

ISLAMIC TOURISM AS A STRATEGIC COMPONENT OF THE SHARIA ECONOMY: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS

Islamic tourism, halal tourism, sharia economy, literature review, Muslim-friendly tourism

Islamic tourism has emerged as a significant segment within the global tourism industry, particularly in countries with Muslim-majority populations and regions seeking to tap into the growing Muslim travel market. This study aims to systematically review and synthesize existing literature on Islamic tourism as an integral component of the sharia economy, focusing on its conceptual foundations, development patterns, economic implications, and governance challenges. Employing a qualitative systematic literature review approach, this article analyzes peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports, and policy documents published between 2010 and 2024. The review is guided by predefined inclusion criteria, emphasizing scholarly works indexed in reputable databases and official statistical sources.

The findings indicate that Islamic tourism is not merely a niche market but a comprehensive economic ecosystem encompassing halal hospitality, sharia-compliant financial services, cultural preservation, and ethical consumption. Several studies highlight the role of Islamic tourism in enhancing economic inclusivity, strengthening local micro-enterprises, and supporting sustainable development goals. However, the literature also reveals persistent challenges, including conceptual ambiguities, regulatory fragmentation, inconsistent standards of halal certification, and limited integration between tourism stakeholders and Islamic financial institutions.

Empirical evidence from international tourism reports and national statistical agencies, including Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), demonstrates the growing contribution of Muslim-friendly tourism to national economies. Despite this potential, the implementation of Islamic tourism remains uneven across regions due to institutional, infrastructural, and policy constraints. This study contributes to the literature by offering a structured conceptual framework that positions Islamic tourism within the broader sharia economic system. It also identifies research gaps and proposes future research directions to strengthen theoretical development and policy formulation. The article is expected to provide valuable insights for academics, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to develop Islamic tourism as a sustainable economic strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has consistently been acknowledged as a vital economic sector with a strong capacity to stimulate economic growth, generate employment opportunities, and promote regional development. Over time, the tourism industry has evolved significantly, adapting to shifts in consumer behavior, ethical awareness, and socio-cultural values. This evolution has

led to increasing diversification within tourism markets, where travelers no longer seek only leisure and recreation but also experiences that align with their personal beliefs, identities, and moral considerations. One of the most prominent outcomes of this diversification is the emergence and rapid growth of Islamic tourism, commonly referred to as halal tourism or Muslim-friendly tourism. This form of tourism emphasizes adherence to Islamic principles in the provision of services and experiences, including the availability of halal-certified food, prayer facilities, modest recreational environments, and ethical business conduct that aligns with Islamic values (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Henderson, 2016; El-Gohary, 2016).

The expansion of Islamic tourism is inseparable from broader demographic and economic dynamics affecting the global Muslim population. The Pew Research Center (2017) projects that the global Muslim population will reach approximately 2.2 billion by 2030, accounting for nearly one-quarter of the world's population. This demographic growth is accompanied by increasing levels of education, urbanization, and income, particularly among Muslim communities in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia. These developments have translated into greater purchasing power and higher mobility, giving rise to a growing segment of Muslim travelers with specific consumption preferences and lifestyle expectations (CrescentRating, 2023; Mastercard & CrescentRating, 2022; UNWTO, 2019). As a result, Islamic tourism has moved beyond a niche market and has become a strategically important segment within the global tourism industry, attracting the attention of governments, private sector actors, and international organizations.

Academic discourse increasingly emphasizes that Islamic tourism should not be narrowly associated with religious travel such as Hajj and Umrah. Instead, it encompasses a wide range of travel activities, including leisure, cultural, educational, medical, and business tourism, as long as these activities are conducted in accordance with sharia principles (Battour et al., 2014; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010; Rahman et al., 2020). This broader interpretation positions Islamic tourism as a multidimensional phenomenon that intersects with various academic fields, including hospitality and tourism management, cultural studies, marketing, and Islamic economics. Consequently, Islamic tourism has attracted growing scholarly interest, resulting in diverse conceptualizations, analytical frameworks, and methodological approaches. However, this diversity has also generated conceptual ambiguity, highlighting the need for systematic synthesis and theoretical clarification.

