

# Halal Tourism and Destination Identity: A Conceptual Discussion on the Integration of Islamic Values in Tourism Branding

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## **Abstract**

This conceptual paper explores how Islamic values can be integrated into destination branding to shape a distinct *halal tourism identity*. While halal tourism has grown as a global phenomenon, especially in Muslim majority countries such as Indonesia, its conceptual foundations remain fragmented. This article argues that halal tourism branding should move beyond functional aspects (e.g., halal certification, facilities) toward embedding Islamic values such as trust (*amanah*), honesty (*ṣidq*), and hospitality (*diyāfah*) into the core of destination identity. Drawing from destination branding theory, consumer trust models, and Islamic value frameworks, this paper develops a conceptual lens for understanding how spiritual, ethical, and cultural dimensions co create a destination's halal identity. The study contributes to the theoretical enrichment of halal tourism research and offers insights for policymakers, destination marketers, and tourism practitioners in Muslim contexts.

**Keywords:** *Halal tourism, destination identity, Islamic values, branding, Muslim tourist trust, conceptual framework.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, halal tourism has developed into one of the most rapidly expanding sectors within the global tourism industry (Biancone et al., 2019). Muslim travelers are showing a growing preference for destinations that not only accommodate their religious requirements but also reflect their ethical principles, cultural identity, and emotional values (Timothy & Iverson, 2006). Countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates have acknowledged the economic and cultural significance of this niche by actively developing halal-friendly destinations (Biancone et al., 2019). Nevertheless, despite the rapid expansion of the industry, the conceptual foundations of halal tourism remain fragmented and are largely treated in an instrumental manner (Fauzi & Battour, 2025). Most initiatives to promote halal destinations tend to focus on certification, facilities, and regulatory compliance, rather than engaging with deeper dimensions of identity and meaning (Battour & Ismail, 2016).

Tourism branding has traditionally concentrated on shaping destination images through the use of visual symbols, slogans, and promotional campaigns (Adamus-Matuszyńska et al., 2021). In the context of halal tourism, however, branding extends beyond mere marketing communication, as it includes the integration of Islamic principles that influence how destinations are experienced and understood (Wilson & Liu, 2011). A strong destination identity is defined not only by recognition but also by authenticity, trust, and the congruence between brand values and visitors' beliefs (Chen et al., 2020). This underscores the importance of integrating Islamic ethical and cultural values in defining what truly constitutes a "halal" destination beyond the superficial provision of services (Khairuldin et al., 2024). However, existing literature has not adequately clarified how these values can be systematically incorporated into tourism branding frameworks (Razzaq et al., 2016).

Halal tourism should be conceptualized as a value driven experience rather than merely a checklist of religious facilities (Khairuldin et al., 2024). The identity of a halal destination should be shaped by an authentic alignment between the destination's brand promise and Islamic principles such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *ʿadl* (justice), and *diyāfah* (hospitality) (Anwar, 2025b). These principles function not merely as ethical guidelines but as the spiritual foundation of Muslim interactions, including travel. Therefore, building a halal destination identity requires embedding these values into both the symbolic and experiential dimensions of tourism (Qureshi et al., 2025). This perspective redirects attention away from technical compliance toward a more holistic portrayal of Islamic culture and ethics (Battour & Ismail, 2016).

In practice, many Muslim-majority destinations, including Indonesia, have started to position themselves as halal tourism hubs (Winarti, 2017). Nevertheless, inconsistencies remain in the interpretation and communication of “halal” within destination narratives. Marketing materials frequently highlight halal certification while failing to sufficiently convey spiritual depth or cultural authenticity (Yusran et al., 2025). This has led to a superficial brand image that emphasizes compliance but does not necessarily foster trust, emotional connection, or a sense of belonging (Thompson et al., 2006). Therefore, there is an increasing need to reconsider how Islamic values can function as the central identity pillars of halal destinations (Mursid, 2023).

Destination identity is a multidimensional concept that comprises cognitive, affective, and symbolic elements (Marine-Roig, 2015). The cognitive component relates to what tourists know about a destination, the affective dimension concerns how they feel about it, and the symbolic element represents what the destination signifies within their worldview (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2018). For Muslim travelers, these dimensions are interpreted through the lens of faith, meaning that perceptions of trust, purity, and moral comfort play a critical role in shaping destination preferences (Kalyan & Ekka, 2024). When destinations effectively convey Islamic values through their identity, they cultivate emotional bonds and loyalty among Muslim visitors (Shafaei & Mohamed, 2015). Accordingly, incorporating Islamic values into destination branding constitutes not only a moral obligation but also a strategic advantage (Andespa et al., 2024).

