

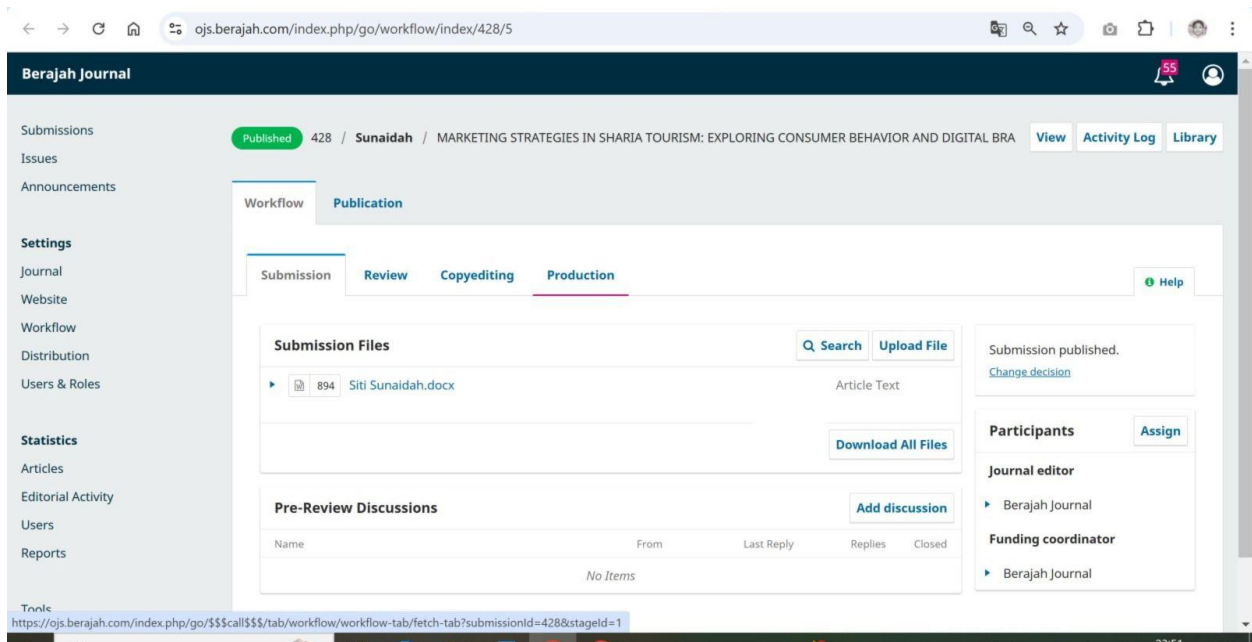
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MARKETING STRATEGIES IN SHARIA TOURISM: EXPLORING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND DIGITAL BRANDING FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

Sharia tourism, or Islamic-friendly tourism, has emerged as a growing sector in the global tourism industry, driven by the increasing demand for travel experiences that adhere to Islamic principles. As Muslim travelers seek destinations and services that align with their religious beliefs, the need for effective marketing strategies in this sector has become crucial. This paper explores key marketing strategies employed in Sharia tourism, focusing on the role of digital marketing, branding, and consumer behavior in shaping the growth of this niche market. Through case studies and analysis of successful Sharia-compliant tourism destinations, the research highlights how destinations are leveraging social media, influencer marketing, and content-driven campaigns to attract Muslim travelers. Moreover, this paper discusses the unique challenges faced by marketers in positioning Sharia tourism products while maintaining cultural sensitivity and religious compliance. The research also examines consumer preferences, exploring how elements such as halal food, gender-segregated facilities, and religious accommodations influence the decision-making process of Muslim tourists. The findings suggest that with proper marketing, Sharia tourism can significantly contribute to the growth of the global tourism sector, offering both economic benefits and opportunities for cultural exchange. Lastly, recommendations are provided for tourism

marketers to enhance their branding efforts and ensure that their messaging aligns with the values and needs of Muslim travelers.

Keywords: *Sharia Tourism, Marketing Strategies, Digital Branding, Muslim Traveler Behavior, Halal Tourism*

INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry has seen rapid growth over the past few decades, contributing significantly to the economies of many countries. Among the various segments of the tourism sector, Sharia tourism, also known as halal tourism or Islamic-friendly tourism, has emerged as a niche market catering to Muslim travelers seeking destinations and services that align with their religious values and cultural expectations. Sharia tourism adheres to Islamic principles, offering experiences that cater to the specific needs of Muslim tourists, such as halal food, gender-segregated facilities, and spaces for prayer.

The rise of Sharia tourism is largely driven by the growth of the Muslim middle

class, increased disposable income, and the desire for travel experiences that do not compromise religious observance. According to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), the global Muslim travel market is expected to reach a value of \$300 billion by 2026. This presents a significant opportunity for tourism destinations and businesses to tap into a growing and lucrative market segment by developing and marketing services that cater specifically to Muslim travelers.

Marketing in the Sharia tourism sector, however, requires a unique approach. Traditional tourism marketing strategies may not resonate with Muslim travelers, who prioritize religious compliance and cultural sensitivity when making travel decisions. As a result, the success of Sharia tourism largely

depends on how well destinations and service providers understand the preferences and behaviors of Muslim tourists and how effectively they communicate their offerings through targeted marketing strategies.

In the digital age, digital marketing Place and social media have become essential tools for promoting Sharia-compliant destinations and services. With the widespread use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Facebook ads and YouTube, Muslim travelers are increasingly turning to online sources for inspiration, information, and recommendations. This shift has prompted tourism marketers to invest in digital branding, influencer marketing, and content-driven campaigns that showcase their destinations as Islamic-friendly. Additionally, the use of online travel agencies (OTAs) and mobile applications has made it easier for Muslim travelers to find, book, and review Sharia-compliant services.

Despite the growth of Sharia tourism, many destinations and service providers face challenges in effectively positioning their products to attract Muslim travelers. These challenges stem from several factors:

1. How can marketers create authentic branding that appeals to the Muslim travel market while maintaining cultural and religious compliance?
2. What role does digital marketing play in shaping the decision-making process of Muslim travelers, and how can destinations leverage digital platforms to promote Sharia tourism?
3. How do consumer preferences in Sharia tourism differ from traditional tourism, and how should marketers tailor their strategies to accommodate these differences?

This paper seeks to address these questions by exploring the marketing

strategies used in the Sharia tourism sector and examining how digital platforms, branding, and consumer behavior influence the growth of this market.

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the key marketing strategies used by destinations and service providers to attract Muslim travelers in the Sharia tourism sector.
2. To analyze the role of digital marketing and branding in promoting Sharia-compliant tourism services and destinations.
3. To explore the consumer behavior of Muslim travelers, focusing on their preferences, needs, and decision-making processes when choosing travel destinations.
4. To provide recommendations for tourism marketers on how to effectively position their products in the Sharia tourism market.

These objectives aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how marketing can be optimized to attract Muslim travelers and foster sustainable growth in the Sharia tourism sector.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the growing body of literature on Islamic marketing, particularly in the tourism sector, where Sharia compliance is becoming an increasingly important factor. While research on Islamic finance and halal food has gained substantial attention, there is still a gap in understanding how Islamic principles influence consumer behavior in tourism. By exploring the marketing strategies used in Sharia tourism, this study provides insights that can help marketers develop more effective campaigns targeting Muslim travelers.

Second, the study highlights the role of digital platforms in shaping consumer behavior and influencing travel decisions. In today's digital age, the way tourists discover, plan, and book their travel experiences is heavily influenced by online content, social media, and reviews. Understanding how Muslim travelers interact with these platforms can help marketers tailor their digital strategies to better engage their target audience.

