

The Role of Culinary Digital Tools in Enhancing the Gastronomic Experience for Muslim Travelers

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ABSTRACT

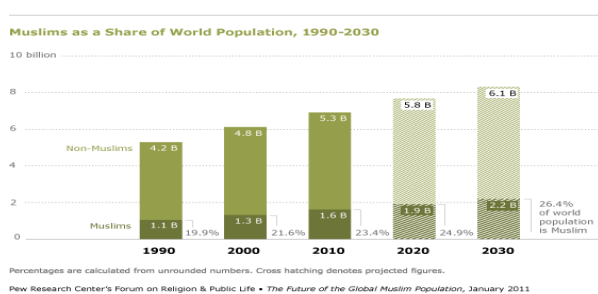
Halal tourism is fast growing in the tourism industry, focused especially on meeting the needs of Muslim tourists concerning services like halal dining establishments, gender-segregated facilities, and the presence of prayer areas. This study explores the increasing need for halal tourism and the crucial role of technology in enhancing the dining experiences for Muslim tourists. This study conducts a secondary literature review to find the integration of digital technologies in halal tourism, with a particular emphasis on their impact on dining experiences. The results show that advancements such as halal food delivery services, artificial intelligence-driven customized suggestions, and comprehensive online resources have considerably improved access to halal dining options for Muslim travelers. These instruments allow Muslim travelers to engage with local cuisine while adhering to their dietary restrictions, thus enhancing the experience of cultural and culinary immersion. Additionally, user-generated content and AR technologies provide travelers with authentic information and virtual culinary experiences, thereby enhancing the overall travel experience. The study further investigates the social and economic impacts of halal tourism on host communities, hence acting as a call for sustainable practices and respect for cultural traditions. The analysis underscores the cooperative efforts needed among the players in the tourism industry, the halal certification authorities, and the Muslim communities to overcome challenges that test the authenticity of halal tourism. Exploring the intersection of technology with halal tourism, this study highlights how digital tools support Muslim travelers in balancing religious observance with diverse culinary.

Keywords: Halal Tourism, Culinary, Muslim Travelers, Food Experience, Tourism Industry

INTRODUCTION

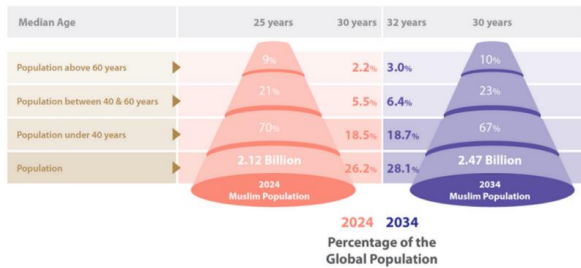
Halal tourism, a distinct sector within the broader tourism industry, is developed specifically to meet the unique needs of Muslim travelers. Recently, this niche market has experienced notable expansion, driven largely by the rising wealth and travel ambitions of the global Muslim demographic. Halal tourism encompasses a range of offerings tailored to align with Islamic principles, including halal-certified food options, gender-segregated facilities, and spaces dedicated to prayer (Abdullah, Awang, & Abdullah, 2020). The economic potential of halal tourism is considerable, with forecasts suggesting that Muslim tourist arrivals will reach 160 million by 2024 and 230 million by 2028, indicating substantial demand for services that accommodate this population's values and practices (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2023).

Figure 1: The Future of the Global Muslim Population



Source: Pew Research Center (2011)

Figure 2: A Demographic Over of the Muslim Population

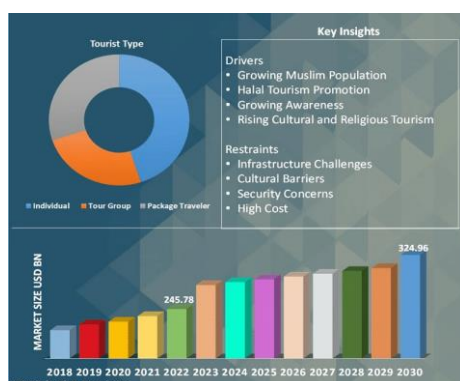


Source: CrescentRating (2024)