Existing studies on destination image and branding, such as those, highlight that identity is co created between destinations and their audiences. In the halal tourism context, this co creation occurs between local communities, religious authorities, destination marketers, and Muslim travelers (Adinugraha et al., 2025). The destination's identity, therefore, must be constructed through narratives and experiences that genuinely reflect Islamic cultural expressions rather than commodified versions of religiosity (Qurashi, 2017). If this alignment between brand and belief is achieved, trust naturally emerges as a key mediator linking destination identity to tourist loyalty (Su et al., 2017). Understanding this dynamic relationship forms the theoretical core of this conceptual paper (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

However, the integration of Islamic values into destination branding is not a straightforward process (Shafaei & Mohamed, 2015). Challenges arise when religious ideals intersect with commercial tourism goals, often leading to tensions between authenticity and profitability (Hung et al., 2017). Some destinations risk reducing Islam to a marketing label, using “halal” merely as a brand without embodying its ethical dimensions. This instrumentalization of religion undermines the credibility of halal branding and weakens tourist trust (Faisal et al., 2024). To move forward, the halal tourism discourse must embrace a conceptual model that unites ethical authenticity with effective brand identity (Noor Shakirah, 2010).

This paper argues that embedding Islamic values into destination identity requires a paradigm shift from *branding for Muslims* to *branding through Islamic values*. Such a shift involves integrating principles like honesty, justice, trust, and hospitality into the symbolic, communicative, and experiential elements of tourism (Dangi, 2018). By doing so, halal destinations can differentiate themselves not only as compliant spaces but as meaningful and value oriented environments (Chantarungsri & Alam, 2024). This conceptual shift also opens space for examining how Muslim tourists interpret brand authenticity and spiritual congruence in their travel experiences (Azam et al., 2024)

To guide this conceptual exploration, the following questions are proposed:

1. How can Islamic values be conceptually integrated into destination branding frameworks to construct a distinctive halal tourism identity?
2. In what ways do trust, authenticity, and ethical alignment influence the perception of destination identity among Muslim tourists?
3. What are the theoretical implications of positioning Islamic values as the foundation of destination branding within the halal tourism context?

By addressing these questions, the paper aims to contribute to the theoretical development of halal tourism studies, particularly in understanding the relationship between faith based values and destination identity. It proposes that Islamic values serve not only as cultural ornaments but as ontological foundations of brand meaning. Through this conceptual analysis, the study seeks to bridge the gap between branding theory and Islamic ethical philosophy. The integration of these dimensions can enrich how destinations represent themselves and how Muslim tourists interpret their experiences. Thus, this paper lays the groundwork for a more holistic and value centered approach to halal tourism branding.

In summary, this conceptual discussion positions halal tourism as a moral, cultural, and symbolic construct that extends beyond the materiality of facilities and certifications. By redefining destination identity through Islamic values, destinations can strengthen their authenticity, trustworthiness, and emotional resonance among Muslim travelers. This approach also provides practical implications for destination managers, policymakers, and marketers seeking to align spiritual values with tourism branding strategies. Ultimately, building a halal destination identity rooted in Islamic ethics is not only an act of religious expression but also a pathway toward sustainable, inclusive, and trusted tourism development.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Destination identity refers to the unique set of meanings, values, and perceptions that distinguish one place from another in the minds of visitors (Marine-Roig, 2015). Destination identity is co created through the interplay between marketing narratives, visitor experiences, and the sociocultural context of the destination (Govers & Go, 2004). While image represents external perception, identity reflects the internal essence and self concept of the destination (Marine-Roig, 2015). In tourism branding, identity plays a strategic role in shaping how destinations communicate authenticity, consistency, and cultural uniqueness (Tian et al., 2020). For Muslim majority destinations, this identity construction must include moral and spiritual dimensions that resonate with the values of their target audience Muslim travelers seeking both leisure and faith congruence (Kalyan & Ekka, 2024). Thus, destination identity in halal tourism cannot be separated from its ethical and religious context (Dinnie, 2015).

Halal tourism is broadly defined as tourism activities designed to comply with Islamic teachings and values while remaining inclusive to diverse travelers (Rasul, 2019). Conceptualize halal tourism as an integration of religious principles into hospitality and service management, including halal food provision, prayer facilities, and modesty in entertainment (Ashton & Islam, 2025). However, argues that halal tourism should not be reduced to operational checklists; instead, it represents a moral and cultural system embedded in the everyday life of Muslim societies (Alam et al., 2024). This means that halal destinations should reflect not only physical readiness but also the ethical atmosphere consistent with Islamic principles (Mursid, 2023). The inclusion of Islamic values such as honesty (*ṣidq*), trust (*amanah*), and hospitality (*diyāfah*) can strengthen emotional connections and trust among Muslim tourists (Jazil & Firdaus, 2024). Hence, the core challenge is to integrate these values meaningfully into branding and identity formation (Khairuldin et al., 2024).

Trust has been identified as a central construct in tourism behavior and brand loyalty models. Commitment trust theory suggests that long term loyalty stems from trustworthiness and shared values between consumers and brands. In halal tourism, trust functions as both a rational and emotional assurance that the destination adheres to Islamic principles. Demonstrate that perceived authenticity and religiosity significantly influence Muslim tourists' satisfaction and revisit intentions. When a destination's image aligns with the traveler's spiritual identity, it fosters emotional resonance and symbolic belonging. Consequently, trust operates not only as a transactional construct but as a spiritual bond connecting the visitor's faith with the destination's moral narrative (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

