



Understanding Muslim Tourist Experiences: A Sequential Exploratory Mixed-Methods Study Of Islamic Values In Destination Marketing

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the multidimensional nature of perceived halal tourism benefits among foreign Muslim tourists and identifies market segments based on benefit preferences. Using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), K-means cluster analysis, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the findings reveal that halal tourism benefits encompass religious, social, emotional, and functional dimensions, indicating that Muslim tourists evaluate destinations through a holistic combination of religious values, comfort, safety, service quality, and emotional experiences. Three distinct segments were identified: tourists with high religiosity and gender ethics sensitivity, tourists oriented toward comprehensive Sharia compliance, and pragmatic tourists prioritizing convenience and safety. Significant differences among segments confirm the heterogeneity of Muslim tourist markets. The study further highlights that tourist experiences are influenced by the interaction of religiosity, socio-cultural factors, technology adoption, and sustainability considerations. By integrating a holistic experiential perspective with benefit-based segmentation, this research contributes to halal tourism literature and provides a foundation for developing adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable destination marketing strategies that address diverse Muslim tourist needs.

INTRODUCTION

Halal tourism has experienced rapid growth in recent years, driven by increasing awareness of the need to provide travel facilities that comply with Islamic Sharia principles (Pranata, 2025). It has become one of the primary travel choices for global Muslim tourists and represents the fastest-growing segment in the tourism industry (Rahman et al., 2020). With an

average growth rate of 4.8%, compared to the global tourism industry average of 3.8%, halal tourism is recognized as one of the fastest-expanding sectors in the global economy (Amadeus, 2016). In 2023, the global Muslim travel market reached approximately 140 million travelers and is projected to increase to 160 million in 2024, with forecasts estimating 230 million travelers by 2028, generating a potential market value of USD 225 billion (Crescentrating, 2023).

Indonesia holds strong potential to become a global hub for halal tourism, following countries such as Malaysia and Turkey, which have earlier adopted Islamic tourism frameworks. Malaysia, for instance, began developing its Islamic tourism concept in 2006 and established a dedicated Islamic Tourism Directorate in 2009 (Asih & Asih, 2015). The Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) ranked Indonesia as the best Muslim-friendly destination in 2023 among both OIC and non-OIC countries. This achievement is supported by strong domestic resources, including a population in which 86.9% are Muslim (BPS, 2020), as well as natural and cultural attractions, including ten priority halal tourism destinations designated by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Komite Nasional Ekonomi dan Keuangan Syariah, 2020). Despite these advantages, the relatively low number of global Muslim tourist arrivals remains a challenge for Indonesia in establishing itself as a leading halal tourism destination. One of the main contributing factors is Indonesia's limited global marketing reach as a Muslim-friendly destination (COMCEC, 2016), highlighting the need for more effective international tourism marketing strategies.

In tourism studies, market segmentation is widely recognized as an effective approach for understanding tourism markets, particularly in emerging destinations where market knowledge remains limited (Chen et al., 2016; Wen et al., 2019). Market segmentation enables a deeper understanding of consumer needs and provides long-term competitive advantages (Dolnicar et al., 2019), making it a fundamental component of tourism marketing strategy (Ernest & Dolnicar, 2018). It involves dividing a heterogeneous market into smaller, more homogeneous groups based on shared characteristics (Dolnicar, 2008), allowing marketers to identify and target specific customer segments more accurately. The underlying assumption of market segmentation is that tourists are not a homogeneous group but differ in motivations, activity preferences, and desired benefits (Hajibaba et al., 2019). In tourism and recreation research, segmentation has been widely applied and is commonly based on demographic, geographic, socioeconomic, psychographic, and behavioral variables (Middleton et al., 2009; Park & Yoon, 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefit-Based Segmentation in Tourism Marketing

Market segmentation is a fundamental concept in tourism marketing, aimed at understanding the diversity of tourists' needs, motivations, and preferences. Among various segmentation approaches, benefit-based segmentation is particularly relevant, as it explains destination choice based on the benefits tourists seek rather than solely on demographic or geographic characteristics (Haley, 1968; Dolnicar, 2022). This approach captures intrinsic motivations, personal values, and travel goals that directly influence tourist behavior, making it especially suitable for complex and heterogeneous markets (Perera et al., 2020).