Within the broader framework of the sharia economy, Islamic tourism represents an important component that reflects the ethical and normative foundations of Islamic economic thought. The sharia economy is grounded in principles such as justice, transparency, accountability, risk-sharing, and the promotion of social welfare. Economic activities within this system are not solely evaluated based on profitability but are also assessed in terms of their social and moral consequences (Chapra, 2009; Antonio, 2012; Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007). In this context, Islamic tourism aligns with the objectives of the sharia economy by integrating commercial goals with ethical consumption, cultural sensitivity, environmental responsibility, and community empowerment.

Several scholars conceptualize Islamic tourism as a strategic subsector of the sharia economy, alongside other halal industries such as Islamic finance, halal food production, and modest fashion (Elasrag, 2016; Hassan & Halim, 2014; Thomson Reuters & DinarStandard, 2020). From this perspective, tourism-related services including accommodation, transportation, culinary services, and entertainment are designed and managed in accordance with Islamic legal and ethical standards. This alignment is expected to enhance the overall integrity and coherence of the sharia economic ecosystem while creating value for both Muslim travelers and host communities. By promoting inclusive and sustainable development, Islamic tourism can contribute to local economic growth, job creation, and cultural preservation.

In Indonesia, the relevance of Islamic tourism is particularly significant given the country's status as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation. Indonesia possesses abundant natural resources, diverse cultural heritage, and rich religious traditions that provide a strong foundation for the development of Islamic tourism destinations. Recognizing this potential, the Indonesian government has incorporated halal tourism into national development strategies aimed at strengthening the halal industry and enhancing global competitiveness (Jaelani, 2017; Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021; BPS, 2023). According to data from Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), the tourism sector contributed approximately 4.1 percent to Indonesia's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019. Although the sector was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, a gradual recovery has been observed, particularly in regions that actively promote halal tourism, such as Lombok and Aceh (BPS, 2023).

Despite these promising developments, the integration of Islamic tourism into the broader sharia economic framework remains both conceptually and practically fragmented. Existing studies often approach Islamic tourism primarily as a branding or marketing strategy rather than as an integral part of a holistic economic system. This narrow perspective has led to inconsistencies in policy formulation, regulatory frameworks, and implementation strategies (Henderson, 2016; Battour & Ismail, 2016; Widagdyo, 2015). As a result, the potential contribution of Islamic tourism to sustainable economic development and social welfare is not fully realized. These challenges underscore the importance of developing a more comprehensive and theoretically grounded understanding of Islamic tourism within the sharia economy.

The practical implementation of Islamic tourism also faces several operational challenges that are frequently highlighted in the literature. One of the most persistent issues is the absence of standardized definitions, criteria, and performance indicators for Islamic tourism. This lack of standardization leads to varying interpretations across countries, institutions, and industry stakeholders, complicating destination branding, service quality assurance, and international benchmarking efforts (Battour et al., 2014; El-Gohary, 2016; Henderson, 2016). Without clear and universally accepted guidelines, destinations may struggle to meet the expectations of Muslim travelers while maintaining competitiveness in the global tourism market.

In addition to conceptual ambiguity, empirical studies point to infrastructural and institutional constraints that hinder the effective development of Islamic tourism. These include limited halal certification capacity, insufficient human resource training, inadequate service quality, and weak coordination among tourism stakeholders, such as government agencies, private enterprises, and local communities (Rahman et al., 2020; Jaelani, 2017; Mohsin et al., 2016). In Indonesia, regional disparities in tourism infrastructure development further exacerbate these challenges. Data from BPS (2023) indicate significant differences between western and eastern regions of the country in terms of accessibility, accommodation quality, and supporting facilities, which affect the equitable growth of Islamic tourism destinations.