The integration of Islamic values into destination branding requires a conceptual framework that bridges marketing theory with Islamic ethical thought. Jamal and Sharpley (2016) propose that Islamic values can enrich tourism management by embedding principles of *tawhid* (unity), *ʿadl* (justice), and *ihsan* (excellence) into service and communication design. This approach aligns with the broader call for value based branding, where authenticity and morality are core differentiators. From this perspective, branding becomes a process of moral storytelling communicating how a destination embodies Islamic ethics in tangible and symbolic ways. Such integration allows destinations to move beyond performative religiosity toward a more holistic identity that resonates with Muslim tourists' inner beliefs and aspirations. Therefore, understanding halal tourism branding through the lens of Islamic values offers both theoretical depth and practical guidance for shaping trusted and meaningful destination identities.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundation of this study begins with the premise that *Islamic values* constitute the moral and cultural core of halal tourism. These values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ʿadl* (justice), *ihsan* (excellence), and *diyāfah* (hospitality) serve as guiding principles that shape interpersonal interactions and social ethics within Muslim societies (Ramlan, 2017). When applied to tourism branding, they provide not only moral direction but also symbolic meaning to the destination's identity (Ekinici et al., 2013). This theoretical stance builds on the idea proposed by that Islamic ethics can be embedded in management and marketing frameworks to promote authenticity and moral accountability (Ahmad et al., 2023). Therefore, in the context of halal tourism, destination identity is theorized as an extension of Islamic values manifested through services, communication, and experiences that align with Sharia principles (Wilson & Liu, 2011).

Destination identity serves as the mediating construct between Islamic values and the perceptions of Muslim tourists (Mursid, 2023). Destination identity encompasses how a place defines and communicates its unique sense of self its culture, values, and essence through branding narratives and visitor experiences (Campelo et al., 2014). In halal tourism, this identity reflects the destination's capacity to express Islamic values not just through compliance, but through cultural storytelling and symbolic representation (Adinugraha et al., 2025). The theory posits that when Islamic values are coherently integrated into the identity of a destination, they foster authenticity, credibility, and emotional resonance among Muslim travelers (Azam et al., 2024). Thus, destination identity becomes the interpretive bridge through which tourists perceive a place as not only "halal" in practice but also *Islamically meaningful* in spirit (Battour et al., 2014).

Trust and authenticity are proposed as the psychological mechanisms that link destination identity with tourist loyalty (Tian et al., 2020). Drawing from the commitment trust theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), the model assumes that trust arises when there is perceived alignment between a destination's claimed identity and its lived experience. In halal tourism, this trust is reinforced when Islamic values are consistently reflected across marketing communication, service delivery, and cultural engagement (Anwar, 2025a). Authenticity, deepens this trust by ensuring that brand promises resonate with genuine cultural and ethical substance (Umoren et al., 2022). Therefore, the more congruent the destination's identity is with Islamic moral principles, the stronger the trust and affective loyalty of Muslim tourists. This psychological link underscores the moral dimension of branding as an act of faith based relationship building (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019).

Integrating the above theoretical propositions, this paper advances a conceptual model that positions Islamic values as the antecedent, destination identity as the mediator, and trust as the pathway to Muslim tourist loyalty (Shafaei & Mohamed, 2015). The model suggests that halal destination branding should be value based rather than product based emphasizing ethical congruence, sincerity, and spiritual authenticity over mere certification or compliance (Amani, 2024). This theoretical synthesis aligns with contemporary approaches to *values driven branding*, where moral integrity and emotional connection are central to long term brand equity. By framing halal tourism within this model, destinations can develop branding strategies that are both spiritually grounded and globally competitive. Ultimately, this framework underscores that sustainable halal tourism identity emerges not from regulation alone, but from the embodiment of Islamic values as lived experiences and brand truths.

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The conceptual roots of halal tourism can be traced back to early academic discussions in the 2010s when scholars began examining tourism from a faith based perspective. Battour, Ismail, and Battor were among the first to define halal tourism as a form of tourism aligned with Islamic law, emphasizing service compliance such as halal food, prayer facilities, and gender segregation (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Similarly, Zamani Farahani and Henderson explored the influence of religion on travel motivation and behavior among Muslim tourists, identifying spirituality and moral comfort as major determinants. However, during this period, the concept remained largely operational, focusing on the provision of halal services rather than exploring deeper constructs such as identity or branding. The notion of integrating Islamic ethical values into tourism marketing was not yet systematically articulated in these foundational works (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010).

A significant development occurred between 2015 and 2017 when researchers began linking halal tourism with consumer behavior and brand perception. Eid and El Gohary investigated how religious commitment and perceived halal image influence Muslim tourists' satisfaction and loyalty, revealing that trust and religiosity play a critical mediating role (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015). Further refined the definition of halal tourism by introducing cultural and spiritual dimensions into service and destination management. Meanwhile, emphasized that Islamic ethics such as honesty (*ṣidq*), hospitality (*diyāfah*), and justice (*ʿadl*) could be used as marketing differentiators to appeal to Muslim travelers' values. Although these studies began to expand beyond functional compliance, they still did not fully conceptualize the *identity* of halal destinations as an integrated expression of Islamic principles (Abdullah & Laila, 2022).