Finally, the study offers practical recommendations for tourism marketers looking to enter or expand their presence in the Sharia tourism market. With the increasing demand for Islamic-friendly travel experiences, marketers need to be aware of the cultural and religious sensitivities that shape Muslim travelers' decisions. This study provides actionable insights on how to create marketing campaigns that are both culturally sensitive and commercially successful.

This paper is organized into six sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 provides a comprehensive review of the relevant literature on Sharia tourism, Islamic marketing, and consumer behavior in tourism. Section 3 outlines the research methodology used in the study, including data collection methods and analysis techniques. Section 4 presents the results of the study, focusing on the key marketing strategies used by destinations and service providers in Sharia tourism. Section 5 discusses the implications of these findings for tourism marketers and provides recommendations for improving marketing efforts in the sector. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper by summarizing the key insights and suggesting areas for future research.

The scope of this study is limited to Sharia-compliant tourism services and

destinations, with a focus on marketing strategies used to attract Muslim travelers. The research primarily examines destinations in Muslim-majority countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey, as well as emerging markets for Sharia tourism in non-Muslim-majority countries. The study analyzes marketing strategies across digital and traditional platforms, with particular emphasis on the role of social media and content marketing.

However, there are several limitations to this study. First, the research is focused on a specific segment of the tourism market, and the findings may not be directly applicable to other sectors of the tourism industry. Second, the study relies on qualitative data collected through interviews and case studies, which may not fully capture the diversity of consumer preferences in the global Muslim travel market. Finally, the study does not address broader economic or geopolitical factors that may influence the growth of Sharia tourism in certain regions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sharia Tourism: Concepts and Growth

Sharia tourism, also known as halal tourism or Islamic-friendly tourism, refers to travel services and experiences that are aligned with Islamic principles. This concept has gained traction as the global Muslim population grows, and Muslim travelers seek destinations that cater to their religious beliefs and values. Sharia-compliant tourism services typically include halal-certified food, accommodations with gender-segregated facilities, access to prayer spaces, and the prohibition of alcohol and gambling on site.

According to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), the Muslim travel market was worth \$177 billion in 2019, and

this figure is expected to continue growing, potentially reaching \$300 billion by 2026. The GMTI also reports that Muslim travelers are particularly interested in destinations that respect Islamic traditions while offering modern and culturally enriching experiences. Popular Sharia-compliant destinations include Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey, which have made significant efforts to position themselves as leaders in the Sharia tourism market. Non-Muslim-majority countries, such as Japan and South Korea, are also investing in halal tourism infrastructure to attract Muslim travelers.

While Sharia tourism presents significant opportunities for economic growth, the sector also faces unique challenges, particularly in terms of marketing. Destinations and service providers must strike a balance between appealing to Muslim travelers and maintaining inclusivity for non-Muslim tourists. This has led to the development of specialized marketing strategies that emphasize cultural sensitivity, religious compliance, and the promotion of Sharia-compliant services.

Consumer Behavior in Sharia Tourism

Understanding the consumer behavior of Muslim travelers is essential for developing effective marketing strategies in Sharia tourism. Muslim tourists, like other consumers, prioritize comfort, convenience, and leisure when choosing travel destinations. However, their decision-making process is also influenced by religious considerations, such as the availability of halal food, modest accommodations, and opportunities for religious observance.

A study by Eid and El-Gohary (2015) on Muslim traveler behavior identified five key factors that influence their travel decisions:

1. **Religious compliance:** Muslim travelers are highly sensitive to whether a destination or service complies with Islamic teachings, particularly regarding halal food, alcohol prohibition, and privacy in accommodations.
2. **Safety and security:** Like any other traveler, Muslim tourists prioritize safety when choosing a destination. This includes political stability, personal security, and health safety.
3. **Cultural and religious sensitivity:** Muslim travelers seek destinations that respect their religious practices, such as providing prayer rooms and ensuring modesty in public spaces.
4. **Affordability:** Cost remains a major factor for all tourists, including Muslim travelers, who are often budget-conscious but willing to pay more for services that align with their values.
5. **Destination appeal:** Beyond religious compliance, Muslim travelers are drawn to destinations that offer rich cultural experiences, historical significance, and natural beauty.

Moreover, the role of family is particularly important in Sharia tourism, as many Muslim travelers prefer family-oriented vacation experiences. Destinations that offer family-friendly facilities and services, such as theme parks, water parks, and educational tours, are more likely to attract Muslim tourists. This consumer preference presents an opportunity for tourism marketers to design campaigns that emphasize family values, cultural exploration, and religious harmony.

Digital Marketing in Sharia Tourism

With the increasing use of digital platforms, tourism marketing has shifted from traditional methods to more dynamic and interactive approaches. For Sharia tourism,

digital marketing plays a crucial role in reaching Muslim travelers, particularly younger generations who rely on social media for travel inspiration and recommendations. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have become key tools for promoting Sharia-compliant destinations and services, enabling tourism marketers to connect directly with their target audience through visually engaging content.

Research shows that social media influencers have a significant impact on Muslim consumer behavior. Influencers who share their travel experiences in a Sharia-compliant manner—showcasing halal food, modest accommodations, and Islamic-friendly activities—resonate strongly with Muslim audiences. For instance, in Malaysia and Indonesia, popular Muslim travel influencers collaborate with tourism boards and hotel chains to promote Islamic-friendly destinations. These influencers act as trusted sources of information for Muslim travelers, who value authenticity and cultural alignment in their travel choices.

Moreover, content-driven campaigns have proven effective in engaging Muslim travelers through storytelling. Digital content that highlights the cultural, religious, and historical significance of a destination, combined with practical information about Sharia-compliant services, helps build emotional connections with potential tourists. This approach not only promotes Sharia tourism but also fosters brand loyalty by creating meaningful travel experiences.

In addition to social media, online travel agencies (OTAs) and mobile applications have become critical platforms for promoting Sharia-compliant services. OTAs such as HalalBooking and CrescentRating specialize in offering halal-

certified accommodations, while mobile apps provide Muslim travelers with tools to find halal restaurants, prayer times, and nearby mosques. By integrating digital tools into their marketing strategies, destinations and service providers can reach a global Muslim audience more effectively, while also providing personalized travel solutions that cater to individual needs.

Branding Strategies in Sharia Tourism

Branding plays a vital role in positioning Sharia-compliant tourism services in a competitive global market. For destinations and businesses operating in the Sharia tourism sector, building a brand that resonates with Muslim travelers requires a focus on authenticity, trust, and religious compliance. A strong Sharia-compliant brand not only emphasizes halal services but also fosters an inclusive and culturally sensitive atmosphere that appeals to both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists.

One of the most successful branding strategies in Sharia tourism is the use of certification. Halal certification for food, accommodations, and tourism services provides Muslim travelers with the assurance that their religious needs will be met during their stay. Many countries, including Malaysia and Indonesia, have established national halal certification bodies to ensure that tourism businesses comply with Islamic standards. For marketers, leveraging these certifications in branding efforts can build consumer trust and differentiate Sharia-compliant services from mainstream tourism offerings.

Another key aspect of branding in Sharia tourism is the creation of experience-based campaigns. Destinations that offer unique Islamic-friendly experiences, such as

cultural tours, religious pilgrimages, or historical site visits, are able to build strong emotional connections with Muslim tourists. These experiences become part of the brand identity, allowing destinations to position themselves as culturally enriching and spiritually fulfilling travel choices.

Challenges in Sharia Tourism Marketing

While the potential for growth in Sharia tourism is vast, the sector faces several challenges in terms of marketing. First, there is the issue of cultural diversity within the Muslim world. Muslim travelers from different regions—such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Europe—have varying expectations and preferences when it comes to Sharia-compliant services. This diversity makes it difficult for marketers to create a one-size-fits-all approach to branding and promotion.

Second, there is the challenge of maintaining inclusivity while promoting Sharia-compliant services. As destinations cater to both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists, marketers must ensure that their messaging is respectful of Islamic values without alienating non-Muslim travelers. Striking this balance requires careful consideration of cultural and religious sensitivities.

