

Mapping the Future of Halal Tourism Research: Bibliometric Analysis Using VOSviewer

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Abstract: *Halal tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism industry, driven by expanding Muslim populations and increasing demand for Shariah-compliant travel services. Despite significant scholarly attention, the field lacks a systematic mapping of its intellectual landscape across major academic databases. This study employs a bibliometric analysis of 189 documents from Scopus and 956 documents from Google Scholar, retrieved using the keyword "halal tourism". Keyword co-occurrence analysis was performed using VOSviewer with title and abstract fields, binary counting, a minimum occurrence threshold of 10, and 85 terms meeting the threshold. Publication output grew substantially from 2016, peaking between 2020 and 2024. Four major research clusters were identified: (1) tourist behavioral intention and psychology, (2) halal destination and food attributes, (3) halal tourism policy and industry opportunities, and (4) regional and religious tourism studies. The Journal of Islamic Marketing and Tourism Management Perspectives dominated the outlet landscape, with Mohamed Battour as the most prolific author. Halal tourism research is maturing, with an evolving focus from conceptual frameworks toward behavioral and experience-based inquiries. Future research should address non-Muslim tourist perspectives, post-pandemic recovery, and digital halal tourism ecosystems.*

Keywords: *Bibliometric Analysis, Halal Tourism, Keyword Co-occurrence, VOSviewer, Muslim Travelers*

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1. Introduction

The halal tourism industry has undergone remarkable growth over the past two decades, propelled by a global Muslim population exceeding 1.9 billion and rising disposable incomes across Muslim-majority economies. The State of the Global Islamic Economy Report (2023) estimated that Muslim tourist expenditure reached USD 177 billion in 2022, with projections forecasting a rise to USD 225 billion by 2027. This trajectory has prompted extensive scholarly inquiry, yet the intellectual structure of the field remains insufficiently mapped. Halal tourism is broadly defined as tourism services and products that are aligned with Islamic principles, encompassing the availability of halal food, prayer facilities, alcohol-free environments, and gender-separated amenities (Battour et al., 2016; El-Gohary, 2016). While early research concentrated on conceptual definitions and market potential (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Mohsin et al., 2016), subsequent scholarship has progressively shifted toward behavioral investigations, including tourist satisfaction, loyalty, religiosity effects, and intention formation (Al-Ansi et al., 2019; Han et al., 2019; Olya & Al-Ansi, 2018).

Bibliometric analysis has gained prominence as a rigorous method for evaluating the structure, scope, and trajectory of academic fields. Pioneered by Garfield (1979) and later systematized by van Eck and Waltman (2010) through the VOSviewer software, bibliometric mapping provides objective visualizations of keyword co-occurrence, authorship networks, and citation linkages. Recent bibliometric studies in adjacent domains, such as sustainable tourism (Garrigos-Simon et al., 2018) and Islamic finance (Hassan et al., 2021), have demonstrated the utility of this approach in revealing hidden thematic clusters and research gaps.

Within halal tourism specifically, bibliometric studies remain nascent. Samori et al. (2016) and Battour (2016) provided early literature overviews but relied on narrative rather than quantitative mapping. A growing number of scholars have called for more systematic evidence-based reviews that can guide future research agendas (Mohsin et al., 2016; Wardi et al., 2018; Boğan & Sarıışık, 2019).

The present study addresses this gap by conducting a comprehensive keyword co-occurrence bibliometric analysis using data drawn simultaneously from Scopus and Google Scholar, two

complementary databases with distinct indexing coverage. The primary objective of this study is to map the thematic landscape of halal tourism research by identifying dominant keywords, research clusters, and emerging frontiers as visualized through VOSviewer. The specific aims are: (1) to describe the growth trend in halal tourism publications from 2009 to 2025; (2) to identify the most influential authors, journals, and documents in the field; and (3) to delineate the major thematic clusters derived from keyword co-occurrence analysis. The findings are expected to serve both as a navigational resource for scholars entering the field and as a strategic reference for policymakers and industry practitioners.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Data Collection

This study adopted a bibliometric research design, systematically retrieving academic documents from two major databases: Scopus and Google Scholar. The search was executed May 29, 2026, using the keyword "*halal tourism*" applied to title, abstract, and keyword fields. No temporal restriction was imposed to capture the full publication history of the field. The Scopus database yielded 189 documents, while Google Scholar contributed 956 records, resulting in a combined dataset of 1,145 documents prior to deduplication. Both datasets were exported in RIS format for processing in VOSviewer.