In the context of halal tourism, benefit-based segmentation becomes even more critical, as Muslim tourists cannot be treated as a homogeneous group. Prior studies demonstrate that their preferences are shaped by varying degrees of religiosity, lifestyle orientation, family considerations, and the need for moral comfort during travel (El-Gohary, 2016; Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2019). Importantly, the benefits sought by Muslim tourists are multidimensional, encompassing: Functional benefits (e.g., halal-certified food, prayer facilities), Symbolic benefits (e.g., Islamic identity and cultural representation), Emotional and experiential benefits (e.g., safety, comfort, spiritual fulfillment). Therefore, benefit-based segmentation provides a more

appropriate framework for mapping halal tourism markets by identifying functional, symbolic, and emotional benefits sought by Muslim tourists, offering stronger insights for destination marketing strategies.

Muslim Consumer Behavior and Islamic Values

Muslim consumer behavior is strongly influenced by Islamic values, Sharia-compliant ethics, and the balance between material and spiritual considerations. In halal tourism, travel decisions are not driven solely by recreational utility, but also by the extent to which destinations align with religious values and Islamic social norms (Ratnasari et al., 2021).

Empirical studies highlight that key determinants of Muslim tourist behavior include: religiosity, trust in halal certification, service ethics, safety and security, and moral comfort (Abror et al., 2020; Suhartanto et al., 2021; Katuk et al., 2021). However, recent literature emphasizes that the concept of "halal" is not uniform, but rather subjective and context-dependent. Muslim tourists' perceptions of halalness are shaped by cultural background, prior travel experience, and social norms in their countries of origin (Brown, 2010; Berakon et al., 2023). Consequently, halal tourism benefits should be understood as socially and experientially constructed values. This theoretical perspective explains how benefit dimensions such as prayer facilitation, Sharia-compliant services, gender ethics, and family orientation reflect the internalization of Islamic values in tourist decision-making.

Halal Tourism as a Holistic Experience

Halal tourism is increasingly conceptualized as a holistic experience that extends beyond formal compliance with halal requirements. It integrates functional, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions that collectively shape tourists' overall experiences (Suhartanto et al., 2021; El-Gohary, 2016). This implies that halal tourism is not limited to the availability of halal-certified products or facilities, but also includes: perceived safety and comfort, ethical and socially appropriate environments, cultural and religious meaning, and quality of social interactions. Recent studies suggest that such experiences are inherently multidimensional and cannot be fully captured through single-variable measurements such as satisfaction or behavioral intention (Amalia et al., 2024; Tjiptono et al., 2022).

METHODS

This study employed a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, systematically integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve the research objectives. The design began with a qualitative phase aimed at exploring and understanding Muslim tourists' experiences and perceptions of halal tourism dengan mengumpulkan dari berbagai studi pustaka. The subsequent quantitative phase focused on identifying benefit structures and forming market segments of foreign Muslim tourists based on the benefits sought.

The quantitative phase involved a survey of 111 foreign Muslim tourists who had experience visiting halal tourism destinations in Indonesia. Respondents were selected based on inclusion criteria requiring Muslim status and actual experience in halal tourism; individuals who did not meet these criteria were excluded.

The sample size was determined to ensure adequate statistical power for multivariate analyses, particularly exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and cluster analysis, following Hair et al. (2019). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the primary benefit dimensions sought by Muslim tourists, and the resulting factor scores were used in cluster analysis to group respondents into homogeneous segments. The cluster solution identified three distinct clusters. Detailed information regarding the number of respondents per cluster and the gender distribution is provided in Appendix 1, respectively.

Cluster validity was assessed using silhouette coefficients (average=0.51), indicating reasonable separation between clusters. Cross-validation was conducted by splitting the sample into two random subsets, and cluster membership remained consistent, confirming the robustness and stability of the solution. The choice of three clusters was further supported by theoretical interpretability and alignment with prior research on Muslim tourist benefit segmentation (El-Gohary, 2016; Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2019).

This methodological approach ensures that the segmentation reflects empirically grounded patterns of benefits sought, providing a strong basis for both theoretical insights into Muslim tourist behavior and practical implications for halal tourism market strategy.

RESULTS

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of Halal Tourism Benefits

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the latent benefit dimensions sought by foreign Muslim tourists in selecting halal tourism destinations in Indonesia. Principal Axis Factoring with Varimax rotation was employed. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was confirmed through a high Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value and a significant Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity, indicating that the correlation matrix was appropriate for factor extraction.