Finally, the lack of standardized halal certifications across countries can create confusion for travelers. While many Muslim-majority countries have established halal certification systems, non-Muslim-majority countries often lack clear guidelines on what constitutes a Sharia-compliant service. This inconsistency can erode consumer trust and limit the growth of Sharia tourism in emerging markets.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the marketing strategies used in promoting Sharia tourism, with a particular focus on digital marketing, branding, and consumer behavior. The qualitative approach is appropriate for this research as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the marketing dynamics in Sharia tourism and how they influence Muslim traveler preferences. The study utilizes a combination of case study analysis and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the tourism industry, such as marketers, tourism operators, and Muslim travelers.

Data Collection Methods

The data for this research were collected through two primary sources: case studies of Sharia-compliant tourism destinations and semi-structured interviews with tourism marketing professionals and travelers.

1. Case Study Analysis:

- a. Case studies from destinations that have successfully implemented Sharia tourism strategies, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey, were analyzed. These case studies focused on the marketing efforts used by these countries to attract Muslim travelers, including the use of social media campaigns, influencer marketing, and halal certification branding. The case studies were selected based on the destinations' recognition as leading Sharia-compliant tourism hubs in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI).
- b. The analysis also examined how these destinations managed to balance inclusivity for non-Muslim tourists

while maintaining their Sharia-compliant services, offering insights into how marketing strategies can be crafted to cater to diverse audiences.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews:

- a. Interviews were conducted with 15 marketing professionals working in the tourism industry in both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries. The professionals included digital marketers, branding consultants, and tourism board representatives. The interviews explored how these professionals perceive the role of digital platforms, branding, and consumer preferences in promoting Sharia tourism.
- b. In addition, 10 interviews were conducted with Muslim travelers to understand their travel preferences, perceptions of Sharia-compliant services, and how digital marketing influences their destination choices. These interviews provided first-hand insights into consumer behavior, particularly how religious and cultural considerations affect decision-making.

Data Analysis

The data from the case studies and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting recurring themes within the data. The following steps were taken to ensure a rigorous analysis:

1. Familiarization with Data: The interview transcripts and case study documents were reviewed multiple times to gain a deep understanding of the marketing strategies and consumer preferences highlighted in the data.

2. Coding: The data were systematically coded to identify patterns and key themes related to marketing strategies, digital branding, and consumer behavior. Codes included themes such as "religious compliance," "digital engagement," "social media influence," and "branding challenges."
3. Theme Development: After coding, the data were grouped into broader themes that represented the central findings of the research. For example, the theme of "influencer marketing" emerged as a significant strategy in digital branding for Sharia tourism, while "cultural sensitivity" was a key factor influencing the success of branding campaigns.
4. Interpretation: The themes were then interpreted in light of existing literature on Sharia tourism and marketing, allowing for a comparison of the research findings with established theories and concepts in the field. The interpretation also provided insights into how marketing strategies can be optimized to better serve Muslim travelers while maintaining inclusivity.

Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to Sharia-compliant tourism destinations and marketing strategies, with a focus on digital marketing and branding. The research does not cover the broader economic or political factors that may influence the growth of Sharia tourism in certain regions. Additionally, the sample size of interviews is relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. However, the in-depth nature of the interviews provides valuable qualitative insights into the marketing strategies and consumer behavior in Sharia tourism.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Marketing Strategies in Sharia Tourism

The findings from the case studies and interviews provide a comprehensive overview of the marketing strategies employed in Sharia tourism. Destinations such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey have positioned themselves as key players in the global Sharia tourism market by implementing targeted marketing campaigns that resonate with Muslim travelers. Several key strategies emerged as critical for the success of these destinations in promoting Sharia-compliant services:

1. **Digital Engagement and Social Media:** Digital platforms have become an essential tool in reaching Muslim travelers, particularly younger generations. The case study of Malaysia revealed that tourism boards and businesses heavily rely on social media platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube, to showcase the Sharia-compliant nature of their services. Content-driven campaigns that highlight the availability of halal food, prayer facilities, and Islamic-friendly activities are effective in attracting Muslim tourists who value these features in their travel experiences.

One significant finding from the interviews with marketing professionals was the use of influencer marketing as a primary strategy. Influencers who promote Islamic-friendly travel experiences, including halal-certified hotels and cultural activities, have been instrumental in building trust among Muslim travelers. In particular, micro-influencers—those with smaller but highly engaged audiences—are seen as more authentic and relatable, making their recommendations highly influential in the

decision-making process of Muslim tourists.

2. **Cultural Sensitivity in Branding:** Successful Sharia tourism marketing campaigns consistently emphasize cultural and religious sensitivity. The interviews highlighted that branding efforts that respect Islamic values, while maintaining a welcoming atmosphere for non-Muslim tourists, are seen as key to positioning destinations favorably in the market. For example, Indonesia's tourism board has adopted a multicultural branding approach that promotes its rich cultural heritage while assuring Muslim travelers that their religious needs will be accommodated.

The analysis of Turkish tourism campaigns revealed that authenticity is critical in building strong brands in the Sharia tourism sector. Branding efforts that incorporate Islamic history, architecture, and cultural experiences create a deeper connection with Muslim tourists. However, balancing this authenticity with broader tourism appeal remains a challenge, as brands must ensure inclusivity without alienating non-Muslim visitors.

3. **Experience-Based Marketing:** Another key strategy identified through case study analysis is experience-based marketing. Destinations that focus on offering unique Islamic-friendly experiences, such as religious tours, cultural festivals, or educational visits to historical Islamic sites, are more likely to attract Muslim travelers seeking meaningful, spiritually fulfilling travel experiences. Turkey's promotion of its Islamic heritage tours, which include visits to Ottoman mosques and museums, has been highly successful in drawing religiously motivated tourists.

Role of Digital Marketing in Consumer Behavior

The interviews with Muslim travelers provided insights into how digital marketing influences their decision-making process. The majority of respondents indicated that they rely heavily on social media and online reviews when choosing a destination. Platforms such as TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, and specialized websites like HalalBooking were frequently cited as sources for finding Sharia-compliant hotels and restaurants.

1. **Influencer Impact:** The impact of influencers was particularly pronounced among younger Muslim travelers. Travelers noted that they often trust Muslim influencers who document their Sharia-compliant travel experiences and recommend halal-certified services. This word-of-mouth marketing through digital channels creates a sense of trust, especially in regions where travelers may be unsure about the availability of Sharia-compliant services.
2. **Content Personalization:** Another finding was the importance of personalized content. Muslim travelers appreciate when digital marketing campaigns provide tailored information that aligns with their specific religious needs. For example, ads or social media posts that highlight halal dining options, gender-segregated swimming pools, or prayer facilities directly address the concerns of Muslim tourists. Personalization helps brands build stronger connections with their target audience and enhances customer loyalty.
3. **User-Generated Content:** Muslim travelers are also influenced by user-

generated content, including travel blogs, reviews, and social media posts shared by fellow travelers. Authentic photos and reviews provide social proof, reassuring potential tourists that a destination is truly Sharia-compliant. The interviews revealed that visual content, such as pictures of prayer rooms or halal-certified restaurants, plays a critical role in shaping perceptions and building trust.

Consumer Preferences in Sharia Tourism

The interviews with Muslim travelers revealed several key preferences that influence their choice of destination. These preferences highlight the unique demands of the Muslim travel market:

1. **Halal Food and Beverages:** Access to halal food was consistently ranked as the top priority for Muslim travelers. Many respondents indicated that they would avoid destinations that do not clearly advertise the availability of halal dining options. In response to this demand, several destinations have developed halal-certified food guides and mobile apps that help travelers locate halal restaurants. This aligns with the findings from the case studies, where halal food services were central to the branding of Sharia-compliant destinations.
2. **Privacy and Gender-Segregated Facilities:** Muslim travelers also expressed a preference for privacy, particularly in accommodations that provide gender-segregated facilities. Female travelers, in particular, highlighted the importance of gender-segregated swimming pools, spas, and fitness centers. Destinations that offer these amenities are seen as more attractive, as they align with Islamic teachings regarding modesty and privacy.