2.2 VOSviewer Configuration

Keyword co-occurrence analysis was performed using VOSviewer version 1.6.20 (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). The software was configured to extract terms from both title and abstract fields, employing binary counting to ensure each term is counted once per document regardless of its frequency within each document. A minimum occurrence threshold of 10 was applied, yielding 85 terms that met this criterion. These 85 terms were retained in their entirety for analysis, producing the co-occurrence network and density visualization presented in this study.

Binary counting was preferred over full counting to reduce the influence of highly repetitive terms in individual abstracts, thereby providing a more balanced reflection of conceptual prevalence across the literature. Binary counting was preferred over full counting to reduce the influence of highly repetitive terms in individual abstracts, thereby providing a more balanced reflection of conceptual prevalence across the 1,145 documents. The resulting network was visualized in two modes: (1) a network visualization displaying clusters distinguished by color coding, and (2) a density visualization representing the relative frequency and co-occurrence intensity of terms through a heat-map overlay.

2.3 Analytical Framework

The bibliometric analysis proceeded in three phases. First, a descriptive analysis was conducted to examine publication trends over time, the distribution across journals and authors, and the most frequently cited documents. Second, keyword co-occurrence mapping was used to identify thematic clusters and their internal relationships. Third, cluster interpretation was performed by reviewing the substantive literature associated with each cluster's dominant keywords, allowing an evidence-based narrative to be constructed around each thematic grouping.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Publication Trends

The growth trajectory of halal tourism research reveals a field that has transitioned from marginal scholarly interest to a well-established area of academic inquiry. As shown in Table 1, Scopus-indexed publications on halal tourism remained sparse prior to 2016, with fewer than five articles published annually between 2009 and 2015. A decisive inflection point occurred in 2016, coinciding with the conceptual consolidation of the field through landmark reviews by Battour et al. (2016) and El-Gohary (2016), which collectively attracted over 700 citations. Annual output increased to 31 documents in 2020 and remained consistently high through 2023.

Google Scholar data corroborates this acceleration, recording 104 documents in 2020 and peaking at 154 in 2024. This sustained growth through the COVID-19 pandemic period (2020-2022) is

particularly noteworthy, as it suggests that the crisis prompted increased scholarly attention to post-pandemic recovery strategies, digital halal tourism infrastructure, and the resilience of Muslim-friendly hospitality systems. The slight moderation observed in 2025 Scopus data (18 documents by mid-year) likely reflects incomplete indexing for the most recent period.

Table 1. Annual Publication Trend of Halal Tourism Research (2016-2025)

Year	Scopus (n)	Google Scholar (n)	Combined
2016	14	16	30
2017	8	36	44
2018	9	50	59
2019	19	83	102
2020	31	104	135
2021	31	122	153
2022	24	140	164
2023	31	150	181
2024	18	154	172
2025	4	101	105
Total	189	956	1,145

3.2 Most Productive Authors and Journals

Mohamed Battour (Universiti Putra Malaysia) is the most prolific author in the Scopus dataset with 10 publications, and his 2016 review article in *Tourism Management Perspectives* remains the most cited document in the field with 440 citations. This single authorial dominance reflects the importance of early conceptual architects in shaping halal tourism's foundational vocabulary. Other notably productive scholars include Hyungsoo Han (Sejong University, South Korea, 4 publications), Ahmad Al-Ansi (4 publications), and Didin Suhartanto (4 publications), reflecting a diverse multi-national scholarly community.

The *Journal of Islamic Marketing* is by far the most prominent outlet, accounting for 56 of the 189 Scopus documents (29.6%). This concentration underscores the strong thematic alignment between halal tourism and Islamic marketing frameworks, particularly in studies examining Muslim consumer behavior, religiosity, and purchase intention. *Tourism Management Perspectives* (13 documents) and *Sustainability* (9 documents) constitute the second tier, the latter indicating growing intersections between halal tourism and sustainability discourse.

