria has never been able to develop a real Sun-sea-sand spot. In contrast, the government is looking to promote one of the most popular locations for ecotourism that has long been Sahara destination. However, Tassili n’Ajjer National Park in desert was designed in 1982 by UNESCO as World Heritage site, famous for its rock formation and archaeological sites, noted for its numerous prehistoric parietal works of rock art the earliest pieces of art are assumed to be 12,000 years old ([David & Alec, 2017](#); [Coulson & Campbell, 2017](#)). Algeria is a paradise for migratory birds, the country has 21 protected areas and natural parks seven from them designed as World Heritage sites, totalling more than 58 million hectares. Algeria aims to transform into a competitive and sustainable tourism destination by capitalizing on its rich natural and cultural heritage while ensuring ecological preservation by 2030. The objective of this roadmap is to increase the number of international tourists from 2.45 million in 2019 to 5 million with 200,000 eco-tourists. This transformation is based on four strategic pillars. First, Sustainable ecotourism will be developed in key areas such as the Sahara ([e.g., Tassili n’Ajjer and Sefar](#)), coastal marine areas ([such as the coral parks of Béjaïa](#)) and the Atlas Mountains ([as Ski resorts Tikjda and Chréa](#)). Second, cultural and heritage tourism will focus on reviving historic trade routes and restoring over 100 sites, including the Casbah of Algiers and Roman ruins ([as Timgad, Tipaza and Djemila ruins sites](#)). Third pillar, the

government plans to improve transportation infrastructure and hospitality facilities, notably through new touristic visa that can be received at board gates in Algeria. Lastly, local community involvement will be strengthened by training 20,000 people in tourism activities and promoting home stay accommodation in culturally rich regions such as Kabylie and M'zab. The target is to boost tourism's contribution to GDP to 7%, cut the sector's carbon footprint by 25% ([Ali & Touham, 2024](#)).

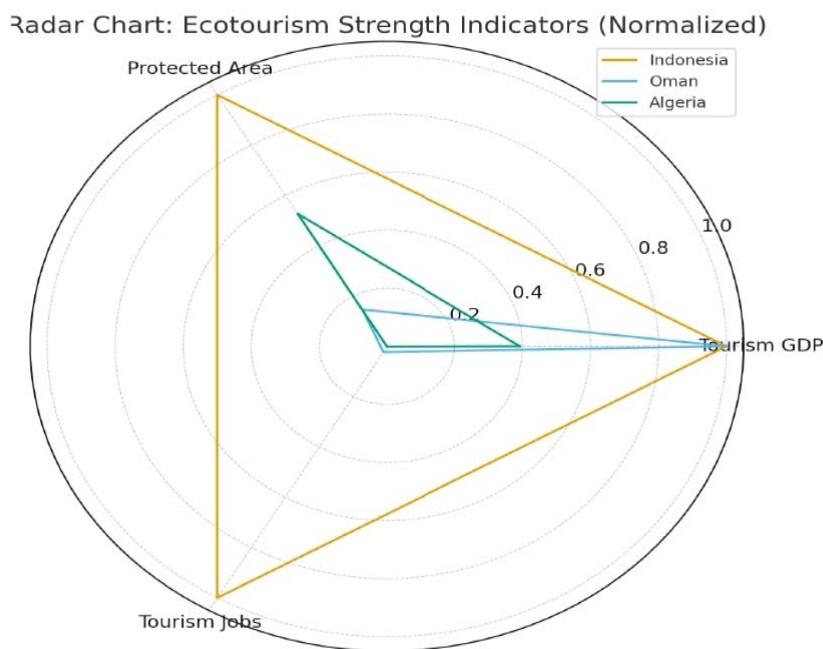
## **Discussion**

This study analysis the evolutionary path of ecotourism among the three countries Indonesia, Oman, and Algeria because of the significant homogenous trait shared by these three different sized Muslim majority society states in terms of possessing Muslim majority social formations. By carrying out this comparative analysis based upon the natural resources and investment approaches of each country in terms of environmental conservation in addition to social engagement and gender considerations in tourism investment in each of the three different sized Muslim society states in Indonesia, Oman, and Algeria contexts, this section derives opportunities embedded in the environmentally responsible Muslim society traits and challenges in moving towards ecotourism in each of the three different sized Muslim society states.