Table 1 Result Exploratory Factor Analysis (Rotated Factor Loadings)

Kode Item	Indicator	Loading
X1	Arts and cultural performances & sharia-compliant attractions	0.493
X2	Availability of religious figures around tourist locations	0.484
X3	Children’s play facilities complying with sharia values	0.46
X4	Separation of hotel floors by gender	0.586
X5	Availability of sharia financial transactions (free of riba)	0.504
X6	Separate areas for women and men at beaches	0.691
X7	Islamic dress of hotel & restaurant staff	0.568
X8	Prevalence of Islamic dress codes in public	0.628
X9	Adzan call facility at prayer times	0.689
X11	Qibla direction in rooms	0.646
X12	Qur’an available in hotel rooms	0.411
X13	Availability of worship facilities	0.635
X14	Smoke-free tourist locations	0.401
X15	Merchandise free from najis materials	0.475
X16	Water taps in wudhu areas	0.538

Source: Data Processed, 2026

As shown in Table 1, all retained indicators had factor loadings above 0.40, demonstrating adequate contribution to their respective factors. The extracted factors cumulatively explained a substantial proportion of variance, reflecting a strong and conceptually meaningful structure of halal tourism benefits. The identified benefit dimensions include prayer facilitation, Sharia-compliant services, Islamic socio-cultural environment, safety and family orientation, gender ethics, and assurance of product and service halalness.

Benefit-Based Market Segmentation of Muslim Tourists

Using factor scores from the EFA, K-means cluster analysis was conducted to group foreign Muslim tourists based on similarities in benefits sought. A three-cluster solution was selected for its optimal balance between statistical quality, visual clarity, and substantive interpretability.

Table 2. K-means Cluster Centers and ANOVA Results Based on Factor Scores (k = 3)

Factor	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	F-value (Relative)	Sig.
Factor 1	−0.66	2.01	0.07	High	< 0.001
Factor 2	−0.16	−4.46	0.18	Very high	< 0.001
Factor 3	−0.71	1.18	0.11	High	< 0.001
Factor 4	−1.02	−2.00	0.28	High	< 0.001
Factor 5	−0.58	0.4	0.11	Moderate	< 0.01
Factor 6	−0.01	0.45	−0.01	Moderate	< 0.05
Factor 7	−0.01	0.34	−0.01	Low	> 0.05
Factor 8	−1.06	0.82	0.2	High	< 0.001
Factor 9	0.18	0.58	−0.06	Moderate	< 0.05

Source: Data Processed, 2026

Cluster validity was assessed using ANOVA, with results presented in Table 2. Most benefit dimensions differed significantly across clusters ($p < 0.05$), confirming that the clusters are statistically and meaningfully distinct.

Profiling and Academic Labeling of Muslim Tourist Segments

Each cluster was further analyzed based on factor score patterns and dominant benefit orientations. Academic labels were assigned to represent the primary value orientation of each segment.

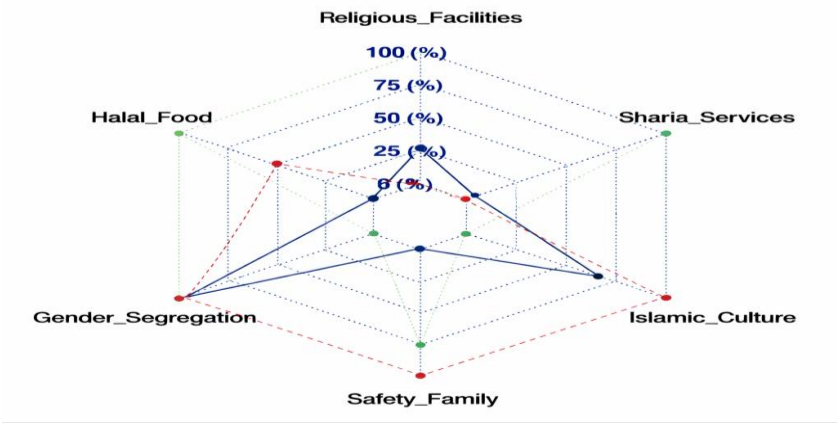
Table 5. Summary of Cluster Labels and Dominant Characteristics

Cluster	Short Label	Dominant Characteristics
1	Devout	Strong emphasis on worship facilitation and gender segregation
2	Strict	Preference for comprehensive regulation and full Sharia compliance
3	Moderate	Flexible orientation prioritizing comfort and convenience