One of the essential elements of halal tourism is a halal-certified food offering, as this is the main requirement for Muslim tourists who follow Islamic dietary laws. Despite the growth in the market, halal tourism still has many challenges. The most prominent challenge of these is that there is still a lack of halal restaurants in many popular tourists' destinations, especially in countries with non-Muslim majorities. The lack of availability of halal food can decrease the quality of the whole journey, as it might be difficult for Muslim tourists to find foods that meet their dietary requirements, which will result in dissatisfaction and an inferior travel experience (Han et al., 2021). Another important issue is relevance and quality of products or services that has been accredited by halal. Since tourism consumers market of Islamic acceptable and halal products is expanding at fast pace there is concern with regard to such markets exploitation and misleading implication. Halal tourism refers to the services and foods offered for consumption certified as 'halal' would be very important to guarantee the compliance with Islamic Law to protect the Muslim tourists' trust and satisfaction. This authentication problem is further worsened by the fact that the criteria for halal certification vary from one jurisdiction to another thus making the procedures for halal certification and/or applications, to differ also.

Culture sensitivity is one of the most central concerns in the area of halal tourism according to the authors. In particular, in regions with a non-Muslim population, there could be no actual contact of the local people with Muslims or any misunderstanding of the Muslim community, for which Muslim tourists will be uncomfortable; this will certainly be an inconvenience for the guests (Hasan et al., 2023). However, some of the local communities may develop what can sort of be termed as a 'halal tourism threat' given that they associate tourism with activities contrary to Islamic value orientation if they are informed of or involved in the development of halal tourism (Abdullah et al., 2020). In order to avoid these problems the halal tourism segment should focus on easy access to Halal food items, promotion of cross cultural appreciation and insistence on Halal compliant standards of food, accommodation and other services. Due to a number of these challenges, embracing the adoption of digital tools and technologies could provide unique solutions to many of them, and improve the gustatory delights of Muslim travelers with the help of AI suggestions, digital platforms, or other related technologies. These innovations have the potential to deliver more reliable, convenient, and culturally respectful experiences for Muslim tourists, contributing to the sustainable growth of halal tourism. 2024 and 230 million by 2028, reflecting a significant demand for services that cater to this demographic (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2023).

Figure 3: Global Halal Tourism Market



Sources: Credence Research (2023)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Principles of Halal Tourism

Halal tourism refers to tourism services and experiences designed in accordance with Islamic teachings, addressing the needs of Muslim travelers specifically (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Central to halal tourism are principles based on Sharia law, which include providing halal-certified food, prayer facilities, and gender-specific accommodations (Samori, Salleh, & Khalid, 2016). Din (1989) argues that halal tourism encompasses more than compliance with dietary guidelines; it involves ensuring that the entire travel experience aligns with Islamic ethics, avoiding activities like alcohol consumption, gambling, and inappropriate forms of entertainment. Moreover, it encourages modesty in dress and conduct. Mohsin, Ramli, and Alkhulayfi (2016) suggest that halal tourism aims to create an environment in which Muslim travelers can comfortably fulfill their religious obligations throughout their journey.

Recent research indicates a rising demand for halal tourism, spurred by a growing Muslim population and increasing disposable incomes (Henderson, 2016). The Thomson Reuters *State of the Global Islamic Economy Report* (2018) forecasts significant growth in Muslim travel spending, signaling substantial expansion potential for the halal tourism market globally. In response, destinations like Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey have developed comprehensive halal tourism infrastructure and marketing initiatives to establish themselves as leading halal-friendly destinations (Razalli, Abdullah, & Hassan, 2012). Jafari and Scott (2014) discuss the diversity within the Muslim tourist demographic, noting differences in religious commitment, cultural backgrounds, and travel motives. This diversity requires a nuanced approach to halal tourism, as services and offerings must cater to a wide range of needs and expectations. El-Gohary (2016) points out that successful halal tourism initiatives must maintain a balance between strict adherence to Islamic principles and flexibility, appealing to both more devout and less conservative Muslim travelers.

The Role of Technology in Enhancing Halal Tourism

Integration of technology into halal tourism has picked up great momentum with the advent of Industry 4.0 (Mukherjee, Rajendran & Wahab, 2022). Technological advancements have changed many aspects of the tourism industry, offering Muslim tourists increased ease and accessibility, among other cultural enrichment opportunities. In addition, digital platforms targeting halal-conscious travelers have emerged, such as halal food delivery apps and virtual online tours, to help Muslim tourists identify halal food and explore cultural heritage sites virtually to enhance their travel experience while observing their religion (Azam et al., 2024).