Indonesia has a population of 278.7 million (2023) in 2 million sq. kilometres in the archipelago consisting of 17,000 islands in the Coral Triangle. The country has retained substantial forest coverage amounting to 59% or 110 million hectares. The Indonesian population consists mostly of Muslims (87.2%) that incorporate Islamic values in communal and ecotourism endeavours like the construction of 'eco-Mosques' and 'Eco-Preaching.' Indonesia protects 51 national parks and 10 protected areas that conserve 110 million hectares of forests. The sector accounts for 5.1% of GDP ([2024](#)), with over 12 million workers supported in the industry with foreign spending of \$19.1 billion. Indonesia is home to one of the best global ecotourism examples in '*Raja Ampat*,' '*Komodo*,' and '*Misool*,' securing support from community tourism. Infrastructure support has been put in place in prime locations like '*Bali*,' '*Raja Ampat*,' and '*Labuan Bajo*' supported by continuous investment from the Indonesian government and communal involvement. The involvement of Indonesian women in 'community-based' 'ecotourism' has increased from 28% in 2020-2024 up to 39%. The strengths lie in inclusive '*Islamic Environmental*' values in rare 'biodiversity' and '*internationally*

*accredited*' 'Green' tourist sites. The main weaknesses are overcoming '*over tourism*,' 'Equitable Share,' 'Green Washing,' and 'Certifications.'

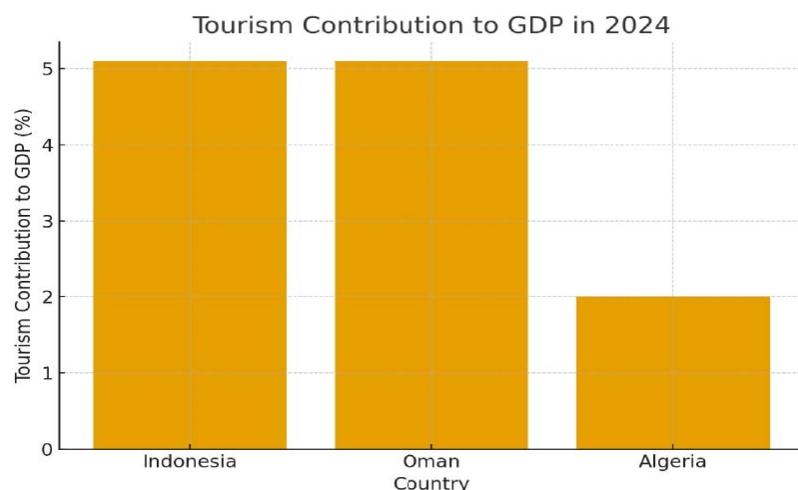
**Graph.4: Ecotourism Strength in the Three Countries**



**Source: Own elaboration**

Oman has a population of 5.3 million (as of June 2025, including 3.01 million Omanis) and covers 300,000 square kilometres with 1,700 kilometres of coastline in terms of landscape structure, with deserts and Wadis being found in areas of high significance in significant zoogeographic areas. Oman has a Muslim majority population in this respect. The country has an overall 16.1 percent land coverage under conservation areas and ranks 19th in this respect in the global context. The tourism sector accounts for 5.1 percent of Oman's GDP (2024), employing 278,000 workers, yet marked by high future growth in the Vision 2040 context. By type, ecotourism currently accounts for 10 percent of overall tourism receptions in Oman's context. For this objective, there are stated concentrations in terms of low-density ecotourism vacation centres, protected areas in tourism, and finally in eco-

culture tourism. The stated investment by the Omani authorities in this respect involves \$500 million in overall allocations covering airports' upgrading in Oman's context, vacation centres in this respect's ecotourism objectives, and finally UNESCO site consolidation in this respect. The relevant authorities expect a 45-50 percent contribution from females in this respect in 2030 in this context by type under overall tourism employment. Oman's key strengths in this respect are pronounced institutional capacity in this respect in terms of overall tourism plans in this respect together with overall investment coverage in this respect in terms of protected land masses together with cultural hospitality in this respect aligned in this statement in terms of overall Muslim values in this respect generally. The overall key challenges in this respect are those concerning overall tourist traffic balances in this respect in terms of balances in stated overall tourist traffic in this respect in terms of overall tourism infrastructure in this respect together in this context emphasizing in this respect balances in tourist number capacities in this respect in terms of overall tourist traffic balances in this respect generally.