From 2018 onward, the research landscape began to shift toward branding, identity, and trust in halal tourism. Eid, El Gohary, and Serrano (2019) proposed a model linking halal brand perception with emotional value and destination loyalty, showing that trust operates as a psychological bridge between tourists and destinations. Henderson explored the policy and cultural frameworks of halal tourism in Southeast Asia, highlighting the need for destinations to reflect authenticity rather than commodified religiosity (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). Pike also contributed to the theoretical understanding of *destination identity*, arguing that branding must emerge from authentic narratives and shared values. These studies collectively advanced the discourse toward an understanding that halal tourism involves cultural storytelling and value based representation but the explicit theoretical link between *Islamic values*, *identity*, and *trust* remained underdeveloped (Pike, 2015).

Recent studies have moved closer to integrating moral and psychological dimensions into halal tourism branding. Emphasized *values based branding* as a sustainable approach that balances authenticity, ethics, and consumer trust. Analyzed the role of *spiritual congruence* in shaping Muslim tourists' loyalty, demonstrating that when a destination's identity aligns with Islamic moral expectations, it fosters stronger emotional attachment. Likewise, discussed how *Islamic work ethics* influence brand credibility in halal hospitality, linking ethical integrity with tourist satisfaction. Most recently. Examined *trust formation* in halal tourism marketing (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019). concluding that perceived authenticity is central to destination loyalty (Luo et al., 2024). Despite these advances, the theoretical synthesis of Islamic values, destination identity, and trust remains fragmented across different sub disciplines.

Although previous studies have progressively expanded the scope of halal tourism from operational practices to branding and trust few have systematically examined how *Islamic values function as the ontological foundation of destination identity*. Most prior research treats Islamic values as contextual variables or service standards rather than as the central axis of branding theory. Furthermore, the majority of studies have employed quantitative or survey based designs that focus on measuring perceptions rather than theorizing conceptual relationships. Consequently, the spiritual, symbolic, and ethical dimensions of halal destination identity remain conceptually underdeveloped in the literature. This gap calls for a theoretical framework that unifies *Islamic ethics*, *destination identity formation*, and *trust building* in halal tourism branding.

In response to these gaps, the present conceptual paper proposes an integrative model of halal tourism branding rooted in Islamic ethical philosophy. By positioning *Islamic values* as the antecedent of *destination identity* and *trust* as its psychological outcome, this study bridges fragmented theoretical streams in halal tourism, branding, and faith based consumer behavior. Unlike prior research that focused primarily on external perceptions, this study emphasizes internal coherence between brand essence and Islamic moral meaning. The conceptual

framework developed herein thus contributes to the academic discourse by redefining halal tourism as both a *moral narrative* and a *cultural identity project*. In doing so, it provides a more holistic theoretical lens through which future empirical research can explore how destinations translate Islamic values into authentic, trusted, and sustainable tourism identities.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a conceptual and textual analysis approach. The research does not involve numerical data or field observation but focuses on the interpretation and synthesis of texts relevant to halal tourism, destination branding, and Islamic value systems. A qualitative conceptual approach is appropriate because the study aims to develop theoretical understanding rather than test hypotheses. As Creswell (2018) suggests, conceptual qualitative studies allow researchers to examine patterns of meaning, language, and representation within existing knowledge domains. Therefore, this study emphasizes theoretical construction, interpretive analysis, and critical reflection on how Islamic values are integrated into destination identity.

The data for this study are textual and secondary in nature, derived from academic journal articles, books, policy documents, and official reports related to halal tourism, Islamic branding, and Muslim tourist behavior. International publications from reputable databases such as *Scopus*, *ScienceDirect*, and *Taylor & Francis Online* were prioritized to ensure the credibility and scholarly relevance of the sources. In addition, selected national documents such as Indonesia's *Masterplan Pariwisata Halal Nasional* and promotional materials from West Java's tourism board were examined to contextualize the analysis. These texts serve as representations of how Islamic values and destination identities are constructed and communicated in both academic and practical discourse. Thus, the data type can be categorized as interpretive textual data, focusing on meaning rather than measurement.

Data were collected using document analysis and literature review techniques. The process involved identifying, selecting, and interpreting texts that discuss key variables: Islamic values, destination branding, trust, and Muslim tourist behavior. The researcher conducted a systematic review to trace how these constructs have evolved over time and how they intersect conceptually. Each document was read critically to identify recurring themes, metaphors, and theoretical propositions related to value based branding and halal tourism identity. The inclusion criteria were: (1) relevance to the study's conceptual framework, (2) publication within the last 10–15 years for contemporary validity, and (3) explicit discussion of Islamic principles or branding elements in tourism. This approach ensured that the selected data provided both theoretical depth and contextual diversity.

The collected textual data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis with an interpretive approach. Following the framework of Miles and Huberman (2014), the analysis consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, texts were categorized into themes such as "Islamic values in branding," "trust and authenticity," and "destination identity." In the data display stage, conceptual relationships among these themes were mapped and synthesized into a theoretical model. Interpretation was then carried out inductively, connecting concepts from Islamic ethics with contemporary branding theories. This iterative process allowed for the emergence of new conceptual linkages, particularly how Islamic values shape the moral narrative of halal destination identity.