For example, the development of technologies such as IoC, cloud computing, AI, and cyber-physical systems has significantly improved governance and protection of halal tourism, but they also bring about problems such as standardization in halal terminology and localized promotional strategies (Mukherjee et al., 2022). In addition, VR is becoming technology of growing importance in the setting of halal tourism. Virtual reality (VR) systems provide prospective travelers with engaging previews of various destinations, which can affect their decision-making regarding travel (Suhartanto, Andrianto, Wibisono & Sutrisno, 2021). As noted by Kamarulzaman et al. (2020), VR effectively highlights cultural and religious heritage, resonating with Muslim tourists through both informative and captivating content.

The conjunction of technological advances and Halal tourism has opened up new dimensions for improving the travel experience for Muslim tourists. By using digital innovations, industry stakeholders can cater to the changing needs of Muslim travelers, which will help foster a more inclusive and rewarding travel environment (Azam et al., 2024; Mukherjee et al., 2022). Hashim, Murphy, and Muhammad (2007) emphasize that internet resources providing halal-specific information significantly impact Muslim travelers' destination selection and overall satisfaction. Websites and mobile applications offering details on halal-friendly destinations, accommodations, and prayer facilities—like HalalTrip and CrescentRating—empower travelers to make well-informed choices (CrescentRating, 2020). Real-time mobile applications that provide information on halal restaurants, prayer schedules, and Qibla directions enhance the travel convenience for Muslim tourists (Rahman, Zailani, & Musa, 2017). Furthermore, AI-driven recommendation systems personalize travel options by suggesting destinations, activities, and dining experiences based on user preferences and past behaviors

(Taecharunroj & Mathayomchan, 2021). Social media also plays a critical role, as user-generated content—such as reviews, tips, and travel narratives shared on platforms like Instagram and TripAdvisor—serves as influential sources of information and inspiration (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Positive electronic word-of-mouth significantly affects Muslim travelers' trust and intentions, highlighting the need for halal tourism providers to maintain a strong online presence (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016).

Impact of Halal Tourism on Local Communities

Halal tourism is an important contributor to the economic strength of local communities, mostly through increased spending by tourists, more investment, and jobs. This sector has proven itself significant in national economies through the creation of economic multiplier effects that increase output, added value, income, and employment (Yusuf, Djakfar & Maulana, 2021). However, the impacts of halal tourism go beyond the economic dimension; they also penetrate the social and cultural domains of society. On the bright side, halal tourism is good for the conservation of local cultural heritage, religious beliefs, customs, and traditions (Yusuf, Djakfar & Maulana, 2021). It motivates the development of the infrastructure of tourism with due consideration to the values of Islam.

The social dimensions of halal tourism are very comprehensive. Even though tourism could facilitate cultural exchange and improve mutual understanding, conflicts between different stakeholders are also possible. To some community members, tourism development could be seen as a threat to Islamic values by either associating it with social issues or ethical concerns (Abdullah, Awang, & Abdullah, 2020). The key to success of the halal tourism lies in the engagement and satisfaction of customers. Studies show that Halal tourism significantly impacts customer engagement and satisfaction, where religiosity acts as the moderating variable, hence meaning that destinations have to all the more carefully meet the religious needs and expectations of Muslim tourists. Halal tourism, therefore, carries with it both opportunities and challenges for the local communities. While it may bring income and help in preserving culture, it needs good management in order to solve social problems that arise and ensure sustainable development that respects Islamic principles and local values.

On the cultural front, halal tourism can support the preservation and celebration of Islamic heritage and traditions. Generally, destinations capitalize on their cultural assets in terms of historical mosques, Islamic art, and traditional cuisines to attract Muslim travelers, thereby conserving these resources (Timothy & Iverson, 2006). In this way, tourism benefits, and at the same time, the local populations strengthen their cultural identity and pride. Notwithstanding these advantages, the rapid growth of halal tourism presents several challenges. A prominent challenge is the threat of cultural commodification, in which cultural traditions may be modified or commercialized to meet the expectations of tourists, thereby potentially compromising their authenticity (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004). Furthermore, environmental concerns may arise as a result of heightened tourism activity, necessitating the implementation of sustainable practices to alleviate negative effects on both natural and cultural resources (Battour, Ismail, & Battor, 2011). Moreover, the economic benefits of halal tourism need to be fairly shared within the local community. Badaruddin et al. (2016) argue that in order to enhance community empowerment, the integration of local stakeholders into planning and decision-making processes can be helpful for developing tourism that corresponds to the needs and values of a community.