From a policy standpoint, Islamic tourism holds substantial strategic importance for achieving national and global development objectives. International organizations such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) emphasize the role of tourism in promoting sustainable development, poverty alleviation, cultural exchange, and environmental protection (UNWTO, 2019). When aligned with Islamic economic values, tourism has the potential to further enhance social justice, ethical governance, and environmental stewardship. However, the literature reveals a persistent gap between normative ideals and operational realities. While policy documents and strategic plans often emphasize ethical and sustainable principles, their implementation is frequently constrained by institutional limitations, regulatory inconsistencies, and market pressures.

Although the body of research on Islamic tourism has grown substantially over the past decade, several gaps remain. Much of the existing literature is empirical and context-specific, focusing on variables such as tourist satisfaction, destination image, service quality, and behavioral intentions. While these studies provide valuable insights, they often lack a strong theoretical foundation that situates Islamic tourism within the broader sharia economic system (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Rahman et al., 2020; Mohsin et al., 2016). Furthermore, systematic literature reviews that critically synthesize conceptual debates, economic implications, and policy considerations remain limited, particularly in the context of developing countries such as Indonesia.

Addressing this gap is essential for advancing both academic understanding and policy development in the field of Islamic tourism. A comprehensive and integrative perspective is needed to clarify how Islamic tourism is conceptualized, operationalized, and evaluated within the sharia economy. Such an approach can help identify best practices, highlight structural challenges, and inform more coherent policy frameworks. By synthesizing insights from diverse scholarly and institutional sources, future research can contribute to the development of Islamic tourism as a sustainable and ethically grounded component of the global tourism industry.

In response to these gaps, this study aims to conduct a qualitative systematic literature review of Islamic tourism research, with a particular focus on its position within the sharia economic framework. The objectives of the study are threefold: first, to examine the

evolution of Islamic tourism concepts and theoretical approaches; second, to analyze the economic and social implications of Islamic tourism development; and third, to identify key challenges and directions for future research. By providing a structured and critical synthesis of existing literature, this study seeks to contribute to academic discourse while offering practical insights for policymakers, industry practitioners, and stakeholders involved in the development of Islamic tourism and the sharia economy.

METHOD RESEARCH

Research Design and Approach

This study employs a qualitative research design using a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to explore and synthesize scholarly discussions on Islamic tourism within the framework of the sharia economy. A qualitative literature review is particularly appropriate for this study because the research objective is not to test hypotheses or analyze primary numerical data, but to develop a comprehensive conceptual understanding based on existing academic knowledge (Snyder, 2019; Tranfield et al., 2003; Xiao & Watson, 2019). By systematically reviewing and interpreting prior studies, this research seeks to identify dominant themes, theoretical perspectives, policy implications, and research gaps related to Islamic tourism.

Systematic literature review differs from traditional narrative reviews in that it follows a transparent, replicable, and structured process for identifying, selecting, and analyzing relevant literature (Kitchenham et al., 2009; Tranfield et al., 2003). This methodological rigor is crucial to minimize selection bias and enhance the credibility of the findings. In the context of Islamic economics and tourism studies, where conceptual ambiguity and terminological overlap are common, an SLR enables the consolidation of fragmented knowledge into a coherent analytical framework (Battour & Ismail, 2016; El-Gohary, 2016; Henderson, 2016).

This study also incorporates a conceptual review dimension, allowing for critical interpretation and synthesis beyond descriptive summarization. Conceptual reviews are particularly valuable in emerging or interdisciplinary fields such as Islamic tourism, where theoretical foundations are still evolving (Jaakkola, 2020; Webster & Watson, 2002). Through this approach, the study positions Islamic tourism as an integral component of the sharia economy rather than merely a niche tourism product.

Data Sources and Literature Search Strategy

The data for this study consist exclusively of secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, conference proceedings, and official institutional reports. Academic literature was retrieved from reputable international databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect, as well as regional databases that index national journals relevant to Islamic economics and tourism studies. To strengthen the practical relevance of the analysis, official reports and statistical publications from recognized institutions such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Mastercard–CrescentRating, Pew Research Center, and Indonesia’s Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) were also included.