3. **Religious Amenities:** Another critical factor influencing destination choice is the availability of religious amenities, such as prayer rooms and mosques. Many respondents emphasized that having convenient access to prayer facilities enhances their travel experience, allowing them to adhere to their religious obligations while on vacation. Destinations that incorporate these amenities into their tourism infrastructure are perceived as more welcoming and respectful of Muslim travelers' needs.

Challenges in Marketing Sharia Tourism

Despite the growing potential of Sharia tourism, several challenges were identified by both marketing professionals and travelers. These challenges must be addressed to fully tap into the Muslim travel market:

1. **Standardization of Halal Certification:** One of the key challenges highlighted in the interviews is the lack of standardized halal certification across countries. While countries like Malaysia and Indonesia have established robust halal certification systems, other regions lack clear guidelines, leading to confusion among Muslim travelers about the authenticity of halal services. This inconsistency undermines consumer trust and makes it difficult for marketers to promote destinations as truly Sharia-compliant.
2. **Balancing Inclusivity:** Marketing professionals also expressed concerns about balancing inclusivity. Destinations that cater to both Muslim and non-Muslim travelers must carefully craft their messaging to avoid alienating either group. For instance, while promoting Sharia-compliant services, destinations must ensure that non-Muslim tourists still

feel welcome and included. Striking this balance requires nuanced messaging that emphasizes cultural diversity and tolerance.

3. **Cultural Diversity within the Muslim World:** Another challenge is the cultural diversity among Muslim travelers. Muslim tourists from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Europe have different cultural expectations and religious practices. This diversity makes it difficult for marketers to develop a one-size-fits-all approach to Sharia tourism. Tailoring marketing strategies to the specific needs of different segments within the Muslim market is essential for success.

Recommendations for Enhancing Marketing in Sharia Tourism

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for enhancing marketing efforts in the Sharia tourism sector:

1. **Leverage Influencer Marketing:** Tourism boards and businesses should continue to collaborate with Muslim influencers who resonate with their target audience. Influencers provide an authentic voice that can build trust and credibility for Sharia-compliant services.
2. **Standardize Halal Certification:** Governments and tourism authorities should work towards establishing standardized halal certification systems that provide clear guidelines for halal services. This will help build consumer confidence and ensure consistency across different regions.
3. **Develop Culturally Inclusive Campaigns:** Marketing campaigns should be culturally sensitive and inclusive, appealing to both Muslim and non-Muslim travelers. Highlighting the destination's cultural

diversity and religious tolerance can create a welcoming environment for all tourists.

4. **Enhance Digital Content Personalization:** Digital marketing efforts should focus on personalizing content to address the specific needs of Muslim travelers. Tailored ads and social media content that emphasize religious amenities, halal food, and privacy features can strengthen the connection with Muslim tourists.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Sharia tourism is a rapidly growing market, driven by the increasing demand for Islamic-compliant services and experiences among Muslim travelers. The research has shown that destinations such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey have successfully positioned themselves as leaders in this sector through the implementation of targeted marketing strategies that align with the values and preferences of Muslim tourists. Digital marketing, particularly through social media platforms and influencer marketing, has emerged as a crucial tool for engaging Muslim travelers, especially the younger generation.

The findings indicate that consumer preferences in Sharia tourism are distinct, with Muslim travelers placing high importance on factors such as halal food, privacy, and religious amenities. The availability of gender-segregated facilities, prayer spaces, and halal-certified services significantly influences their destination choices. Destinations that cater to these specific needs are more likely to attract loyal Muslim tourists who value religious compliance and cultural sensitivity.

Despite the potential of Shariatourism, several challenges remain. The lack

of standardized halal certification across different countries creates confusion and erodes trust among Muslim travelers. Additionally, the challenge of balancing inclusivity—ensuring that both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists feel welcome—requires careful marketing strategies that emphasize cultural diversity and tolerance. Furthermore, the cultural diversity within the Muslim market itself complicates the development of a unified approach to Sharia tourism marketing, as travelers from different regions have varied expectations and preferences.

To address these challenges, the study offers several recommendations. First, standardizing halal certification across regions is essential to building consumer confidence and ensuring that Sharia-compliant services are consistently provided. This will help destinations establish themselves as reliable hubs for Muslim travelers. Second, marketers should continue to leverage influencer marketing as a powerful tool for building trust and promoting Sharia-compliant services. Influencers, particularly micro-influencers, can provide authentic, relatable recommendations that resonate with Muslim audiences. Third, destinations should aim to develop culturally inclusive marketing campaigns that highlight both their commitment to Islamic principles and their welcoming atmosphere for non-Muslim tourists. Lastly, personalizing digital content that addresses the specific needs and concerns of Muslim travelers—such as promoting halal food options and privacy features—will enhance the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts.

In conclusion, the potential for Sharia tourism to grow and contribute to the global tourism industry is substantial. With appropriate marketing strategies, destinations

can tap into the lucrative Muslim travel market while promoting religious and cultural diversity. By addressing the unique preferences of Muslim travelers and overcoming the challenges of certification and inclusivity, Sharia tourism can serve as a bridge between cultures, fostering mutual understanding and respect through travel experiences.

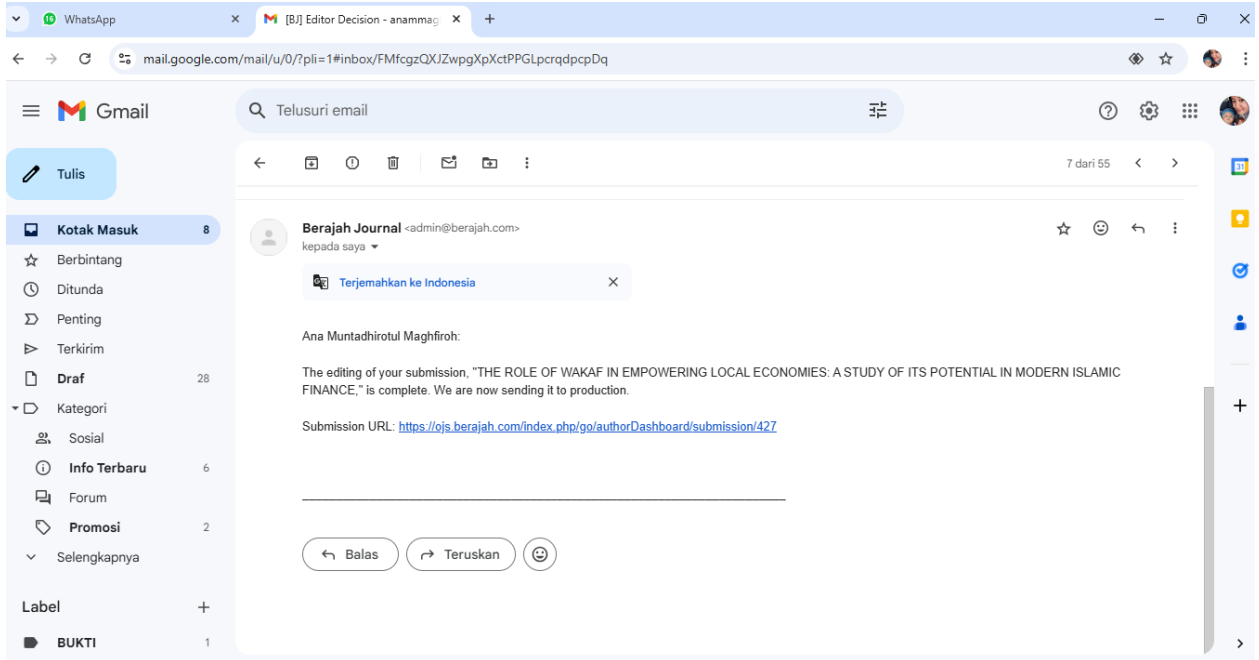
Future research should explore the long-term sustainability of Sharia tourism, particularly in non-Muslim-majority countries that are seeking to attract Muslim travelers. Additionally, studies could examine how advancements in technology, such as AI-driven marketing and augmented reality, could further enhance the personalization and promotion of Sharia-compliant services.