The process of drawing conclusions was conducted through interpretive reasoning, emphasizing coherence and theoretical integration rather than statistical validation. Conclusions were derived from the synthesis of literature and the interpretive patterns identified during analysis. To ensure reliability, multiple sources were compared and cross referenced to confirm consistency in the conceptual meanings of key variables. The findings are presented in the form of a conceptual framework that illustrates how Islamic values, destination identity, and trust are interrelated within halal tourism branding. In essence, the methodological approach ensures that the study's conclusions are grounded in textual evidence and theoretical logic, providing a robust foundation for future empirical research in halal tourism studies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this conceptual study are based on the interpretive synthesis of literature, official documents, and theoretical frameworks related to halal tourism, Islamic branding, and destination identity (Lestari & Hidayah, 2025). Rather than presenting statistical outcomes, the discussion unfolds through analytical reasoning that integrates prior studies (Primadona et al., 2025) with Islamic ethical constructs (al-Mansyur et al., 2019). The results are organized around three guiding research questions addressing (1) the integration of Islamic values in destination branding, (2) the influence of trust and authenticity on destination identity, and (3) the theoretical implications of positioning Islamic values as the foundation of halal destination branding. This organization allows for a structured analysis that connects empirical insights from previous research with conceptual argumentation.

Overall, the analysis reveals that the integration of Islamic values into destination branding remains underdeveloped in both theory and practice. While many studies have recognized the importance of trust and religiosity (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015), few have articulated a framework for embedding Islamic moral values into branding strategies. The findings of this study suggest that conceptual clarity can be achieved by reframing halal tourism not as a technical compliance issue, but as a process of ethical identity construction. Through this lens, branding becomes a spiritual and cultural practice that embodies Islamic teachings in communication and experience. Each of the following sections discusses this integration from a different theoretical angle.

In line with prior conceptual studies this research argues that a holistic understanding of halal tourism requires the fusion of theological insight and marketing theory (Ali Shah et al., 2023). The discussion that follows elaborates the three core dimensions that emerged from the data analysis: (1) Islamic values as the ontological foundation of branding, (2) trust and authenticity as psychological mediators shaping tourist perception, and (3) theoretical implications for developing a values based model of halal destination branding. Together, these dimensions form the conceptual contribution of this paper and demonstrate how Islamic ethical values can serve as an enduring framework for destination identity formation.

### 1. Integrating Islamic Values into Destination Branding

The first research question explores how Islamic values can be conceptually integrated into destination branding frameworks to construct a distinctive halal tourism identity. Analysis of the literature indicates that most branding models in tourism focus primarily on functional differentiation and emotional positioning (Pike, 2015). However, when examined through the lens of Islamic ethics, branding must extend beyond emotional appeal toward moral integrity. Propose that Islamic principles such as *amanah* (trustworthiness) and *ihsan* (excellence) can serve as branding elements that communicate sincerity and

ethical consistency. By incorporating these values, destinations can move from promoting halal as a label to embodying it as an authentic identity.

In practice, destinations like Malaysia and Indonesia have adopted Islamic branding strategies but often without explicit theoretical grounding. Many promotional materials highlight halal compliance yet fail to communicate the spiritual meaning behind it. This study contends that branding rooted in Islamic values must first articulate a moral narrative that reflects the unity of faith and culture (Khoiriati et al., 2018). Recent institutional analyses further indicate that both countries exhibit varying degrees of incorporating Islamic values into their tourism identity, with branding frequently shaped more by policy and market incentives than by moral narratives (Musthofa et al., 2023). When *tawhid* (oneness) and *‘adl* (justice) become central to a destination’s storytelling, the brand resonates more deeply with Muslim tourists.

From a conceptual standpoint, Islamic values serve as semiotic codes that specify how a place conveys authenticity. Narrative coherence shapes brand identity; in halal tourism, coherence emerges when a destination's actions are consistent with Islamic values. concentrate on customer satisfaction and service quality, but this study advances their work by highlighting value alignment as the cornerstone of authentic branding. A symbolic contract based on common beliefs is formed when the destination's promises and the visitor's religious expectations are morally aligned. This expands the definition of "halal destination" beyond formal certification.

Furthermore, by strengthening the ethical and spiritual underpinnings of tourism, the incorporation of Islamic values promotes sustainable branding. Value-based branding, as opposed to transactional satisfaction, increases customer loyalty through moral engagement. This moral engagement in halal tourism takes the form of empathy, compassion, and community-building traits derived from *‘adl* (justice) and *rahmah* (mercy). According to the research, incorporating these ideas into destination branding encourages a sense of emotional connection with the location, turning travel into a moral engagement. This realization connects Islamic spiritual anthropology and branding theory.

However, incorporating religious principles into contexts that are driven by the market presents a number of difficulties. If Islamic symbols are used superficially for commercial appeal, there is a chance that religion will become a commodity. The current study backs this criticism and makes the case for a morally sound strategy that opposes this kind of commercialization. Islam should be portrayed in branding as a lived moral culture that influences behavior, design, and communication rather than as a feature of a product. framework of "Islamic marketing," which highlights *niyyah* (intention) as the moral cornerstone of branding. Therefore, the integration process necessitates both strategic sensitivity and theological awareness.

Institutional coherence among tourism stakeholders is also necessary for the integration of Islamic values. There needs to be a common understanding of what defines halal identity among government agencies, marketers, and service providers. Diverse institutional interpretations of "halal" weaken the authenticity of a brand. This analysis confirms that maintaining moral consistency requires alignment between policy narratives and brand communication. Branding becomes a long-term identity strategy that goes beyond individual campaigns when Islamic ethics are ingrained at the institutional level. Maintaining visitor loyalty and fostering trust depend on this integrative coherence.