Table 2. Top 10 Most Cited Documents in Halal Tourism Research (Scopus)

Author(s)	Year	Title (Abbreviated)	Journal	Citations
Battour et al.	2016	Halal tourism: Concepts, practises, challenges and future	Tourism Mgmt. Perspectives	440
Al-Ansi et al.	2019	Role of halal-friendly destination performances, value, satisfaction...	J. Dest. Marketing & Mgmt.	299
Olya & Al-Ansi	2018	Risk assessment of halal products and services...	Tourism Management	291
El-Gohary	2016	Halal tourism, is it really Halal?	Tourism Mgmt. Perspectives	270
Han et al.	2019	Exploring halal-friendly destination attributes in South Korea...	Tourism Management	266
Battour et al.	2011	The impact of destination attributes on Muslim tourist's choice	Intl. J. Tourism Research	233

Author(s)	Year	Title (Abbreviated)	Journal	Citations
Stephenson	2014	Deciphering 'Islamic hospitality'...	Tourism Management	229
Mohsin et al.	2016	Halal tourism: Emerging opportunities	Tourism Mgmt. Perspectives	227
Henderson	2016	Halal food, certification and halal tourism...	Tourism Mgmt. Perspectives	185
Battour & Ismail	2016	Toward a halal tourism market	Tourism Management	160

3.3 Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis: Network Visualization

The VOSviewer network visualization (Figure 1), derived from 85 terms meeting the minimum occurrence threshold of 10 across 1,198 documents, reveals four primary thematic clusters. The clustering algorithm applied by VOSviewer uses modularity optimization, grouping terms that co-occur more frequently with each other than with terms in other clusters. The resulting structure provides a visual cartography of halal tourism's intellectual landscape.

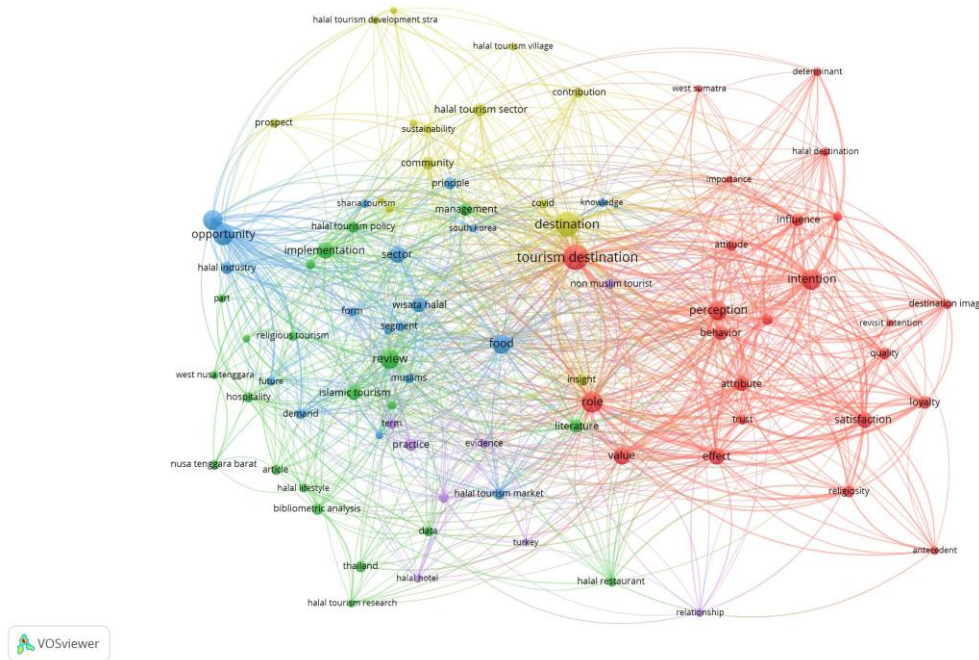


Figure 1. VOSviewer Keyword Co-occurrence Network Visualization of Halal Tourism Research (n = 85 terms, minimum occurrence = 10, binary counting)
Source: Processed VOSviewer data, 2026

Cluster 1 (Red, 28 terms): This dominant cluster comprises keywords including *intention*, *perception*, *satisfaction*, *loyalty*, *trust*, *quality*, *behavior*, *effect*, *religiosity*, *destination image*, and *revisit intention*. The cluster represents the behavioral psychology strand of halal tourism research, which has become the most voluminous sub-domain. This aligns with the theoretical adoption of Theory of Planned Behavior and Service Quality frameworks in studying Muslim tourist decision-making processes (Han et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2020).