Challenges and Opportunities in Halal Tourism Development

Sustaining and advancing halal tourism requires navigating various challenges and leveraging new opportunities. One major hurdle is the lack of standardized certification and regulation across countries, which causes inconsistencies and ambiguity regarding halal-compliant services (Stephenson, Russell, & Edgar, 2010). Establishing universal standards and accreditation processes is crucial to building trust and ensuring industry-wide quality. Meeting the divergent needs and expectations of Muslim tourists from various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds is another challenge. Shafaei and Mohamed (2015) emphasized the need for market segmentation and a wide range of targeted marketing strategies to effectively meet diversity. Their destinations should be made more flexible and inclusive regarding the different levels of religiosity and cultural practices.

The digital revolution brings huge opportunities for growth and innovation in halal tourism. The new technologies can be used to improve service delivery, customer engagement, and operational efficiency (Jafari & Scott, 2014). Moreover, the on-rise state of awareness and interest in ethical and sustainable travel goes hand in hand with halal tourism principles, opening ways to further appeal to a wider audience interested in responsible and meaningful travel (Henderson, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the contours of tourism, foregrounding health and safety protocols that can be integrated with halal standards to provide safe travel options (UNWTO, 2020). There is thus an opportunity at this juncture for the adjustment of halal tourism to changed global circumstances and traveler preferences.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the role of culinary digital tools in enhancing the gastronomic experiences of Muslim travelers in the halal tourism sector. The methodological design integrates a comprehensive literature review, case studies, and content analysis of digital tools to analyze the impact of these innovations. The qualitative approach was chosen due to its flexibility in examining the dynamic interplay between technology and culinary experiences within the context of halal tourism. Through secondary data sources, this study investigates current digital tools that enhance access to halal culinary options and support cultural engagement for Muslim travelers. By analyzing various sources, this research identifies patterns, insights, and gaps within the digital ecosystem supporting halal tourism. The study relies on secondary data gathered from a wide range of reputable sources, including academic journals, industry reports, government publications, and credible websites specializing in halal tourism and culinary innovations. These data sources offer insights into the existing digital tools such as halal food delivery applications, AI-driven recommendation systems, and virtual culinary tours that facilitate a culturally respectful and religiously compliant dining experience for Muslim tourists.

FINDING

In this article, the impacts of digital technology on Muslim tourists in their culinary experiences under halal tourism are explored with regard to how technological advancement has better served to provide access, convenience, and cultural engagement to Muslim travelers. This section draws information from a variety of sources to examine specific ways in which developments in digital resources are expanding halal dining opportunities for Muslim tourists.

The Expansion of Halal Food Delivery Applications

Another finding is the technology of halal food delivery services in connecting Muslim travelers to halal-certified restaurants, mostly in places where halal food is limited. These apps are very useful for halal-conscious travelers as the mobile apps even enable them to have real-time options of halal dining in regions with few Muslims. Thus, these apps, according to research, are easy to use and very effective in ensuring that the traveler maintains his/her daith while getting to know a new location. Since it becomes possible to search nearby dining places that comply with religious doctrines, these halal food apps bring wonderful experiences to Muslim travelers in the course of their journey.

Integrated platforms as virtual navigators in culinary arts:

Online platforms played a more important role in the capturing of halal food options, traditional cooking styles, and premium halal dishes. These platforms thus become digital guides that may teach a Muslim tourist on what meals are available from local cuisines, restaurant ratings, and even a country's hidden cultural cues thus making dining even better. The study demonstrates that the platforms are not only a search tool of halal food that can be mastered very rapidly, but also a medium through which people can experience the real story behind the dishes they are eating.

AI-Driven Personalized Recommendations

Artificial Intelligent has developed a more user-friendly Halal dining experience. It makes the system able to

gather up user feedback about their preferences and previous actions. With the user's distinguished dietary demands, liking preferences, and travel experience among others, Artificial Intelligence technologies provide the users with the restaurants and food items that can be most satisfying for the travelers. Through this personal-style interaction, the Muslim tourists are able to come across new and exiting halal dining experiences that are culturally appropriate thus making the Islamic tourist enjoy the stay and be loyal to halal-locations..

