

FROM DEVOTION TO DESTINATION: MAPPING GLOBAL RESEARCH TREND IN MUSLIM-FRIENDLY DESTINATIONS A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS (2019-2024)

Muhammad Reyga Wahyudi^{1*}, Suci Sandi Wachyuni²

^{1,2}Politeknik Sahid, Jakarta, Indonesia

Correspondence: muhammadreyga@polteksahid.ac.id

Article Info	Abstract
Keywords: Halal Tourism¹, Muslim-Friendly Destinations², Bibliometric Analysis³, VOSviewer⁴, Muslim Tourist Behavior⁵. Received: July 03, 2026 Approved: July 24, 2026 Published: September 30, 2026	The rapid growth of Muslim-Friendly tourism has attracted increasing scholarly attention, yet a comprehensive understanding of its intellectual structure and emerging research directions remains limited. This study examines global research trends on Muslim-friendly destinations and halal tourism through a bibliometric analysis of publications indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar from 2019 to 2024. Using VOSviewer, keyword co-occurrence and density visualization were employed to map thematic networks and identify research concentrations. The findings reveal five dominant research clusters centered on halal service attributes, Muslim tourist behavior, destination governance, community participation, and regional case studies. Bibliometric mapping further indicates that sustainability, digital transformation, and destination image appear as low-density keywords, suggesting that these themes remain underexplored and represent promising directions for future research. This study provides an update overview of the intellectual landscape of Muslim-friendly tourism and offers insight for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to support the development of more inclusive, competitive, and sustainable destinations.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the fastest-growing economic sectors worldwide, continuously adapting to changing consumer preferences, technological advancements, and socio-cultural dynamics. Among its emerging segments, Muslim-friendly tourism has attracted increasing attention due to the rapid growth of the global Muslim population and the expanding demand for halal-compliant travel services. According to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), Muslim travelers are projected to spend more than US\$225 billion by 2028, highlighting the significant economic potential of this market (Chantarungsri et al., 2024). Muslim-friendly destinations extend beyond the provision of halal food by offering a comprehensive tourism ecosystem that accommodates religious practices through prayer facilities, halal-certified services, privacy-oriented accommodations, and culturally sensitive hospitality. Consequently, both Muslim-majority countries and non-Muslim destinations have increasingly adapted their tourism products and services to attract Muslim travelers, stimulating growing scholarly interest across tourism management, hospitality, consumer behavior, destination marketing, sustainability, and public policy. Throughout this paper, the term Muslim-friendly destinations is adopted as the primary concept, whereas halal tourism is used as broader and closely related research domain commonly found in the literature.

The rapid expansion of Muslim-friendly tourism has generated a substantial body of academic literature. Numerous studies have examined determinants of Muslim tourist satisfaction, destination image, halal attributes, behavioral intention, service quality, and destination competitiveness. As the field has evolved, bibliometric studies have also emerged to map the development of halal tourism research. Previous studies by Chantarungsri et al. (2024), Jafar et al. (2023), Hasan (2025), Rasuman and Saeed (2024), and Ratnasari et al. (2024) have analyzed publication trends, citation performance, influential authors, and thematic development, demonstrating the increasing academic interest in this field and confirming the value of bibliometric analysis for understanding its scientific evolution.

Despite these important contributions, several limitations remain. Existing bibliometric studies have primarily focused on publication performance, citation analysis, and author productivity, while relatively limited attention has been given to examining the conceptual relationships among research themes through keyword co-occurrence and thematic structures. Furthermore, the rapid growth of publications following the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new research priorities, including sustainability, digital transformation, destination resilience, community participation, and smart tourism, which have not yet been comprehensively synthesized using updated bibliometric mapping techniques. Consequently, there remains a need for an updated bibliometric review that not only maps publication trends but also visualizes the intellectual structure of Muslim-friendly destination research and identifies emerging research opportunities.

To address these gaps, this present conducts a bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer based on publications retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar covering the period from 2019 to 2024. By applying keyword co-occurrence analysis and bibliometric network visualization, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview

of the thematic development and conceptual structure of Muslim-friendly destination research.

Specifically, analysis seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the dominant research themes in Muslim-friendly destination and halal tourism studies published between 2019 and 2024? This question provides an updated overview of the principal knowledge domains that have shaped the development of Muslim-friendly tourism research.