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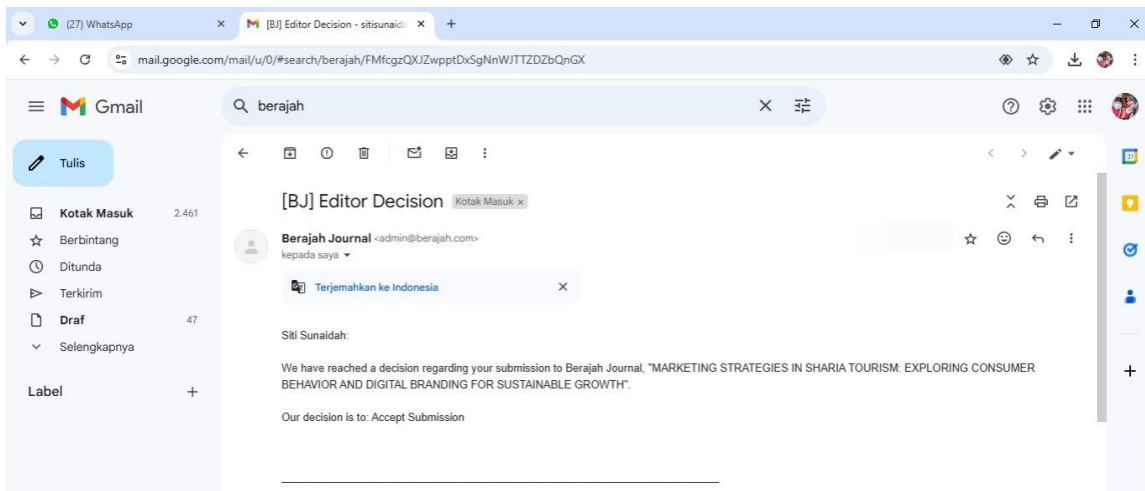
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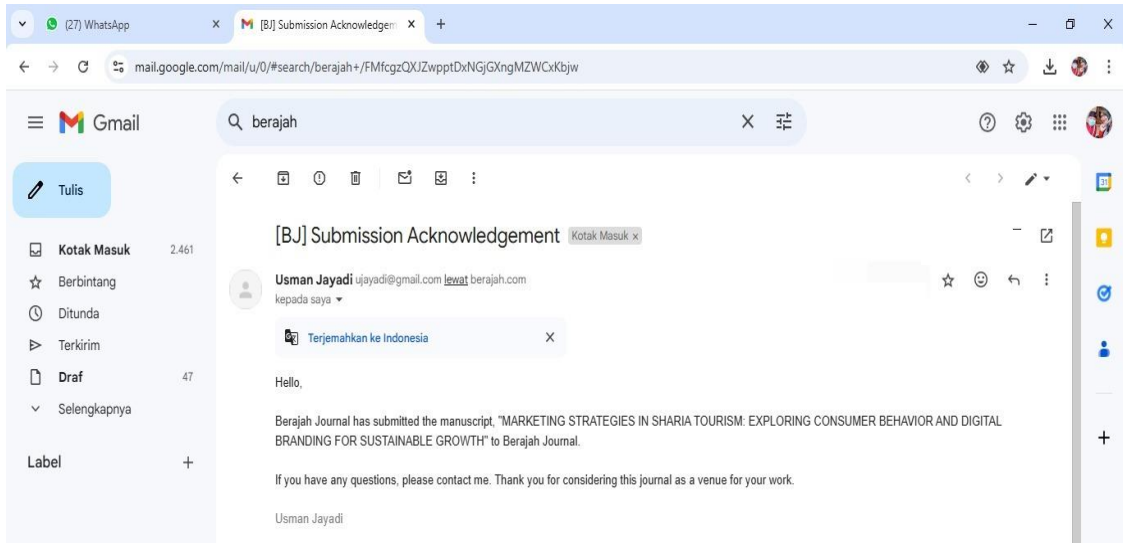
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ABSTRACT

Sharia tourism, or Islamic-friendly tourism, has emerged as a growing sector in the global tourism industry, driven by the increasing demand for travel experiences that adhere to Islamic principles. As Muslim travelers seek destinations and services that align with their religious beliefs, the need for effective marketing strategies in this sector has become crucial. This paper explores key marketing strategies employed in Sharia tourism, focusing on the role of digital marketing, branding, and consumer behavior in shaping the growth of this niche market. Through case studies and analysis of successful Sharia-compliant tourism destinations, the research highlights how destinations are leveraging social media, influencer marketing, and content-driven campaigns to attract Muslim travelers. Moreover, this paper discusses the unique challenges faced by marketers in positioning Sharia tourism products while maintaining cultural sensitivity and religious compliance. The research also examines consumer preferences, exploring how elements such as halal food, gender-segregated facilities, and religious accommodations influence the decision-making process of Muslim tourists. The findings suggest that with proper marketing, Sharia tourism can significantly contribute to the growth of the global tourism sector, offering both economic benefits and opportunities for cultural exchange. Lastly, recommendations are provided for tourism marketers to enhance their branding efforts and ensure that their messaging aligns with the values and needs of Muslim travelers.

Keywords: *Sharia Tourism, Marketing Strategies, Digital Branding, Muslim Traveler Behavior, Halal Tourism*

INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry has seen rapid growth over the past few decades, contributing significantly to the economies of many countries. Among the various segments of the tourism sector, Sharia tourism, also known as halal tourism or Islamic-friendly tourism, has emerged as a niche market catering to Muslim travelers seeking destinations and services that align with their religious values and cultural expectations. Sharia tourism adheres to Islamic principles, offering experiences that cater to the specific needs of Muslim tourists, such as halal food, gender-segregated facilities, and spaces for prayer.

The rise of Sharia tourism is largely driven by the growth of the Muslim middle

class, increased disposable income, and the desire for travel experiences that do not compromise religious observance. According to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), the global Muslim travel market is expected to reach a value of \$300 billion by 2026. This presents a significant opportunity for tourism destinations and businesses to tap into a growing and lucrative market segment by developing and marketing services that cater specifically to Muslim travelers.

Marketing in the Sharia tourism sector, however, requires a unique approach. Traditional tourism marketing strategies may not resonate with Muslim travelers, who prioritize religious compliance and cultural sensitivity when making travel decisions. As a result, the success of Sharia tourism largely

depends on how well destinations and service providers understand the preferences and behaviors of Muslim tourists and how effectively they communicate their offerings through targeted marketing strategies.

In the digital age, digital marketing and social media have become essential tools for promoting Sharia-compliant destinations and services. With the widespread use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, Muslim travelers are increasingly turning to online sources for inspiration, information, and recommendations. This shift has prompted tourism marketers to invest in digital branding, influencer marketing, and content-driven campaigns that showcase their destinations as Islamic-friendly. Additionally, the use of online travel agencies (OTAs) and mobile applications has made it easier for Muslim travelers to find, book, and review Sharia-compliant services.