The Value of User-Generated Content and Reviews

User-generated content in the form of reviews and recommendations, particularly on social media and travel blogs, plays vital role in the Muslim travelers who can have a halal dining experience. In such data other travelers can access trustworthy sources of info about the quality and authenticity of halal food options in different locations. Besides the accuracy of this rating, the authenticity of the relations between the hotel management and the Muslim – the speed of service and public transport connections and the presence of easy-access prayer facilities along vacation routes; all are high-prized aspects for the halal observant-conscious tourist. Additionally, virtual communities are places for mutual friendship and trust among Muslim tourists which can be supported by communication of good-customs and tips for dining in restaurants of different recipes.

Culinary Exploration through Virtual and Augmented Reality

The inclusion of virtual reality and augmented reality in halal tourism allows the halal tourism conscious tourist to explore the culinary culture in another way. These technologies enable the users to gain an insight to the culinary destination, observe the methods used in cooking and even interact in with food customs before they get to the place. The research also shows that VR and AR contributes to the development of the concept of the halal tourism in a way that lets understand and value the cultural significance which is attributed to local dishes. This immersive technology does not just enhance the experience but also builds up excitement for the culinary journey of the travelers.

Halal Verification Applications and Food Authenticity

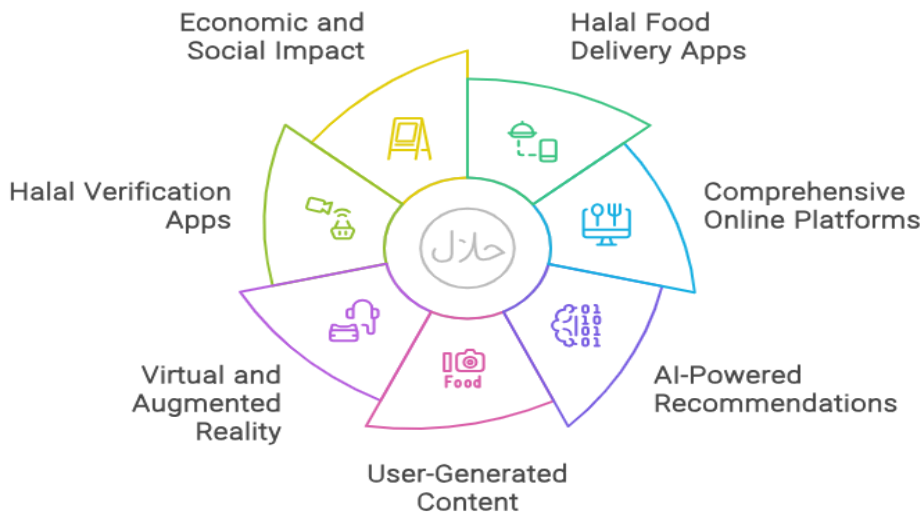
Halal verification applications are thought to be the proper tool for checking how foodstuffs and restaurants comply with set criteria of halal. Featuring barcode scanning or location-based functions, such apps offer updated information about halal certification. Research indicates these apps prove very helpful, particularly in regions where there is a shortage of halal options or where halal certification is ambiguous. These apps make traveling and dining easy for Muslim travelers because they can check the status in real time.

Economic and Social Effects on Local Communities

Lastly, a further area that this research will explore is the general economic and social impacts of halal tourism to local communities. Economically, increased demand through halal tourism encourages business expansion, job creation, and investment in tourism infrastructure. Socially, it opens possibilities for cultural exchange and understanding, as the communities make changes to accommodate Muslim travelers. The paper also discusses the risks of cultural commodification and the establishment of sustainable tourism strategies for the preservation of local traditions and resources. Such stakeholders' collaboration is very important to ensure benefit sharing in a just and equitable manner that preserves the integrity of this cultural and religious heritage.

This study demonstrates that, in general, digital technologies have dramatically improved the culinary experiences of Muslim travelers, with better access and enjoyment of, and cultural immersion into, halal tourism. Innovations such as halal delivery applications, artificial intelligence recommendations, and virtual reality completely change the way Muslim tourists experience local food while keeping up with their dietary restrictions. Furthermore, the economic and social ramifications of halal tourism highlight the necessity for practices that are both sustainable and culturally attuned as this sector continues to expand. The incorporation of technology within halal tourism responds to the particular requirements of Muslim travelers while simultaneously promoting a more inclusive and culturally enriched travel experience.