RQ2. How are the principal research topics conceptually connected through bibliometric network analysis? Addressing this question reveals the intellectual structure of the field by illustrating the relationships among research themes and identifying the major knowledge clusters.

RQ3. What emerging themes and research gaps can be identified to guide future studies? This question contributes by identifying underexplored topics and highlighting future research directions that can support the continued development of Muslim-friendly destination studies.

Collectively, these research questions contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the intellectual landscape of Muslim-friendly tourism research. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for researchers in identifying emerging research opportunities, for policymakers in formulating evidence-based tourism strategies, and for destination management organizations and tourism practitioners in developing more inclusive, competitive, and sustainable Muslim-friendly destinations.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section describes the research methodology, including the systematic literature review procedure and bibliometric analysis. This is followed by the presentation of the bibliometric results and network visualizations, discussion of the findings, and finally the conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) integrated with bibliometric analysis to examine the development of research on Muslim-friendly destinations and halal tourism. The SLR approach was selected because it enables a systematic, transparent, and comprehensive synthesis of previous studies while identifying research trends, dominant themes, and existing research gaps. The review process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines to ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and reproducibility throughout the article selection process (Page et al., 2021).

The study analyzed scholarly publications published between 2019 and 2024 retrieved from four major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The initial search identified 359 publications, consisting of 95 articles from Scopus, 90 articles from Web of Science, 74 articles from ScienceDirect, and 100 articles from Google Scholar. Following duplicate removal and screening based on predefined eligibility criteria, 145 unique journal articles were retained as the final dataset for bibliometric analysis.

The target population comprised peer-reviewed journal articles discussing Muslim-friendly destinations, halal tourism, Islamic tourism, and related tourism services. Only articles published in English or Indonesian, available in full text, and directly relevant to the research objectives were included. Conference proceedings, books, book chapters, editorial notes, theses, dissertations, and publications without complete bibliographic information were excluded from the analysis.

The literature search was conducted using combinations of the following keywords: "*Muslim-friendly destinations*" , "*Halal tourism*" , "*Islamic tourism*", "*Halal travel services*". Boolean operators (AND and OR) were used to improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the search strategy across the four databases. The inclusion criteria were established as follows Articles published between 2019 and 2024, Articles written in English or Indonesian, Peer-reviewed journal publications, Studies explicitly discussing Muslim-friendly destinations, halal tourism, Islamic tourism, or halal travel services, Studies providing empirical, conceptual, or review-based contributions relevant to tourism research.

The exclusion criteria included duplicate records, conference proceedings, books, book chapters, editorial articles, inaccessible full-text publications, and studies not directly related to Muslim-friendly tourism.

Several bibliometric indicators were employed to evaluate the intellectual development of the field, including publication year, source journals, country of origin, author collaboration, keyword occurrence, co-authorship relationships, and co-citation patterns. These indicators were selected to identify research productivity, thematic evolution, collaboration networks, and emerging research topics.

The literature selection followed the four stages of the PRISMA framework, namely identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

During the identification stage, publications were retrieved from the selected databases using predefined search keywords. The screening stage involved removing duplicate records and evaluating article titles and abstracts to eliminate irrelevant publications. Subsequently, the eligibility stage consisted of full-text assessment based on the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Finally, during the inclusion stage, 145 eligible articles were selected for bibliometric analysis.

Descriptive analysis was initially conducted to summarize publication characteristics, including publication trends, country distribution, journal sources, and research focus. The bibliometric analysis was subsequently performed using VOSviewer version 1.6.20 (Van Eck & Waltman, 2023), which enables visualization of scientific knowledge structures through network mapping.

Three bibliometric techniques were applied in this analysis. First, co-occurrence analysis was conducted to identify relationships among author keywords and to reveal dominant research themes. Second, co-authorship analysis was employed to examine collaboration patterns among researchers and institutions. Third, co-citation analysis was performed to identify influential publications and visualize the intellectual structure of Muslim-friendly tourism research.