Source: Data Processed, 2026

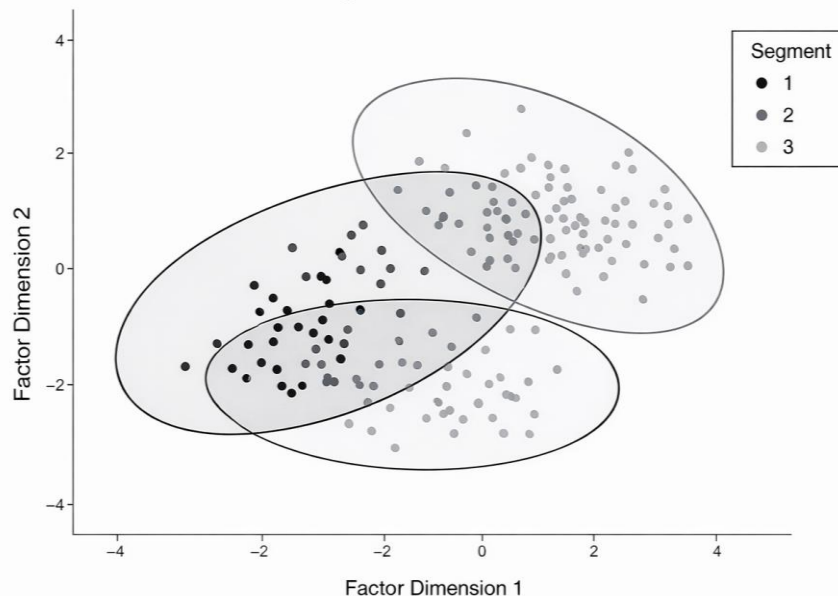
Cluster 1: Characterized by high importance on prayer facilities and gender ethics, indicating strong sensitivity to religious and moral aspects of tourism. Cluster 2: Exhibited consistently high scores across most Sharia compliance dimensions, reflecting a preference for highly regulated and normatively compliant tourism environments. Cluster 3: The largest cluster, displaying a more moderate and flexible orientation, emphasizing convenience, safety, and service ease, while still meeting basic halal requirements.

Figure 1. Radar Chart Comparison of Benefit Dimensions Across Segmen



Differences in segment profiles are visualized using a radar chart (Figure 1), illustrating contrasting benefit preference patterns across clusters. Additional visualizations based on factor scores (Figure 2) demonstrate clear and stable cluster separation, reinforcing the validity of the segmentation results.

Figure 2. Cluster Plot Benefit-Based Segmentation of Muslim Tourist



These findings confirm that foreign Muslim tourists are not a homogeneous group. Their preferences for halal tourism are shaped by a multidimensional benefit structure, resulting in empirically and conceptually distinct market segments. The integration of factor and cluster analyses successfully uncovers the heterogeneity of Muslim tourists, providing a robust foundation for theoretically informed and value-based destination marketing strategies.

Technical details, including KMO and Bartlett values, initial cluster centers, and demographic distributions, are provided in the Appendices to maintain methodological transparency without overloading the main text.

DISCUSSION

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) revealed that perceived halal tourism benefits among foreign Muslim tourists are multidimensional, encompassing religious, social, emotional, and functional values in Table 1. Benefits are not concentrated in a single religiosity factor but distributed across multiple dimensions, confirming that tourists select destinations based on benefits sought rather than solely on demographic characteristics (Dolnicar, 2022; Perera et al., 2020).

From a conceptual standpoint, these findings suggest that understanding halal tourism merely as compliance with formal halal standards is overly narrow. Muslim tourists perceive halal tourism as a holistic experience, where religiosity forms the trust foundation, while experiential value is shaped by a combination of comfort, safety, social quality, and emotional meaning (Suhartanto et al., 2021). This study empirically validates the holistic perspective of halal tourism experiences and extends prior work by quantifying the latent benefit dimensions.

Using EFA-derived factor scores, K-means cluster analysis identified three empirically distinct Muslim tourist segments. ANOVA results confirmed significant differences across most benefit dimensions, supporting the validity of benefit-based segmentation. This aligns with prior

studies demonstrating the heterogeneity of Muslim tourist markets (Nor et al., 2023; Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2019; Battour et al., 2024).

Cluster distribution reveals one dominant segment, with the other two smaller and more specialized, reflecting the natural structure of the halal tourism market: the majority of Muslim tourists are moderate in their halal orientation, while a niche segment seeks stricter Sharia compliance. Segment profiles and academic labeling further distinguish: Cluster 1: High religiosity and gender ethics sensitivity, Cluster 2: Comprehensive Sharia compliance orientation, Cluster 3: Pragmatic, emphasizing convenience, safety, and service ease

Visualizations, including radar charts and cluster score mappings, reinforce numerical interpretations, illustrating distinct but contextually fluid benefit profiles. Overlaps reflect the dynamic and situational nature of Muslim tourist preferences (Sahir et al., 2021).