Enhancing Halal Tourism through Culinary Digital Innovations



CONCLUSION

Digital culinary technologies integrated with halal tourism represent a tremendous evolution in the way Muslim travelers interact with their gastronomic experiences. The integration of technology in that field has made it easier to access halal-certified food and enhanced the travel experience with a solution tailored to their needs regarding religion and culture. The increase in the global Muslim population and their demand for services complying with Islamic principles is pushing the transformation of halal tourism. Halal tourism benefits both tourists and their host communities economically, socially, and culturally, as discussed further in this paper. However, continued success in this field depends on solving some of the key issues related to offering more genuine halal products and services, development of standardized mechanisms for certification and the adequate use of technology to cater to the different needs of the tourists. To further develop and create more viable halal tourism, there are several recommendations. First and foremost, there is a dire need to have more standardized and globally recognized halal certification mechanisms developed. The current poor universal certification that different regions have resulted in insecurity and low confidence in Muslim travelers. This will however be enhanced by the formation of an international halal certification body whose function will be to produce standard that will help Muslim tourists to be in a position to get information on Halal services anytime they want in any part of the world. However, it must also be noted that there is a requirement in the training in cultural awareness for the tourism operators. It empowers the hospitality establishments such as hotels, restaurants, travel agency and other players in the tourism sector with the ability to meet out the special need that Muslim travelers have in relation to diet, praying place, and gender sensitivity in the delivery of services, this training aids service providers to learn how best to deal with travelers so as to make service delivery sensitive to Islamic and cultural beliefs.

Halal tourism has large importance of technology in enhancing the experience of the tourists. AI would require further attention to address the needs of Muslim travelers and improve/invent new traveling solutions in the market. AI may also serve as useful in providing recommendations for foods, places to stay, and leisure activities that are acceptable to the specific requirement and permit of people. More so, involvement of local communities is another major determinant in enhancement of any good performance in any effective implemented halal tourism program. The major consequence of understanding the culture and with the involvement of the host communities in the planning/decision-making process for tourism growth it will be meaningful and ecological to harmonise with the culture. A few strategic suggestions could shape the future of halal tourism. A global halal tourism network would be beneficial for knowledge sharing and best practices among various stakeholders involved, such as certification bodies, tourism authorities, and technology companies. Such a network would be able to facilitate cooperation in the growth of halal tourism globally. Besides, locating such halal tourism centers to already established infrastructure like Malaysia and Turkey will serve as role models for emerging markets. These centers will also provide training and resources and specialized expertise to help other regions build-up their halal tourism initiatives successfully.

Another important recommendation is to include halal tourism in the national tourism strategy. To do so, the

government must recognize halal tourism as one of the prime growth sectors and promote it through marketing initiatives, infrastructure developments, and incentives to halal-certified businesses. Ethical and sustainable practices of halal tourism also required for the longevity of this industry. It includes reducing the environmental impact of tourism, supporting local economies, and preserving cultural heritages in ways that are compliant with Islamic values. It is important that future research in halal tourism investigates the following areas to address the challenges at present and grab the emerging opportunities: it would be interesting to probe the influence of AI and machine learning on halal tourism in terms of service personalization and efficiency. Understanding how these technologies can more effectively respond to the needs of Muslim travelers is critical for the growth of this sector.

Additionally, more research is needed on halal tourism in non-Muslim-majority countries, which face unique challenges in catering to Muslim tourists. Researches might provide some important information on how these areas can optimise their halal tourism services. Sustainability is another area of research that researchers believe should be embraced in the future study of halal tourism. It is essential to analyse possible approaches as to the minimization of the environmental and the social footprint of tourism in order to eliminate the potentially negative effects of halal tourism on the communities and the resources the principles of which are taken as the basis of its functioning. Knowledge of the consumers' behavior which will enable the development of products and services that will suit the different consumers' needs is also important in halal tourism. It also examined the way other social factors such as cultural, religious, and economic factors influence travel decisions, which would help travel providers to address this market segment more adequately.

As information and communication technologies are successively implemented in halal tourism, it is essential to determine the various segments of Muslim travellers' attitudes and adoption of advanced technologies. Factors like trust in them, ease of using it and perceived usefulness of those technologies maybe a great boost to improving travel experiences. Understanding these areas in future research can help to build on the progress of halal tourism, in order to promote the needs of the Muslim tourists while encouraging tourism for both cultural and economic benefits. The prospects of halal tourism look promising, the potential for development is enormous, and there is vast potential for further innovation on the horizon. Through confronting current challenges and capitalizing on technological advancement, the industry could arguably deliver Muslim travelers enriching, culturally respectful, and enjoyable experiences that at the same time secure sustainable development for host communities.

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