The literature search was conducted using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant studies. The primary search terms included “Islamic tourism,” “halal tourism,” “Muslim-friendly tourism,” “sharia economy,” “Islamic economics,” and “halal industry,” combined with terms such as “development,” “policy,” “economic impact,” and “conceptual framework.” These keywords were selected based on commonly used terminology in prior studies (Battour et al., 2014; Mohsin et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2020).

To maintain relevance and quality, the literature search focused on publications released between 2010 and 2024. This time frame captures the rapid growth of academic and policy interest in Islamic tourism while allowing for the inclusion of foundational studies that shaped early conceptual debates (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010; Henderson, 2016). Only publications written in English were included to ensure consistency and accessibility of analysis.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure methodological rigor, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied during the literature selection process. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) the study explicitly discusses Islamic tourism, halal tourism, or Muslim-friendly tourism; (2) the publication is peer-reviewed or issued by a credible international or national institution; (3) the study addresses conceptual, economic, managerial, or policy-related aspects of Islamic tourism; and (4) the full text is accessible for detailed analysis. These criteria are consistent with best practices in systematic review methodology (Kitchenham et al., 2009; Snyder, 2019).

Conversely, studies were excluded if they (1) focused solely on religious pilgrimage without broader tourism implications, (2) lacked academic rigor or clear methodological explanation, (3) were opinion pieces without scholarly grounding, or (4) duplicated findings from other included studies. Publications in languages other than English were also excluded to avoid misinterpretation and translation bias.

Through this screening process, the initial pool of literature was narrowed to a curated set of sources that directly address the research objectives. This step is essential for maintaining analytical focus and ensuring that the review reflects high-quality and relevant scholarship (Xiao & Watson, 2019; Tranfield et al., 2003).

Data Analysis and Synthesis Technique

The selected literature was analyzed using thematic content analysis, a widely used qualitative technique for identifying patterns, themes, and relationships within textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Each article was carefully read and coded based on recurring concepts, theoretical perspectives, and empirical findings related to Islamic tourism and the sharia economy. The coding process was iterative, allowing themes to emerge inductively while remaining guided by the research objectives.

Key themes identified during the analysis included conceptual definitions of Islamic tourism, its relationship with the sharia economy, economic and social impacts, governance and regulatory challenges, and future development strategies. These themes were then compared and synthesized across studies to identify convergences, divergences, and gaps in the literature. This synthesis process enabled the development of a structured conceptual framework that integrates Islamic tourism into the broader discourse of Islamic economics (Elasrag, 2016; Hassan & Halim, 2014; Thomson Reuters & DinarStandard, 2020).

In addition to academic sources, institutional reports and statistical data were analyzed to contextualize theoretical discussions within real-world economic and policy developments. For example, tourism contribution data from BPS and market insights from Mastercard–CrescentRating were used to support discussions on practical relevance and policy implications. This triangulation of sources enhances the robustness and credibility of the findings (Yin, 2018).

Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

Although this study does not involve primary data collection or human subjects, methodological validity and reliability remain critical concerns. To enhance validity, the literature review process followed transparent and replicable procedures, including clearly defined search strategies, inclusion criteria, and analytical steps. Reliability was strengthened by cross-checking themes and interpretations across multiple sources, reducing the risk of subjective bias (Snyder, 2019; Tranfield et al., 2003).

Ethical considerations in this study primarily relate to proper attribution and academic integrity. All sources were cited appropriately using APA style to acknowledge original authors and avoid plagiarism. The study does not manipulate or misrepresent data and adheres to ethical standards for scholarly research. By relying on reputable and verifiable sources, this research aims to provide an objective and balanced synthesis of existing knowledge.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualization of Islamic Tourism in the Academic Literature

The systematic review reveals that Islamic tourism is conceptualized in diverse yet interrelated ways across the academic literature. Early studies tend to frame Islamic tourism narrowly as travel activities motivated by religious obligations, particularly pilgrimage-related travel such as Hajj and Umrah (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010; Henderson, 2016; Battour et al., 2014). However, more recent scholarship expands this definition to encompass leisure, cultural, educational, and business tourism conducted in accordance with Islamic principles. This shift reflects the evolving lifestyle and consumption patterns of Muslim travelers in a globalized economy (Battour & Ismail, 2016; El-Gohary, 2016; Rahman et al., 2020).