Integrating global insights, intersectionality, and sustainability, this study situates the findings within a broader international and interdisciplinary context. Evidence demonstrates that Muslim tourist experiences are shaped by multiple interacting factors, including religiosity, gender, socio-cultural norms, legal constraints, technological adoption, and sustainability considerations.

Rostami and Trupp (2025) highlight that Muslim female solo travelers face context specific constraints arising from intersections of gender, education, employment, nationality, religion, marital status, ethnicity, age, and race, influencing travel behavior and decision-making. This emphasizes that Islamic values interact with social and cultural dimensions to create differentiated travel experiences. Similarly, Jabeen et al. (2025) identify three main clusters in halal tourism research sustainable tourism and development, halal tourism entrepreneurship, and technology and digitalization and underline that integration of Islamic principles with global sustainability goals shapes tourist behavior, service quality, and marketing strategies. Rizkitama et al. (2025) demonstrate that determinants such as CHSE (cleanliness, health, safety, environment), service quality, accessibility, and faith-based marketing significantly influence Muslim tourists' satisfaction and revisit intentions, emphasizing the alignment of Sharia-compliant services with sustainability practices to support economic growth and market diversification.

Bibliometric analyses by Battour et al. (2024) and Alimusa et al. (2024) reveal research clusters emphasizing halal tourism marketing, service standards, tourist satisfaction, and Muslim-friendly destination development, showing a global focus on integrating Islamic values with operational and strategic practices. Siregar et al. (2025) and Ratnasari et al. (2024) confirm that destination attributes, technology adoption, and digital transformation critically shape Muslim tourist behavior and satisfaction, while Adirestuty et al. (2023) and Kurniawan et al. (2025) highlight trends in Indonesian halal tourism research that underscore strategic planning, service quality alignment, and organizational innovation. Chantarungsri et al. (2024) emphasize opportunities in heritage tourism and technology integration, whereas Ismail et al. (2025) provide a systematic review identifying six main clusters in halal tourism research including market, Islamic tourism, value, destination, intention, and dimension with Indonesia emerging as a leading context due to its Muslim population and integrated halal tourism practices. Marlina et al. (2025) further highlight the strategic importance of Sharia-compliant services, halal marketing, and certification in driving tourist satisfaction and loyalty, noting trends in digital integration, COVID-19 adaptation, and global standardization.

Collectively, these studies reinforce the notion that Muslim tourist experiences are multidimensional, contextually contingent, and intersectional, influenced by the interplay of religious, socio-cultural, gendered, technological, and sustainability-related factors. Integrating these global insights situates the current findings within an international research agenda and provides a conceptual foundation for designing adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable halal tourism strategies that accommodate heterogeneous tourist segments and context-specific challenges.

This study demonstrates that halal tourism is a multidimensional experience, producing empirically distinct market segments. The novelty lies in combining a holistic experiential perspective with benefit-based segmentation validated through EFA and cluster analysis, addressing a gap in empirical understanding of how halal tourism benefits shape Muslim tourist market structures. By providing empirical evidence on heterogeneity and value-based segmentation, the study enriches halal tourism literature and offers a conceptual basis for adaptive, value-driven, and sustainable destination marketing strategies capable of accommodating both mainstream and niche Muslim tourist needs.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that halal tourism is a multidimensional experience, shaped by religious, socio-cultural, functional, and emotional factors. Foreign Muslim tourists exhibit heterogeneous preferences, forming empirically distinct market segments validated through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and K-means cluster analysis. The findings reveal that halal tourism goes beyond formal compliance, integrating trust, comfort, safety, social quality, and Islamic lifestyle values. By highlighting multidimensional benefits and value-driven segmentation, this research provides both theoretical and practical insights for understanding Muslim tourist behavior and designing effective, contextually relevant destination marketing strategies.

LIMITATION

1. Contextual Limitation: The study focuses solely on Indonesia; cross-country comparisons with other Muslim-majority and non-Muslim countries could further validate the generalizability of findings.
2. Sample and Methodology: Although the sample size supports robust factor and cluster analysis, future studies could include larger and more diverse samples to examine demographic and cultural moderators.
3. Longitudinal Perspective: This study captures tourist preferences at a single point in time. Longitudinal research could explore how Muslim tourist behavior evolves in response to global trends, sustainability initiatives, and digital transformations.

Future Agenda: Future research may integrate behavioral experiments, cross-cultural comparisons, and the impact of emerging trends such as digital halal tourism platforms, post-pandemic travel behavior, and climate-conscious travel preferences.

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