Despite the growth of Sharia tourism, many destinations and service providers face challenges in effectively positioning their products to attract Muslim travelers. These challenges stem from several factors:

4. How can marketers create authentic branding that appeals to the Muslim travel market while maintaining cultural and religious compliance?
5. What role does digital marketing play in shaping the decision-making process of Muslim travelers, and how can destinations leverage digital platforms to promote Sharia tourism?
6. How do consumer preferences in Sharia tourism differ from traditional tourism, and how should marketers tailor their strategies to accommodate these differences?

This paper seeks to address these questions by exploring the marketing

strategies used in the Sharia tourism sector and examining how digital platforms, branding, and consumer behavior influence the growth of this market.

The primary objectives of this study are:

5. To identify the key marketing strategies used by destinations and service providers to attract Muslim travelers in the Sharia tourism sector.
6. To analyze the role of digital marketing and branding in promoting Sharia-compliant tourism services and destinations.
7. To explore the consumer behavior of Muslim travelers, focusing on their preferences, needs, and decision-making processes when choosing travel destinations.
8. To provide recommendations for tourism marketers on how to effectively position their products in the Sharia tourism market.

These objectives aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how marketing can be optimized to attract Muslim travelers and foster sustainable growth in the Sharia tourism sector.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the growing body of literature on Islamic marketing, particularly in the tourism sector, where Sharia compliance is becoming an increasingly important factor. While research on Islamic finance and halal food has gained substantial attention, there is still a gap in understanding how Islamic principles influence consumer behavior in tourism. By exploring the marketing strategies used in Sharia tourism, this study provides insights that can help marketers develop more effective campaigns targeting Muslim travelers.

Second, the study highlights the role of digital platforms in shaping consumer behavior and influencing travel decisions. In today's digital age, the way tourists discover, plan, and book their travel experiences is heavily influenced by online content, social media, and reviews. Understanding how Muslim travelers interact with these platforms can help marketers tailor their digital strategies to better engage their target audience.

Finally, the study offers practical recommendations for tourism marketers looking to enter or expand their presence in the Sharia tourism market. With the increasing demand for Islamic-friendly travel experiences, marketers need to be aware of the cultural and religious sensitivities that shape Muslim travelers' decisions. This study provides actionable insights on how to create marketing campaigns that are both culturally sensitive and commercially successful.

This paper is organized into six sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 provides a comprehensive review of the relevant literature on Sharia tourism, Islamic marketing, and consumer behavior in tourism. Section 3 outlines the research methodology used in the study, including data collection methods and analysis techniques. Section 4 presents the results of the study, focusing on the key marketing strategies used by destinations and service providers in Sharia tourism. Section 5 discusses the implications of these findings for tourism marketers and provides recommendations for improving marketing efforts in the sector. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper by summarizing the key insights and suggesting areas for future research.

The scope of this study is limited to Sharia-compliant tourism services and

destinations, with a focus on marketing strategies used to attract Muslim travelers. The research primarily examines destinations in Muslim-majority countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey, as well as emerging markets for Sharia tourism in non-Muslim-majority countries. The study analyzes marketing strategies across digital and traditional platforms, with particular emphasis on the role of social media and content marketing.

However, there are several limitations to this study. First, the research is focused on a specific segment of the tourism market, and the findings may not be directly applicable to other sectors of the tourism industry. Second, the study relies on qualitative data collected through interviews and case studies, which may not fully capture the diversity of consumer preferences in the global Muslim travel market. Finally, the study does not address broader economic or geopolitical factors that may influence the growth of Sharia tourism in certain regions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sharia Tourism: Concepts and Growth

Sharia tourism, also known as halal tourism or Islamic-friendly tourism, refers to travel services and experiences that are aligned with Islamic principles. This concept has gained traction as the global Muslim population grows, and Muslim travelers seek destinations that cater to their religious beliefs and values. Sharia-compliant tourism services typically include halal-certified food, accommodations with gender-segregated facilities, access to prayer spaces, and the prohibition of alcohol and gambling on site.

According to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), the Muslim travel market was worth \$177 billion in 2019, and

this figure is expected to continue growing, potentially reaching \$300 billion by 2026. The GMTI also reports that Muslim travelers are particularly interested in destinations that respect Islamic traditions while offering modern and culturally enriching experiences. Popular Sharia-compliant destinations include Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey, which have made significant efforts to position themselves as leaders in the Sharia tourism market. Non-Muslim-majority countries, such as Japan and South Korea, are also investing in halal tourism infrastructure to attract Muslim travelers.

While Sharia tourism presents significant opportunities for economic growth, the sector also faces unique challenges, particularly in terms of marketing. Destinations and service providers must strike a balance between appealing to Muslim travelers and maintaining inclusivity for non-Muslim tourists. This has led to the development of specialized marketing strategies that emphasize cultural sensitivity, religious compliance, and the promotion of Sharia-compliant services.

Consumer Behavior in Sharia Tourism

Understanding the consumer behavior of Muslim travelers is essential for developing effective marketing strategies in Sharia tourism. Muslim tourists, like other consumers, prioritize comfort, convenience, and leisure when choosing travel destinations. However, their decision-making process is also influenced by religious considerations, such as the availability of halal food, modest accommodations, and opportunities for religious observance.

A study by Eid and El-Gohary (2015) on Muslim traveler behavior identified five key factors that influence their travel decisions:

6. Religious compliance: Muslim travelers are highly sensitive to whether a destination or service complies with Islamic teachings, particularly regarding halal food, alcohol prohibition, and privacy in accommodations.
7. Safety and security: Like any other traveler, Muslim tourists prioritize safety when choosing a destination. This includes political stability, personal security, and health safety.
8. Cultural and religious sensitivity: Muslim travelers seek destinations that respect their religious practices, such as providing prayer rooms and ensuring modesty in public spaces.
9. Affordability: Cost remains a major factor for all tourists, including Muslim travelers, who are often budget-conscious but willing to pay more for services that align with their values.
10. Destination appeal: Beyond religious compliance, Muslim travelers are drawn to destinations that offer rich cultural experiences, historical significance, and natural beauty.

Moreover, the role of family is particularly important in Sharia tourism, as many Muslim travelers prefer family-oriented vacation experiences. Destinations that offer family-friendly facilities and services, such as theme parks, water parks, and educational tours, are more likely to attract Muslim tourists. This consumer preference presents an opportunity for tourism marketers to design campaigns that emphasize family values, cultural exploration, and religious harmony.

Digital Marketing in Sharia Tourism

With the increasing use of digital platforms, tourism marketing has shifted from traditional methods to more dynamic and interactive approaches. For Sharia tourism,

digital marketing plays a crucial role in reaching Muslim travelers, particularly younger generations who rely on social media for travel inspiration and recommendations. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have become key tools for promoting Sharia-compliant destinations and services, enabling tourism marketers to connect directly with their target audience through visually engaging content.

Research shows that social media influencers have a significant impact on Muslim consumer behavior. Influencers who share their travel experiences in a Sharia-compliant manner—showcasing halal food, modest accommodations, and Islamic-friendly activities—resonate strongly with Muslim audiences. For instance, in Malaysia and Indonesia, popular Muslim travel influencers collaborate with tourism boards and hotel chains to promote Islamic-friendly destinations. These influencers act as trusted sources of information for Muslim travelers, who value authenticity and cultural alignment in their travel choices.

Moreover, content-driven campaigns have proven effective in engaging Muslim travelers through storytelling. Digital content that highlights the cultural, religious, and historical significance of a destination, combined with practical information about Sharia-compliant services, helps build emotional connections with potential tourists. This approach not only promotes Sharia tourism but also fosters brand loyalty by creating meaningful travel experiences.

In addition to social media, online travel agencies (OTAs) and mobile applications have become critical platforms for promoting Sharia-compliant services. OTAs such as HalalBooking and CrescentRating specialize in offering halal-

certified accommodations, while mobile apps provide Muslim travelers with tools to find halal restaurants, prayer times, and nearby mosques. By integrating digital tools into their marketing strategies, destinations and service providers can reach a global Muslim audience more effectively, while also providing personalized travel solutions that cater to individual needs.