Islamic values serve as both symbolic capital and moral standards, according to a review of the literature. The idea of cultural capital is applicable here: Islamic virtues create symbolic meaning that sets destinations apart in the global halal market when they are incorporated into branding. claim that Islamic travel embodies a moral and cultural framework. Islamic values are therefore incorporated as a dual mechanism that improves symbolic differentiation while fortifying ethical integrity. This dual function is positioned as the foundation of halal destination identity in the conceptual framework developed in this paper.

Additionally, incorporating Islamic values enables places to have interfaith and cross-cultural conversations. Highlights: Halal travel does not have to be exclusive; it can encourage universal values like justice, honesty, and hospitality. By demonstrating how Islamic branding can convey common human values derived from the Qur'anic ethos of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation), the current study supports this inclusive interpretation. This kind of integration promotes social harmony and mutual understanding, bringing moral tourism into line with sustainable development objectives. Islamic principles can therefore serve as a link between global inclusivity and religious authenticity.

To reiterate, the strategic incorporation of Islamic principles to destination branding involves a shift from branding for Muslims to branding through Islam. Previous research has also laid the empirical foundation by which we understood the influence of religiosity and satisfaction; this paper builds on these findings by introducing an ontological model of value based identity construction. The process of integration is content rather than representation, the bringing of Islamic ethics into a palpable existence, lived out in tourism. In turn, destinations embracing these values will bring out trustworthiness, truth and sustainable point of differentiation in the halal tourism demand.

## 2. Trust, Authenticity, and the Perception of Destination Identity

Trust is believed to be a key variable which explains destination loyalty and satisfaction, particularly in faith based tourism setting. CCT theory suggests that long-lasting relationships between brand and consumer are based on mutual trust and value compatibility. In the halal tourism context, such trust is further magnified since Muslim tourists perceive trust to be not just a matter of transaction but also as an ethical and religious consideration. Sufficiently validated that perceived trust in halal certified services enhances the extent of emotional attachment among Muslim on variation H5 (Appendix). Building upon this foundation, the present conceptual analysis positions trust as both a psychological assurance and a spiritual bond that sustains the integrity of halal destination identity.

Authenticity, as a closely related construct, plays a crucial mediating role between destination identity and tourist trust. Define authenticity as the perceived genuineness and cultural truth of a tourism experience. Within halal tourism, authenticity extends beyond aesthetics or heritage representation; it involves alignment with Islamic moral and ethical expectations. When tourists perceive that a destination's communication and services sincerely reflect Islamic values. This authenticity reinforces emotional security and strengthens tourists' belief that the destination embodies the values it claims to represent. Hence, authenticity is the perceptual gateway through which trust is formed.

However, authenticity cannot be engineered solely through marketing communication. Authentic Islamic hospitality emerges from ethical consistency and *niyyah* (intention),

rather than symbolic representation. Destinations that merely advertise halal compliance without genuine commitment risk generating “performative religiosity,” which undermines credibility. Similarly warns that the commodification of Islamic identity can weaken trust and alienate discerning Muslim travelers. This analysis suggests that authenticity in halal tourism must arise organically from the integration of Islamic values at institutional, cultural, and behavioral levels. Only then can trust evolve as a sustainable relational outcome.

The perception of trust among Muslim tourists is also influenced by the congruence between *brand promises* and *religious expectations*. Inconsistency between marketing narratives and actual service delivery such as promoting “Islamic hospitality” without providing prayer facilities or halal certified food creates cognitive dissonance and damages trust. Emphasize that spiritual congruence is key to shaping positive destination perception. This study supports that argument and expands it by suggesting that congruence is not only behavioral but also symbolic. When destination identity authentically reflects Islamic ethics, Muslim travelers experience psychological harmony that reinforces both satisfaction and loyalty.

From a social psychological standpoint, trust operates at both individual and collective levels. Individual trust develops from personal encounters with ethical service delivery, while collective trust emerges from the destination’s reputation and community endorsement. Highlights that collective trust in branding is often co created through social discourse and word of mouth communication. In halal tourism, these discourses are shaped by shared religious values and community validation. This conceptual model therefore views trust as a social construct embedded in the moral ecosystem of Muslim tourism, where destination identity becomes a reflection of shared belief systems rather than mere market positioning.

Authenticity also shapes trust through emotional resonance and symbolic communication. Emotionally authentic destinations evoke a sense of belonging that transforms visitors from consumers into participants. When a destination embodies Islamic compassion (*rahmah*) and justice (*‘adl*), tourists perceive sincerity rather than spectacle. This emotional connection strengthens the moral contract between the destination and its visitors, creating a relational trust that transcends the transactional logic of tourism. The present study thus interprets authenticity as both an emotional and ethical bridge linking Islamic values to destination identity.