The bibliometric networks were generated using the association strength normalization method implemented in VOSviewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Two visualization techniques were used, namely network visualization to illustrate relationships among keywords and research clusters, and density visualization to identify research areas with the highest concentration of scientific attention. The results of the bibliometric analysis were then interpreted alongside the systematic literature review to identify dominant themes, research gaps, and future research opportunities within the field of Muslim-friendly destination studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

PUBLICATION CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1 Characteristics of Selected Publications

NO	VARIABLE	FREQUENCY
1	Total Articles	145
2	Scopus	95
3	WoS	90
4	ScienDirect	74
5	Google Scholar	100
6	Final Dataset	145

Sources: Primay Data (2026)

A total of 359 publications were initially identified from four databases. After removing duplicate and irrelevant records following the PRISMA protocol, 145 journal articles were included in the bibliometric analysis. These publications represent recent developments in Muslim-friendly destination research during the 2019-2024 period.

KEYWORD CO-OCCURRENCE NETWORK ANALYSIS

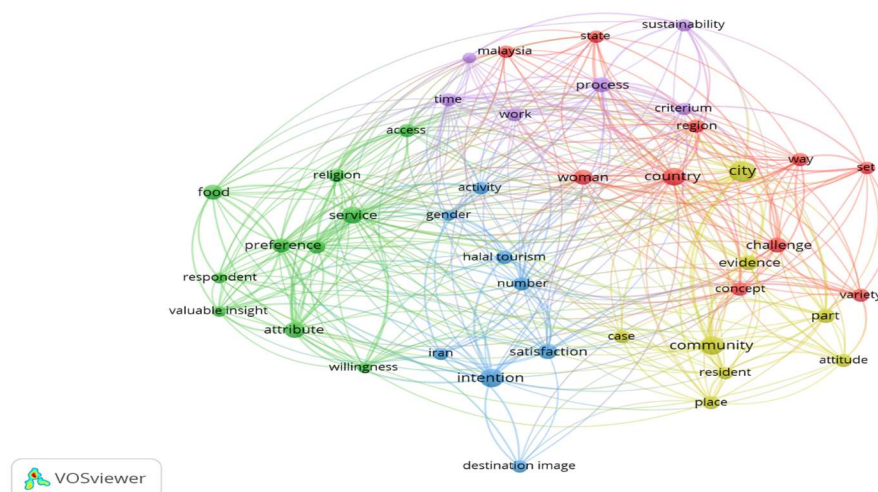


Figure 1. Network Visualization
 Sources: Primary Data (2026)

Figure 1 presents the keyword co-occurrence network generated using VOSviewer. The analysis identified five major thematic clusters, illustrating the conceptual structure of Muslim-friendly destination research. Each cluster represents a group of closely connected keywords that frequently appear together within the scientific literature.

The first cluster (green) is primarily associated with halal service attributes, including keywords such as food, service, preference, attribute, and religion. This cluster indicates that researchers have devoted considerable attention to understanding Muslim tourists expectations regarding halal food availability, religious facilities, and service quality. The close relationships among these keywords suggest that service quality remains one of the fundamental determinants influencing tourist satisfaction and destination competitiveness.

The second cluster (blue) focuses on tourist behavior, represented by keywords such as halal tourism, intention, satisfaction, and destination image. These concepts demonstrate that behavioural perspectives remain central in Muslim-friendly tourism studies, particularly in explaining travel intention, satisfaction, loyalty, and destination choice. The appearance of Iran within this cluster also reflects the substantial contribution of regional case studies to the development of behavioral research.

The third cluster (red) highlights destination governance and spatial development through keywords including country, city, region, state, and sustainability. This cluster reflects the increasing interest in comparing destination readiness, tourism policy, regional planning, and sustainable destination management across different countries.

The fourth cluster (yellow) emphasizes community participation and socio-cultural issues, represented by keywords such as community, resident, attitude, place, and challenge. These findings indicate that local communities are increasingly recognized as key stakeholders in developing Muslim-friendly destinations. Community acceptance, cultural adaptation, and stakeholder collaboration have therefore become important dimensions of destination development.

Finally, the fifth cluster (purple) includes keywords such as Malaysia, work, and time. The prominence of Malaysia suggests that the country continues to serve as one of the leading contexts for empirical research and policy development in halal tourism, reflecting its long-standing position as an international benchmark in Muslim-friendly destination management.

Overall, the network visualization indicates that Muslim-friendly tourism has developed into a multidimensional research field characterized by strong interconnections among tourism services, tourist behavior, destination governance, and community engagement. The close links among clusters also indicate increasing interdisciplinary collaboration in recent years.