Several authors emphasize that Islamic tourism is not defined by the destination's religious identity but by the availability of sharia-compliant services and ethical practices (Mohsin et al., 2016; Henderson, 2016; Battour & Ismail, 2016). This includes halal food

provision, prayer facilities, gender-sensitive recreational spaces, and the avoidance of prohibited activities such as gambling and alcohol consumption. Such characteristics align Islamic tourism with the broader concept of value-based tourism, which prioritizes ethical considerations alongside economic objectives (El-Gohary, 2016; Hassan & Halim, 2014).

Despite this conceptual expansion, the literature also highlights persistent ambiguity regarding terminology. Terms such as “Islamic tourism,” “halal tourism,” and “Muslim-friendly tourism” are often used interchangeably without clear theoretical distinction (Battour et al., 2014; Henderson, 2016; Widagdyo, 2015). This lack of conceptual clarity complicates academic discourse and policy formulation, as stakeholders may interpret Islamic tourism either as a strict religious construct or a flexible market-oriented strategy. The findings suggest a need for a unified conceptual framework that situates Islamic tourism firmly within Islamic economic principles while remaining adaptable to diverse cultural contexts.

Islamic Tourism as a Component of the Sharia Economy

A key finding of the literature review is the strong alignment between Islamic tourism and the foundational principles of the sharia economy. Islamic economics emphasizes justice (*adl*), welfare (*maslahah*), ethical consumption, and social responsibility, all of which are reflected in the operational philosophy of Islamic tourism (Chapra, 2009; Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007; Antonio, 2012). Several studies explicitly position Islamic tourism as a strategic subsector within the broader halal economy, alongside Islamic finance, halal food industries, and modest fashion (Elasrag, 2016; Thomson Reuters & DinarStandard, 2020; Hassan & Halim, 2014).

From an economic perspective, Islamic tourism contributes to value creation through halal-certified supply chains, sharia-compliant financial transactions, and inclusive business models that engage local communities. Empirical studies indicate that destinations implementing Islamic tourism principles tend to stimulate the growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), particularly in the halal food and hospitality sectors (Jaelani, 2017; Rahman et al., 2020; Mohsin et al., 2016). This aligns with the sharia economy’s objective of promoting equitable wealth distribution and reducing socio-economic disparities.

Furthermore, the literature highlights the role of Islamic financial institutions in supporting tourism development through sharia-compliant financing instruments such as *mudarabah*, *murabaha*, and *ijarah* (Elasrag, 2016; Antonio, 2012; Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007). However, several studies note that integration between Islamic finance and tourism sectors remains limited in practice, particularly in developing countries. This disconnect undermines the potential of Islamic tourism as a fully integrated sharia economic ecosystem and represents a critical area for policy intervention and future research.

Economic Impact and Market Potential of Islamic Tourism

The reviewed literature consistently underscores the substantial economic potential of Islamic tourism at both global and national levels. International reports indicate that Muslim traveler expenditure has grown significantly over the past decade, driven by rising incomes, increased mobility, and demographic expansion (Mastercard & CrescentRating, 2022; UNWTO, 2019; CrescentRating, 2023). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Muslim travel spending was estimated to exceed USD 190 billion globally, with projections indicating continued growth in the post-pandemic recovery phase.

Academic studies corroborate these findings by demonstrating the positive contribution of Islamic tourism to employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development (Battour et al., 2014; Mohsin et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2020). In Muslim-majority countries, Islamic tourism is often promoted as a strategic tool to enhance tourism resilience by catering to domestic and regional markets less affected by global shocks. This strategy is particularly relevant in the context of economic recovery and sustainable development.