Another significant insight relates to how ethical alignment reinforces the cognitive dimension of trust. Muslim travelers assess destinations through indicators of religious adherence, but these evaluations are increasingly influenced by perceived ethical integrity. The current conceptual synthesis reveals that ethical alignment between what a destination *says* and what it *does* serves as the primary validator of authenticity. When destinations internalize Islamic ethics in management, transparency, and hospitality, tourists interpret these actions as signs of *amanah* (trustworthiness). Thus, ethical alignment becomes both a prerequisite and a product of perceived trustworthiness in halal branding.

This dynamic is further supported by research on symbolic interactionism, which posits that meaning is constructed through shared interpretation. Applying this theory, the identity of a halal destination is co created through the interactions between marketers, service providers, and tourists. Destination identity is not imposed but negotiated through

communication and experience. The integration of Islamic values allows this negotiation to take place within a shared moral vocabulary, thereby reducing interpretive ambiguity and strengthening trust. The result is a destination identity perceived as coherent, credible, and spiritually grounded.

Nevertheless, several tensions persist in the practical implementation of trust based branding. Observed that some destinations rely heavily on symbolic markers such as Arabic signage or mosque imagery without corresponding ethical behavior. Such symbolic excess can generate skepticism among Muslim tourists who expect integrity rather than imagery. This study reinforces Stephenson's critique and highlights the importance of moral transparency as a driver of trust. Authentic branding, therefore, must be built upon demonstrable ethical consistency rather than religious symbolism alone.

From a theoretical perspective, the interaction between trust, authenticity, and destination identity reflects a cyclical process. Trust reinforces identity through validation, while identity sustains trust by providing meaning. This mutual reinforcement aligns with the "relational authenticity model", which views authenticity as a dynamic exchange of meaning between provider and consumer. The present study extends this model into a religious context, suggesting that trust in halal tourism is not only relational but also spiritual anchored in shared faith based values. Consequently, the perception of destination identity emerges as a moral construct grounded in mutual trust and ethical coherence.

In conclusion, the synthesis of previous studies and theoretical reasoning demonstrates that trust and authenticity are central to shaping how Muslim tourists perceive destination identity. Prior works confirm their empirical influence, but this study contributes by conceptualizing their moral and theological foundations. Trust is not simply a cognitive judgment but a reflection of shared values and moral assurance. Authenticity, in turn, represents the visible manifestation of Islamic ethics in branding and experience. Together, these constructs constitute the psychological and spiritual mechanisms through which Islamic values are translated into meaningful destination identities

### **3. Theoretical Implications of Positioning Islamic Values as the Foundation of Destination Branding**

Positioning Islamic values as the theoretical foundation of destination branding offers a paradigm shift in understanding the nature of halal tourism. Traditionally, tourism branding has been dominated by consumer psychology and market differentiation frameworks. These models treat destination identity as an outcome of market signaling and brand image construction. However, when grounded in Islamic values, branding transforms from an external communication tool into an internalized ethical system. This theoretical repositioning aligns concept of *Islamic marketing*, which situates marketing activities within a value based moral worldview rather than a purely economic framework. Hence, Islamic values redefine destination branding as a form of ethical representation rather than market promotion.

From a conceptual standpoint, this paradigm implies that destination branding operates within a theological ethical ontology. The notion of *tawhid* (oneness) establishes the epistemological unity between creator, human, and environment, which profoundly influences how a destination is imagined and experienced. Emphasize that tourism underpinned by *tawhidic* consciousness encourages harmony and stewardship rather than exploitation. Incorporating this worldview into branding reorients the purpose of tourism toward spiritual fulfillment and communal well being. Thus, the theoretical implication is

that branding becomes an act of *da'wah* a moral communication that reflects Islamic cosmology and ethical responsibility.

Integrating Islamic values also challenges the Western centric paradigm of branding theory that prioritizes individual experience over collective meaning. In contrast, Islamic ethics emphasize social justice, community harmony, and moral accountability (*'adl, ukhuwwah,* and *amanah*). When applied to destination branding, these principles create a communal rather than individualistic identity. Who suggests that future place branding must move from transactional to relational ethics. The present study extends this argument by grounding relational ethics in Islamic theology, thereby providing a normative moral foundation for global halal tourism branding.

Another significant theoretical implication involves reinterpreting the concept of “brand equity” through an Islamic moral lens. Conventional models define brand equity as the aggregate of consumer perceptions and loyalty. However, this study proposes that in halal tourism, brand equity must also include *ethical equity* the moral credibility and trustworthiness of the destination. This addition expands the theoretical boundaries of branding theory, suggesting that the long term value of a destination depends not only on image and satisfaction but also on perceived moral integrity. This conceptual enrichment offers a pathway for developing a faith sensitive model of brand equity grounded in Islamic ethics.

Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values offers a holistic framework that bridges spirituality, culture, and commerce. Both acknowledge that Muslim travelers seek spiritual resonance rather than mere service compliance. The present analysis translates this insight into a theoretical proposition: Islamic values serve as the *semantic core* of destination identity. In this model, destination image, trust, and authenticity are not separate constructs but expressions of an underlying spiritual coherence. The implication is that future theories of destination branding should consider moral and metaphysical dimensions alongside traditional consumer based variables.