DENSITY VISUALIZATION

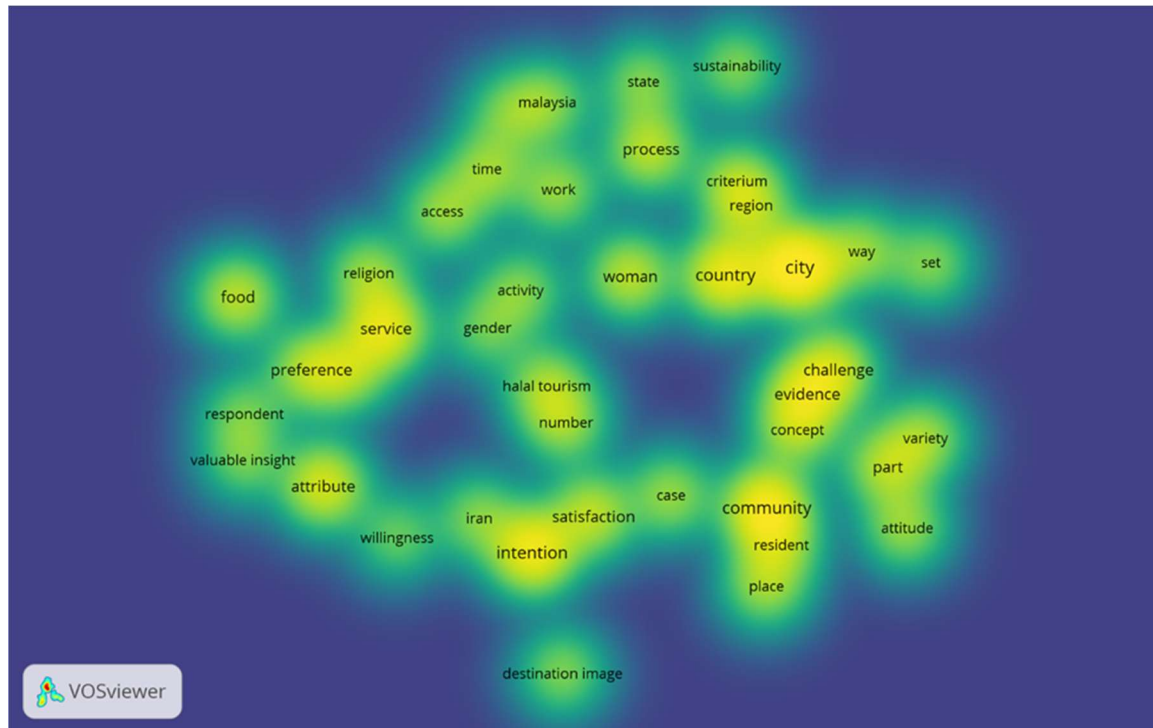


Figure 2. Density Visualization
Sources: Primary Data (2026)

The density visualization provides additional insight into the concentration of research themes. Keywords such as country, city, and community occupy the highest-density areas, indicating that destination development and geographical context remain dominant topics. Likewise, service, preference, intention, and satisfaction continue to receive considerable scholarly attention.

Conversely, keywords including destination image, sustainability, and digital transformation appear in lower-density areas. Their relatively limited occurrence suggest that these topics remain underexplored and represent promising directions for future research.

DISCUSSION

The findings directly address the three research questions proposed in this findings. Regarding RQ1, the bibliometric analysis identifies five dominant research themes that define the current intellectual landscape of Muslim-friendly destination studies: halal service attributes, tourist behaviour, destination governance, community participation, and regional case studies represented by Malaysia. These findings demonstrate that the field has expanded beyond its initial emphasis on halal facilities toward broader discussions involving governance and stakeholder engagement. This evolution reflects the increasing maturity and multidisciplinary nature of Muslim-friendly tourism research.

Regarding RQ2, the keyword network reveals strong conceptual relationships among the identified themes. Halal service attributes remain closely connected with tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention, while governance and community participation are

increasingly integrated into destination development studies. These relationships indicate that Muslim-friendly tourism is no longer examined solely from a marketing or hospitality perspective but has evolved into an interdisciplinary research domain incorporating destination management, planning, and public policy.