In Indonesia, official data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) show that tourism contributed approximately 4.1% to national GDP in 2019, with halal tourism destinations such as Lombok, Aceh, and West Sumatra demonstrating strong recovery trends in recent years (BPS, 2023). Several studies argue that Islamic tourism can further strengthen Indonesia's sharia economy by integrating tourism with halal certification systems and Islamic financial services (Jaelani, 2017; Widagdyo, 2015; Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021). However, regional disparities in infrastructure and service quality remain significant challenges that limit the sector's overall economic impact.

Governance, Regulation, and Institutional Challenges

Governance and regulatory frameworks emerge as critical determinants of Islamic tourism development. The literature reveals considerable variation in how countries regulate and institutionalize Islamic tourism, ranging from comprehensive national policies to fragmented and ad hoc initiatives (Henderson, 2016; Battour & Ismail, 2016; El-Gohary, 2016). Inconsistent halal certification standards and overlapping institutional mandates are frequently cited as barriers to effective implementation.

Several studies highlight the absence of universally accepted standards for Islamic tourism services, leading to confusion among tourists and service providers alike (Mohsin et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2020; Henderson, 2016). While some countries rely on religious authorities to oversee halal certification, others adopt market-driven approaches that prioritize flexibility and inclusivity. This divergence reflects broader debates within Islamic economics regarding standardization versus contextual adaptation.

In Indonesia, governance challenges are compounded by decentralization, which grants significant authority to local governments in tourism development. While decentralization allows for context-specific innovation, it also results in uneven policy implementation and coordination challenges (Jaelani, 2017; BPS, 2023; Widagdyo, 2015). The literature suggests that stronger coordination between central and local governments, as well as between

tourism and religious authorities, is essential to ensure policy coherence and institutional effectiveness.

Social, Cultural, and Sustainability Dimensions

Beyond its economic relevance, Islamic tourism is increasingly examined through social, cultural, and sustainability perspectives, reflecting its broader implications for community development and ethical governance. A substantial body of literature suggests that Islamic tourism plays a meaningful role in preserving cultural heritage by promoting respectful interactions between tourists and host communities. Unlike conventional mass tourism models that often prioritize commercial gains at the expense of local values, Islamic tourism emphasizes cultural sensitivity and moral responsibility. This orientation encourages tourists to engage with destinations in ways that respect local customs, religious practices, and social norms, thereby contributing to the protection of cultural identity and social cohesion (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010; Hassan & Halim, 2014; El-Gohary, 2016).

Cultural preservation is widely regarded as a distinguishing characteristic of Islamic tourism, particularly in destinations with rich religious and historical significance. By integrating local traditions into tourism offerings, Islamic tourism fosters mutual understanding between visitors and residents, reducing the risk of cultural commodification and social conflict. Scholars argue that this approach enhances the authenticity of tourism experiences while strengthening the sense of ownership among local communities (Hassan & Halim, 2014; El-Gohary, 2016). As a result, Islamic tourism is often positioned as a culturally responsible alternative to mainstream tourism, aligning economic development with the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

In addition to cultural considerations, Islamic tourism is frequently linked to broader sustainability agendas, particularly the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Several studies highlight its potential contribution to poverty reduction, social inclusion, and environmental responsibility, especially in developing countries where tourism plays a vital role in local economies (UNWTO, 2019; Rahman et al., 2020; Mohsin et al., 2016). Islamic ethical principles such as *wasatiyyah* (moderation) and *khalifah* (stewardship) emphasize balance, responsibility, and care for the environment, which resonate strongly with contemporary sustainability discourses. These principles provide a normative foundation for tourism practices that minimize environmental degradation, promote responsible resource use, and support long-term ecological balance.

Despite these normative alignments, the literature also acknowledges limitations in empirical evidence regarding the environmental performance of Islamic tourism destinations. While theoretical discussions frequently emphasize sustainability and ethical responsibility, relatively few empirical studies systematically measure environmental outcomes, such as waste management efficiency, energy consumption, or biodiversity conservation in Islamic tourism contexts (Rahman et al., 2020; Mohsin et al., 2016). This gap suggests the need for more rigorous empirical research to assess whether Islamic tourism practices effectively translate ethical ideals into measurable environmental benefits. Addressing this gap is

essential to substantiate claims that Islamic tourism offers a genuinely sustainable alternative to conventional tourism models.