Cluster 2 (Yellow, 18 terms): Centered on *tourism destination*, *destination*, *food*, *role*, *value*, *literature*, and *non-Muslim tourist*. This cluster captures research on halal destination attributes and food-related services as key quality dimensions. The presence of non-Muslim tourist within this cluster is particularly significant, reflecting an emerging research stream that examines how halal-friendly environments affect the experiences of non-Muslim visitors, a topic that has grown since Samori et al. (2016) and Yousaf and Xiucheng (2018).

3.5 Discussion: Theoretical and Practical Implications

The bibliometric map presented in this study carries several important theoretical implications. First, the dominance of the behavioral intention cluster signals a theoretical convergence around the Theory of Planned Behavior and related cognitive models, which may risk overlooking emotional, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of Muslim travel experience. Future theoretical work should integrate constructs from Islamic psychology and Maqasid al-Shariah frameworks to capture the normative foundations of halal travel preferences.

Second, the prominence of *non-Muslim tourist* within the destination cluster points to an undertheorized but commercially significant population: non-Muslim visitors to halal-friendly destinations. As destinations such as South Korea and Thailand increasingly adopt halal-friendly strategies to attract Muslim tourists, the experiential spillover effects for non-Muslim guests merit dedicated inquiry (Henderson, 2016; Han et al., 2019).

Third, the distinct Indonesian cluster, evidenced by terms like *halal tourism* and regional place names, reflects the maturation of Indonesia as a primary locus of halal tourism research. This localization, however, also signals a potential insularity: the majority of Indonesian halal tourism studies have been conducted in Bahasa Indonesia-medium journals, limiting their international visibility. Encouraging bilingual publication practices and Scopus indexing for Indonesian halal tourism journals would strengthen the global knowledge base.

From a practical standpoint, the policy cluster's emphasis on *opportunity, implementation, and sector* aligns with national halal tourism masterplan frameworks in countries including Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey. Policymakers can leverage these research insights to prioritize investment in halal food certification systems, prayer infrastructure, and digitally accessible halal-friendly booking platforms, all of which rank as high-frequency determinants of tourist satisfaction in the behavioral cluster.

4. Conclusion

This study presents a systematic bibliometric mapping of halal tourism research drawing on 199 Scopus and 999 Google Scholar documents, analyzed through keyword co-occurrence using VOSviewer with binary counting, a minimum term occurrence of 10, and 85 retained terms. The findings reveal that halal tourism has evolved from a nascent conceptual domain in the early 2010s into a robust multidisciplinary field, with publication output growing more than tenfold between 2015 and 2024.

Four major research clusters were identified. The behavioral intention and psychology cluster constitutes the field's dominant intellectual core, reflecting widespread adoption of attitude-behavior frameworks in studying Muslim tourist decision-making. The destination and food attributes cluster highlights the centrality of tangible halal service dimensions in shaping tourist experiences. The policy and industry development cluster, strongly represented by Indonesian scholarship, underscores the strategic importance of governmental halal tourism frameworks. Finally, the regional and meta-analytical cluster captures both country-specific case studies and the growing practice of bibliometric self-reflection within the field.

The study's findings contribute to three areas. For the academic community, the thematic map identifies underexplored frontiers, particularly: digital halal tourism ecosystems, non-Muslim visitor experiences at halal destinations, post-pandemic resilience of halal hospitality services, and the application of Maqasid al-Shariah as a theoretical lens for halal tourism quality standards. For journal editors and research funders, the concentration of publications in the Journal of Islamic Marketing and a small number of tourism outlets suggests opportunities for expanding the disciplinary diversity of halal tourism scholarship. For policymakers and industry practitioners, the alignment between the behavioral and policy clusters reinforces the case for integrating consumer behavior evidence into halal tourism destination planning.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the exclusive use of the keyword "*halal tourism*" may have excluded relevant documents indexed under synonymous terms such as *Islamic tourism, Muslim-friendly tourism, or halal hospitality*. Second, Google Scholar's broader and less quality-controlled indexing introduces heterogeneity in the combined dataset. Third, citation counts from Scopus represent a snapshot at the time of retrieval and may have shifted since. Future bibliometric studies should complement keyword co-occurrence analysis with co-citation and bibliographic coupling analyses to provide a fuller picture of the field's intellectual foundations.

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