Branding Strategies in Sharia Tourism

Branding plays a vital role in positioning Sharia-compliant tourism services in a competitive global market. For destinations and businesses operating in the Sharia tourism sector, building a brand that resonates with Muslim travelers requires a focus on authenticity, trust, and religious compliance. A strong Sharia-compliant brand not only emphasizes halal services but also fosters an inclusive and culturally sensitive atmosphere that appeals to both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists.

One of the most successful branding strategies in Sharia tourism is the use of certification. Halal certification for food, accommodations, and tourism services provides Muslim travelers with the assurance that their religious needs will be met during their stay. Many countries, including Malaysia and Indonesia, have established national halal certification bodies to ensure that tourism businesses comply with Islamic standards. For marketers, leveraging these certifications in branding efforts can build consumer trust and differentiate Sharia-compliant services from mainstream tourism offerings.

Another key aspect of branding in Sharia tourism is the creation of experience-based campaigns. Destinations that offer unique Islamic-friendly experiences, such as

cultural tours, religious pilgrimages, or historical site visits, are able to build strong emotional connections with Muslim tourists. These experiences become part of the brand identity, allowing destinations to position themselves as culturally enriching and spiritually fulfilling travel choices.

Challenges in Sharia Tourism Marketing

While the potential for growth in Sharia tourism is vast, the sector faces several challenges in terms of marketing. First, there is the issue of cultural diversity within the Muslim world. Muslim travelers from different regions—such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Europe—have varying expectations and preferences when it comes to Sharia-compliant services. This diversity makes it difficult for marketers to create a one-size-fits-all approach to branding and promotion.

Second, there is the challenge of maintaining inclusivity while promoting Sharia-compliant services. As destinations cater to both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists, marketers must ensure that their messaging is respectful of Islamic values without alienating non-Muslim travelers. Striking this balance requires careful consideration of cultural and religious sensitivities.

Finally, the lack of standardized halal certifications across countries can create confusion for travelers. While many Muslim-majority countries have established halal certification systems, non-Muslim-majority countries often lack clear guidelines on what constitutes a Sharia-compliant service. This inconsistency can erode consumer trust and limit the growth of Sharia tourism in emerging markets.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the marketing strategies used in promoting Sharia tourism, with a particular focus on digital marketing, branding, and consumer behavior. The qualitative approach is appropriate for this research as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the marketing dynamics in Sharia tourism and how they influence Muslim traveler preferences. The study utilizes a combination of case study analysis and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the tourism industry, such as marketers, tourism operators, and Muslim travelers.

Data Collection Methods

The data for this research were collected through two primary sources: case studies of Sharia-compliant tourism destinations and semi-structured interviews with tourism marketing professionals and travelers.

3. Case Study Analysis:

- a. Case studies from destinations that have successfully implemented Sharia tourism strategies, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey, were analyzed. These case studies focused on the marketing efforts used by these countries to attract Muslim travelers, including the use of social media campaigns, influencer marketing, and halal certification branding. The case studies were selected based on the destinations' recognition as leading Sharia-compliant tourism hubs in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI).
- b. The analysis also examined how these destinations managed to balance inclusivity for non-Muslim tourists

while maintaining their Sharia-compliant services, offering insights into how marketing strategies can be crafted to cater to diverse audiences.

4. Semi-Structured Interviews:

- a. Interviews were conducted with 15 marketing professionals working in the tourism industry in both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries. The professionals included digital marketers, branding consultants, and tourism board representatives. The interviews explored how these professionals perceive the role of digital platforms, branding, and consumer preferences in promoting Sharia tourism.
- b. In addition, 10 interviews were conducted with Muslim travelers to understand their travel preferences, perceptions of Sharia-compliant services, and how digital marketing influences their destination choices. These interviews provided first-hand insights into consumer behavior, particularly how religious and cultural considerations affect decision-making.

Data Analysis

The data from the case studies and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting recurring themes within the data. The following steps were taken to ensure a rigorous analysis:

5. Familiarization with Data: The interview transcripts and case study documents were reviewed multiple times to gain a deep understanding of the marketing strategies and consumer preferences highlighted in the data.

6. Coding: The data were systematically coded to identify patterns and key themes related to marketing strategies, digital branding, and consumer behavior. Codes included themes such as "religious compliance," "digital engagement," "social media influence," and "branding challenges."
7. Theme Development: After coding, the data were grouped into broader themes that represented the central findings of the research. For example, the theme of "influencer marketing" emerged as a significant strategy in digital branding for Sharia tourism, while "cultural sensitivity" was a key factor influencing the success of branding campaigns.
8. Interpretation: The themes were then interpreted in light of existing literature on Sharia tourism and marketing, allowing for a comparison of the research findings with established theories and concepts in the field. The interpretation also provided insights into how marketing strategies can be optimized to better serve Muslim travelers while maintaining inclusivity.

Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to Sharia-compliant tourism destinations and marketing strategies, with a focus on digital marketing and branding. The research does not cover the broader economic or political factors that may influence the growth of Sharia tourism in certain regions. Additionally, the sample size of interviews is relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. However, the in-depth nature of the interviews provides valuable qualitative insights into the marketing strategies and consumer behavior in Sharia tourism.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Marketing Strategies in Sharia Tourism

The findings from the case studies and interviews provide a comprehensive overview of the marketing strategies employed in Sharia tourism. Destinations such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey have positioned themselves as key players in the global Sharia tourism market by implementing targeted marketing campaigns that resonate with Muslim travelers. Several key strategies emerged as critical for the success of these destinations in promoting Sharia-compliant services:

4. **Digital Engagement and Social Media:** Digital platforms have become an essential tool in reaching Muslim travelers, particularly younger generations. The case study of Malaysia revealed that tourism boards and businesses heavily rely on social media platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube, to showcase the Sharia-compliant nature of their services. Content-driven campaigns that highlight the availability of halal food, prayer facilities, and Islamic-friendly activities are effective in attracting Muslim tourists who value these features in their travel experiences.

One significant finding from the interviews with marketing professionals was the use of influencer marketing as a primary strategy. Influencers who promote Islamic-friendly travel experiences, including halal-certified hotels and cultural activities, have been instrumental in building trust among Muslim travelers. In particular, micro-influencers—those with smaller but highly engaged audiences—are seen as more authentic and relatable, making their recommendations highly influential in the

decision-making process of Muslim tourists.

5. **Cultural Sensitivity in Branding:** Successful Sharia tourism marketing campaigns consistently emphasize cultural and religious sensitivity. The interviews highlighted that branding efforts that respect Islamic values, while maintaining a welcoming atmosphere for non-Muslim tourists, are seen as key to positioning destinations favorably in the market. For example, Indonesia's tourism board has adopted a multicultural branding approach that promotes its rich cultural heritage while assuring Muslim travelers that their religious needs will be accommodated.

The analysis of Turkish tourism campaigns revealed that authenticity is critical in building strong brands in the Sharia tourism sector. Branding efforts that incorporate Islamic history, architecture, and cultural experiences create a deeper connection with Muslim tourists. However, balancing this authenticity with broader tourism appeal remains a challenge, as brands must ensure inclusivity without alienating non-Muslim visitors.

6. **Experience-Based Marketing:** Another key strategy identified through case study analysis is experience-based marketing. Destinations that focus on offering unique Islamic-friendly experiences, such as religious tours, cultural festivals, or educational visits to historical Islamic sites, are more likely to attract Muslim travelers seeking meaningful, spiritually fulfilling travel experiences. Turkey's promotion of its Islamic heritage tours, which include visits to Ottoman mosques and museums, has been highly successful in drawing religiously motivated tourists.