Social acceptance and inclusivity represent another important dimension in the discourse on Islamic tourism. Although this form of tourism primarily targets Muslim travelers, several scholars argue that its core values such as ethical consumption, family-friendly environments, and respect for human dignity have universal appeal (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Henderson, 2016; El-Gohary, 2016). These characteristics challenge the common misconception that Islamic tourism is inherently exclusive or restrictive. Instead, Islamic tourism can be understood as an inclusive model that accommodates diverse visitor groups while maintaining ethical and cultural integrity.

The inclusive potential of Islamic tourism is particularly relevant in multicultural societies, where tourism development must balance religious values with social diversity. By emphasizing ethical standards rather than rigid religious boundaries, Islamic tourism can foster cross-cultural understanding and social harmony. This inclusivity not only enhances destination competitiveness but also strengthens the social legitimacy of Islamic tourism within global tourism markets. Consequently, scholars increasingly view Islamic tourism as a universal ethical tourism framework that transcends religious boundaries, offering valuable insights for the development of socially responsible and culturally sensitive tourism practices (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Henderson, 2016; El-Gohary, 2016).

Overall, the social, cultural, and sustainability dimensions of Islamic tourism underscore its potential to contribute to holistic development that extends beyond economic growth. By aligning tourism practices with ethical principles, cultural preservation, and sustainability goals, Islamic tourism offers a multidimensional approach to tourism development. However, realizing this potential requires stronger empirical validation, clearer operational frameworks, and more integrated policy support. Continued scholarly inquiry is therefore essential to deepen understanding of how Islamic tourism can effectively promote inclusive, culturally respectful, and environmentally sustainable development within diverse socio-economic contexts.

Research Gaps and Future Directions

The systematic review identifies several gaps in the existing literature. First, there is a lack of integrative theoretical models that explicitly link Islamic tourism to the sharia economy in a holistic manner. Most studies focus on consumer behavior or destination management without situating these findings within broader Islamic economic theory (Battour et al., 2014; Rahman et al., 2020; Mohsin et al., 2016). Second, comparative and cross-country studies remain limited, restricting the generalizability of findings.

Additionally, the literature reveals a methodological imbalance, with a predominance of quantitative survey-based studies and relatively few qualitative or conceptual analyses. This imbalance limits deeper understanding of institutional dynamics, governance processes, and ethical considerations. Future research should adopt interdisciplinary approaches that integrate Islamic economics, tourism studies, and public policy to address these complexities.

Overall, the findings underscore the need for a more coherent and theoretically grounded understanding of Islamic tourism as a strategic component of the sharia economy. By addressing conceptual ambiguities, strengthening institutional integration, and embracing sustainability principles, Islamic tourism can realize its full potential as a driver of inclusive and ethical economic development.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to systematically review and synthesize the growing body of literature on Islamic tourism and to position it conceptually within the broader framework of the sharia economy. Drawing on peer-reviewed academic studies and authoritative institutional reports, this article demonstrates that Islamic tourism has evolved from a narrowly defined religious travel concept into a multidimensional economic phenomenon. The findings confirm that Islamic tourism encompasses a wide range of tourism activities leisure, cultural, educational, and business travel conducted in accordance with Islamic ethical and legal principles. This evolution reflects broader transformations in Muslim consumption patterns and the increasing demand for value-based economic activities in a globalized context.

One of the central conclusions of this study is that Islamic tourism should be understood not merely as a niche market or branding strategy, but as an integral component of the sharia economic system. The literature consistently highlights strong conceptual alignment between Islamic tourism and the foundational principles of Islamic economics, including justice, ethical consumption, social welfare, and sustainability. Through halal-certified supply chains, sharia-compliant financial mechanisms, and community-based business models, Islamic tourism contributes to inclusive economic development and equitable value creation. However, the review also reveals that this integrative potential remains underutilized in practice due to fragmented institutional arrangements and limited cross-sectoral coordination.