These findings are consistent with Saville and Mahbubi (2021), who highlighted the importance of halal services in influencing Muslim travel decisions, and with Fajriyati et al. (2020), who emphasized the role of destination attributes in shaping tourist satisfaction. Similarly, the emergence of governance and community-related themes supports previous studies by Hammoodi and Al-Hinkawi (2023) and Garrod and Nicholls (2022), which underline the importance of spatial planning and stakeholder participation in tourism development. Rather than merely confirming previous findings, the present bibliometric analysis indicates how these themes are interconnected within the broader intellectual structure of Muslim-friendly destination research.

Regarding RQ3, the density visualization identifies several emerging yet underexplored themes. Compared with established topics such as halal services and tourist behaviour, keywords related to sustainability, digital transformation, and destination image appear less frequently within the bibliometric network. Their lower density indicates that these topics have not yet become mainstream despite their growing practical relevance in the post-pandemic tourism landscape.

An additional finding is the continued prominence of Malaysia within the bibliometric network. Although Malaysia has significantly contributed to the advancement of Muslim-friendly tourism knowledge and policy, its dominance also suggests a geographical concentration of existing studies. Future research should therefore expand comparative investigations involving emerging Muslim-friendly destinations across different regions to improve the generalizability of current knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This study employed a bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer to examine the development of research on Muslim-friendly destinations and halal tourism published between 2019 and 2024. The findings demonstrate that the field has evolved into a multidimensional area of research characterized by five dominant thematic clusters: halal service attributes, Muslim tourist behaviour, destination governance, community participation, and regional case studies. The bibliometric mapping further reveals that keywords such as service, preference, intention, country, and community occupy central positions within the intellectual structure of the literature, indicating sustained scholarly attention to tourist experiences and destination development. In contrast, themes related to sustainability, digital transformation, and destination image appear with relatively lower density, suggesting that these topics remain underexplored and offer promising opportunities for future research.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide useful insights for multiple stakeholders. Researchers are encouraged to further investigate emerging themes, particularly the integration of sustainability, digital technologies, and destination branding

within Muslim-friendly tourism. For policymakers, the results emphasize the importance of developing context-specific tourism policies that incorporate community participation and respond to the diverse needs of Muslim travelers rather than adopting generic halal tourism strategies. Tourism practitioners may also utilize these findings to enhance destination competitiveness through the provision of halal-certified services, adequate religious facilities, privacy-oriented accommodations, and culturally sensitive hospitality.

Overall, this study provides an updated bibliometric overview of the intellectual structure of Muslim-friendly destination research and contributes to the literature by identifying dominant knowledge domains, conceptual relationships, and emerging research opportunities that can guide future scholarly inquiry.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should further examine the effectiveness of stakeholder collaboration in developing Muslim-friendly destinations across different geographical and socio-cultural contexts. In addition, future studies are encouraged to develop more comprehensive integrative models that examine the relationships among halal service quality, destination governance, digital transformation, community participation, environmental sustainability, tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty, and revisit intention. Comparative studies involving countries and regions with different levels of halal tourism development would also provide deeper insights into best practices and contextual factors influencing the successful implementation of Muslim-friendly tourism. Such studies are expected to contribute to a broader understanding of sustainable halal tourism development and support evidence-based policymaking in the future.

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AUTHOR PROFIL

Muhammad Reyga Wahyudi, S.Tr.Par, M.Tr.Par. is the Secretary of the Study Program at Politeknik Sahid, Indonesia. He earned his Master of Applied Tourism in Tourism Planning and Development from Politeknik Sahid after completing his Bachelor of Applied Tourism degree. His academic and professional activities focus on vocational higher education. His primary research interests include Muslim-friendly tourism, halal tourism, tourism planning, and culinary tourism.

Dr. Suci Sandi Wachyuni, S.TP, M.M.,C.H.E. 0000-0002-0699-7089. is an Assistant Professor, Lecturer, and Researcher in Hospitality and Tourism Management. She graduated from Doctoral of Tourism Studies, Gadjah Mada University. Suci has experience as an educator and trainer for 14 years. In addition, she is also a guest lecturer on tourism studies at several universities. She is also frequently invited as a trainer to assist local communities in managing destinations and SMEs in tourist villages. Over the years, she has published more than 60 articles in national and international journals and books. She also actively presented her research in international conferences. She is also active as a reviewer in several journals..Her research interests are gastronomy tourism, sustainable tourism, tourist behavior, tourism marketing, and tourism planning and development. Suci can be contacted through her email: sucisandi91@gmail.com or sucisandi@polteksahid.ac.id