**Graph. 5: Tourism Contribution to GDP in the Three Countries****Source: Own elaboration**

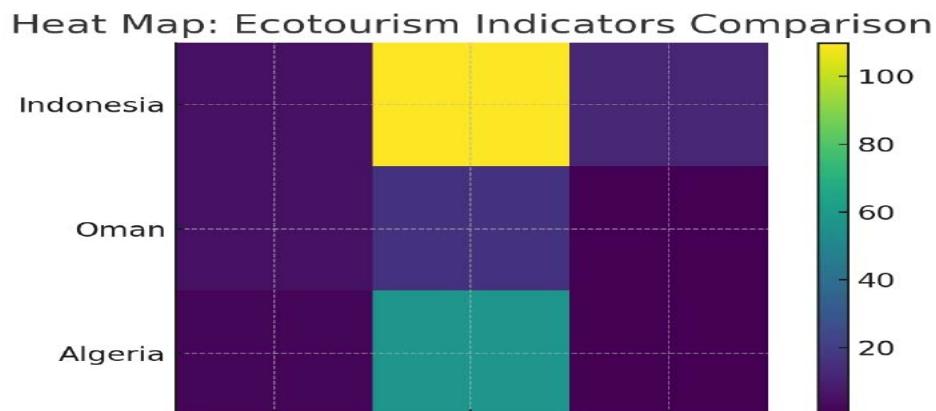
Algeria has an estimated 47.2 million people and covers 2.4 million sq. kilometres of land mass including the Atlas Mountain ranges, Mediterranean shores of 998 kilometres, and the vast Sahara region of 1.2 million sq. kilometres. The country's majority religion is Muslim, of Maliki and Ibadi

schools, and demonstrates resource management under Islamic tradition in the Sahara and oasis regions. Algeria has 21 protected areas and natural parks, seven UNESCO sites, and plans to protect about 58 million hectares.

The tourism sector currently generates 2% of GDP; however, the SDAT 2030 plans to increase this sector's contribution to 7% with five million visitors. Algeria boasts many natural and cultural resources such as Sahara Deserts of 2.9 million sq. kilometres; Tassili n'Ajjer mountain ranges; and coral reef ecosystems; however, there are no well-developed tourist infrastructure services yet except that SDAT 2030 plans to increase eco-tourism with capacity-building of 20,000 professionals. The country's weakness in this aspect is underdeveloped infrastructure services; however, the SDAT 2030 aims to address infrastructure improvements in transport networks, visas facilitation, and homestay training. The country's strength is the existence of many vast and unique natural and cultural resources and Muslim resource-management approaches through 'foggaras' and 'zawiyyas' in favour of ecotourism site development.

The country's weakness in this sector includes no further developed infrastructure yet. However, there are other weaknesses like little marketing in foreign markets yet; currently, few tourism benefits are obtained from foreign tourist visits. Present organizational or institutional weaknesses include little infrastructure support yet; tourism frequently earns little from foreign visits yet; however, there are further organizational/institutional SDAT 2030 plans in aid of infrastructure improvements in transport networks and homestay trainings. The weakness in this country's organizational structure includes little support infrastructure yet in favour of further site tourist infrastructure facility improvements.

**Graph.6: Ecotourism Indicators Comparison in the Three Countries**



Tourism GDP (%) Protected Area Tourism jobs (M)

**Source: Own Elaboration**

## **Summary**

Muslim countries share common cultural values and Islam serves as a central source of ethical guidance and behaviour. The religion is not only a set of rituals but also a comprehensive way of life. Ecotourism is a form of civic responsibility designed to protect the environment and local communities from the negative impacts of mass tourism. However, this form of tourism serves as an economic tool for Muslim countries to improve style of living of Muslims where approximately half of the world is poor live in the Muslim world, while Muslims represent about 24% of the global population Muhammad Zubair Mughal, CEO of Al-Huda Centre of Islamic Banking and Economics ([Mughal, 2012](#)). Ecotourism As a niche tourism segment has the potential to stimulate socio-economic development by involving local communities and creating job opportunities. Under these favourable conditions Muslim countries can promote the economic sustainability of local populations while contributing to broader global sustainability goals.

The article highlights that keywords such as "ecotourism" are rarely used in Islamic tourism research that reflecting a gap in this literature. Although Islamic tourism has experienced significant growth over the past thirty decades, particularly in hospitality, tourism management, and marketing, the academic research needs further exploration of ecotourism concept. Eco-Islamic tourism is a form of

sustainable travel that aligns with the ethical and spiritual values of Islam and its lofty goals of Islam through promoting responsible interaction with nature, respect for local communities, and moderation in consumption in general. Furthermore, Muslims are encouraged to travel to reflect on the signs 'Ayat' of God manifested in the universe and the natural world, such as flora, fauna, and landscapes, as a form of worship and spiritual enrichment. This concept serves both as spiritual journey and commitment to environmental protection, with this type of tourism directly reflecting the holistic Islamic vision of harmony between humanity and divine creation. However, researchers are encouraged to develop studies that integrate halal principles with ecotourism concepts, with an emphasis on quantitative study, sustainability and customer satisfaction in order to improve the Islamic tourism landscape.

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