From an economic perspective, the reviewed studies and official data underscore the substantial market potential of Islamic tourism at both global and national levels. The rapid growth of the Muslim travel market, supported by demographic expansion and rising disposable incomes, positions Islamic tourism as a strategic driver of economic resilience and diversification. In countries such as Indonesia, Islamic tourism has been identified as a key pillar of halal industry development and a means of strengthening regional economies. Nonetheless, the literature indicates that uneven infrastructure development, disparities in service quality, and limited human resource capacity continue to constrain the sector's overall economic impact. These findings suggest that realizing the full benefits of Islamic tourism requires targeted investment, capacity building, and long-term policy commitment.

Another important conclusion concerns governance and regulation. The systematic review reveals considerable variation in how Islamic tourism is regulated and institutionalized across different national contexts. The absence of standardized definitions and certification frameworks often leads to confusion among stakeholders and undermines consumer trust. While some degree of flexibility is necessary to accommodate cultural diversity, the literature emphasizes the need for clearer regulatory guidelines and stronger institutional coordination.

In decentralized governance systems, such as Indonesia's, this challenge is particularly pronounced, highlighting the importance of harmonizing national strategies with local implementation. Effective governance is therefore essential to ensure that Islamic tourism develops in a manner consistent with sharia economic principles while remaining competitive in the global tourism market.

Beyond economic and regulatory dimensions, this study concludes that Islamic tourism holds significant social, cultural, and sustainability potential. The ethical foundations of Islamic tourism promote cultural preservation, social inclusion, and responsible consumption, aligning closely with global sustainability agendas such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The emphasis on moderation, stewardship, and respect for local values distinguishes Islamic tourism from mass tourism models that often prioritize short-term profit over long-term sustainability. Importantly, the literature suggests that Islamic tourism is not inherently exclusive; rather, its family-friendly and ethical attributes can appeal to a broad range of tourists, including non-Muslims. This inclusivity strengthens its relevance as a universal ethical tourism model.

In terms of theoretical contribution, this study advances the literature by offering a structured synthesis that explicitly situates Islamic tourism within the sharia economy. By integrating insights from Islamic economics, tourism studies, and policy analysis, the article addresses conceptual fragmentation and provides a more holistic understanding of the sector. This contribution is particularly relevant for emerging fields where theoretical foundations are still developing. The study also highlights the need to move beyond descriptive and market-oriented analyses toward more normative and system-based perspectives that reflect the ethical objectives of Islamic economics.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. As a qualitative systematic literature review, the analysis relies exclusively on secondary sources and is constrained by the scope and quality of existing literature. The focus on English-language publications may have excluded relevant studies published in other languages, particularly in Muslim-majority countries. Additionally, while institutional reports provide valuable contextual data, they may reflect specific policy agendas that require careful interpretation. These limitations should be considered when generalizing the findings.

Future research is encouraged to address these limitations and build upon the insights generated by this review. Empirical studies examining the integration of Islamic tourism with Islamic financial institutions, halal certification bodies, and local communities would provide valuable practical insights. Comparative cross-country analyses could further illuminate how different governance models influence the success of Islamic tourism initiatives. Moreover, interdisciplinary research that incorporates environmental sustainability, digital innovation, and social entrepreneurship perspectives would enrich understanding of Islamic tourism's evolving role in the sharia economy.

In conclusion, this study affirms that Islamic tourism represents a promising and ethically grounded pathway for economic development within the sharia economy. By addressing conceptual ambiguities, strengthening institutional frameworks, and embracing sustainability

principles, Islamic tourism can move beyond symbolic implementation toward substantive economic and social impact. For policymakers, practitioners, and scholars, the findings underscore the importance of adopting a holistic and value-driven approach to Islamic tourism development, ensuring that economic growth is aligned with ethical responsibility and societal well-being.

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