Role of Digital Marketing in Consumer Behavior

The interviews with Muslim travelers provided insights into how digital marketing influences their decision-making process. The majority of respondents indicated that they rely heavily on social media and online reviews when choosing a destination. Platforms such as TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, and specialized websites like HalalBooking were frequently cited as sources for finding Sharia-compliant hotels and restaurants.

4. **Influencer Impact:** The impact of influencers was particularly pronounced among younger Muslim travelers. Travelers noted that they often trust Muslim influencers who document their Sharia-compliant travel experiences and recommend halal-certified services. This word-of-mouth marketing through digital channels creates a sense of trust, especially in regions where travelers may be unsure about the availability of Sharia-compliant services.
5. **Content Personalization:** Another finding was the importance of personalized content. Muslim travelers appreciate when digital marketing campaigns provide tailored information that aligns with their specific religious needs. For example, ads or social media posts that highlight halal dining options, gender-segregated swimming pools, or prayer facilities directly address the concerns of Muslim tourists. Personalization helps brands build stronger connections with their target audience and enhances customer loyalty.
6. **User-Generated Content:** Muslim travelers are also influenced by user-

generated content, including travel blogs, reviews, and social media posts shared by fellow travelers. Authentic photos and reviews provide social proof, reassuring potential tourists that a destination is truly Sharia-compliant. The interviews revealed that visual content, such as pictures of prayer rooms or halal-certified restaurants, plays a critical role in shaping perceptions and building trust.

Consumer Preferences in Sharia Tourism

The interviews with Muslim travelers revealed several key preferences that influence their choice of destination. These preferences highlight the unique demands of the Muslim travel market:

4. **Halal Food and Beverages:** Access to halal food was consistently ranked as the top priority for Muslim travelers. Many respondents indicated that they would avoid destinations that do not clearly advertise the availability of halal dining options. In response to this demand, several destinations have developed halal-certified food guides and mobile apps that help travelers locate halal restaurants. This aligns with the findings from the case studies, where halal food services were central to the branding of Sharia-compliant destinations.
5. **Privacy and Gender-Segregated Facilities:** Muslim travelers also expressed a preference for privacy, particularly in accommodations that provide gender-segregated facilities. Female travelers, in particular, highlighted the importance of gender-segregated swimming pools, spas, and fitness centers. Destinations that offer these amenities are seen as more attractive, as they align with Islamic teachings regarding modesty and privacy.

6. **Religious Amenities:** Another critical factor influencing destination choice is the availability of religious amenities, such as prayer rooms and mosques. Many respondents emphasized that having convenient access to prayer facilities enhances their travel experience, allowing them to adhere to their religious obligations while on vacation. Destinations that incorporate these amenities into their tourism infrastructure are perceived as more welcoming and respectful of Muslim travelers' needs.

Challenges in Marketing Sharia Tourism

Despite the growing potential of Sharia tourism, several challenges were identified by both marketing professionals and travelers. These challenges must be addressed to fully tap into the Muslim travel market:

4. **Standardization of Halal Certification:** One of the key challenges highlighted in the interviews is the lack of standardized halal certification across countries. While countries like Malaysia and Indonesia have established robust halal certification systems, other regions lack clear guidelines, leading to confusion among Muslim travelers about the authenticity of halal services. This inconsistency undermines consumer trust and makes it difficult for marketers to promote destinations as truly Sharia-compliant.
5. **Balancing Inclusivity:** Marketing professionals also expressed concerns about balancing inclusivity. Destinations that cater to both Muslim and non-Muslim travelers must carefully craft their messaging to avoid alienating either group. For instance, while promoting Sharia-compliant services, destinations must ensure that non-Muslim tourists still

feel welcome and included. Striking this balance requires nuanced messaging that emphasizes cultural diversity and tolerance.

6. **Cultural Diversity within the Muslim World:** Another challenge is the cultural diversity among Muslim travelers. Muslim tourists from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Europe have different cultural expectations and religious practices. This diversity makes it difficult for marketers to develop a one-size-fits-all approach to Sharia tourism. Tailoring marketing strategies to the specific needs of different segments within the Muslim market is essential for success.

Recommendations for Enhancing Marketing in Sharia Tourism

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for enhancing marketing efforts in the Sharia tourism sector:

5. **Leverage Influencer Marketing:** Tourism boards and businesses should continue to collaborate with Muslim influencers who resonate with their target audience. Influencers provide an authentic voice that can build trust and credibility for Sharia-compliant services.
6. **Standardize Halal Certification:** Governments and tourism authorities should work towards establishing standardized halal certification systems that provide clear guidelines for halal services. This will help build consumer confidence and ensure consistency across different regions.
7. **Develop Culturally Inclusive Campaigns:** Marketing campaigns should be culturally sensitive and inclusive, appealing to both Muslim and non-Muslim travelers. Highlighting the destination's cultural

diversity and religious tolerance can create a welcoming environment for all tourists.

8. **Enhance Digital Content Personalization:** Digital marketing efforts should focus on personalizing content to address the specific needs of Muslim travelers. Tailored ads and social media content that emphasize religious amenities, halal food, and privacy features can strengthen the connection with Muslim tourists.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Sharia tourism is a rapidly growing market, driven by the increasing demand for Islamic-compliant services and experiences among Muslim travelers. The research has shown that destinations such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey have successfully positioned themselves as leaders in this sector through the implementation of targeted marketing strategies that align with the values and preferences of Muslim tourists. Digital marketing, particularly through social media platforms and influencer marketing, has emerged as a crucial tool for engaging Muslim travelers, especially the younger generation.

The findings indicate that consumer preferences in Sharia tourism are distinct, with Muslim travelers placing high importance on factors such as halal food, privacy, and religious amenities. The availability of gender-segregated facilities, prayer spaces, and halal-certified services significantly influences their destination choices. Destinations that cater to these specific needs are more likely to attract loyal Muslim tourists who value religious compliance and cultural sensitivity.

Despite the potential of Shariatourism, several challenges remain. The lack

of standardized halal certification across different countries creates confusion and erodes trust among Muslim travelers. Additionally, the challenge of balancing inclusivity—ensuring that both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists feel welcome—requires careful marketing strategies that emphasize cultural diversity and tolerance. Furthermore, the cultural diversity within the Muslim market itself complicates the development of a unified approach to Sharia tourism marketing, as travelers from different regions have varied expectations and preferences.

To address these challenges, the study offers several recommendations. First, standardizing halal certification across regions is essential to building consumer confidence and ensuring that Sharia-compliant services are consistently provided. This will help destinations establish themselves as reliable hubs for Muslim travelers. Second, marketers should continue to leverage influencer marketing as a powerful tool for building trust and promoting Sharia-compliant services. Influencers, particularly micro-influencers, can provide authentic, relatable recommendations that resonate with Muslim audiences. Third, destinations should aim to develop culturally inclusive marketing campaigns that highlight both their commitment to Islamic principles and their welcoming atmosphere for non-Muslim tourists. Lastly, personalizing digital content that addresses the specific needs and concerns of Muslim travelers—such as promoting halal food options and privacy features—will enhance the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts.

In conclusion, the potential for Sharia tourism to grow and contribute to the global tourism industry is substantial. With appropriate marketing strategies, destinations

can tap into the lucrative Muslim travel market while promoting religious and cultural diversity. By addressing the unique preferences of Muslim travelers and overcoming the challenges of certification and inclusivity, Sharia tourism can serve as a bridge between cultures, fostering mutual understanding and respect through travel experiences.

Future research should explore the long-term sustainability of Sharia tourism, particularly in non-Muslim-majority countries that are seeking to attract Muslim travelers. Additionally, studies could examine how advancements in technology, such as AI-driven marketing and augmented reality, could further enhance the personalization and promotion of Sharia-compliant services.

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