This framework also contributes to the growing discourse on *transformative tourism* a movement emphasizing tourism’s role in personal and social transformation. Transformative tourism requires ethical consciousness and meaningful engagement. Islamic values naturally fulfill these criteria, as they encourage humility, reflection, and stewardship of creation (*khalifah fil ardh*). Therefore, positioning Islamic ethics as the foundation of branding not only enriches marketing theory but also situates halal tourism within a global agenda of sustainable and transformative practices. The theoretical implication extends beyond Muslim markets toward universal moral tourism paradigms.

Moreover, grounding destination branding in Islamic values invites an epistemological dialogue between faith based and secular marketing theories. Tourism studies have long been dominated by secular, utilitarian frameworks that neglect moral consciousness. By contrast, this study proposes that Islamic epistemology anchored in divine guidance (*wahy*) offers an alternative model of knowledge production. Branding, therefore, becomes an act of moral interpretation rather than consumer manipulation. The implication is the emergence of a hybrid theoretical domain that blends theology, ethics, and marketing science into a coherent conceptual structure for halal destination branding.

At a methodological level, this reorientation suggests that future research on halal tourism should adopt integrative approaches combining qualitative hermeneutics, semiotic

analysis, and moral philosophy. Relied heavily on quantitative measures of satisfaction and loyalty, yet these metrics cannot fully capture the moral depth of Islamic experiences. The present conceptual model demonstrates the need for a *value centered* methodology that decodes the symbolic, ethical, and theological layers of destination identity. Such an approach would yield richer theoretical insights and advance halal tourism research from descriptive empiricism to normative theorization.

Additionally, this theoretical stance has implications for policy and governance in Muslim majority destinations. Many tourism authorities still approach halal branding as a marketing campaign rather than an identity formation process. The framework proposed here redefines governance as *moral stewardship*, where policy decisions are guided by *maqasid al shariah* (the objectives of Islamic law) namely, the preservation of faith, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth. When these objectives inform tourism branding, the resulting destination identity embodies ethical balance and social welfare. The implication is that theory and policy must converge under a unified moral paradigm.

In synthesizing these perspectives, the study advances a conceptual model termed “Value Integrated Destination Identity (VIDI)”. This model posits that Islamic values serve as the ontological foundation from which trust, authenticity, and loyalty emerge as derivative constructs. Unlike conventional branding models that treat values as external modifiers, the VIDI framework positions them as the generative source of identity. This theoretical innovation enriches both the halal tourism discourse and broader marketing scholarship by embedding spirituality within the structure of brand identity. Thus, the model contributes to the ongoing redefinition of marketing as a moral science.

In conclusion, positioning Islamic values as the foundation of destination branding transforms the theoretical landscape of halal tourism studies. It shifts the focus from compliance to consciousness, from image to integrity, and from consumption to communion. Provided empirical insights into Muslim consumer behavior, but this conceptual synthesis introduces a deeper philosophical framework. By reframing branding as a moral narrative grounded in Islamic theology, this study bridges ethical theory and marketing practice. The result is a theoretical model that envisions halal tourism not merely as a market niche, but as a global movement toward ethical and spiritual sustainability.

## CONCLUSION

This research has successfully answered all the questions raised regarding how Islamic values can be integrated into halal destination branding, how trust and authenticity shape perceptions of destination identity, and the theoretical implications of placing Islamic values as the primary foundation of tourism branding strategies. Through a conceptual qualitative approach based on textual analysis, this research confirms that the halal destination image is not simply the result of marketing activities, but rather a reflection of the moral integrity, spiritual awareness, and ethical commitment of all tourism stakeholders.

The first finding indicates that the integration of Islamic values such as *amanah* (honesty), *ihsan* (excellence), *‘adl* (justice), and *rahmah* (compassion) is central to the formation of an authentic halal destination identity. These values not only strengthen the destination's differentiation in the global market but also bring to life spiritual meanings that unite the dimensions of worship and the tourism experience. Thus, the theoretical question regarding the relationship between Islamic values and destination image can be resolved by

understanding that branding is not merely a commercial symbol, but rather a manifestation of Islamic ethics and morality in the social sphere of tourism.

The second finding confirms that trust and authenticity are the key link between Islamic values and the perception of destination identity in the eyes of Muslim tourists. Trust grows not only from adherence to halal standards, but also from the alignment between brand promises and actual practices on the ground. Authenticity, on the other hand, serves as a moral mirror that demonstrates the destination's commitment to implementing Islamic values fully and consistently. This section has addressed how trust and authenticity shape tourists' psychological and spiritual perceptions, while simultaneously strengthening the destination's identity as ethical and sustainable.

The third finding expands theoretical understanding by positioning Islamic values as the ontological framework underlying destination branding theory. The analysis shows that the conventional, market-oriented marketing paradigm needs to be complemented by a tawhidic paradigm that emphasizes the unity of spiritual, social, and ecological values. This approach yields the Value Integrated Destination Identity (VIDI) conceptual model, which explains how Islamic values serve as a source of identity, while trust, authenticity, and loyalty serve as derived dimensions. Thus, this research not only expands branding theory but also enriches the global discourse on values-based tourism.

Overall, this study demonstrates that all research questions have been systematically answered. Islamic values have been demonstrated to be conceptually integrated into halal destination branding strategies; trust and authenticity serve as moral and psychological bonds between tourists and destinations; and a new theoretical foundation has been established through an Islamic ethical approach that views tourism as a space for da'wah (Islamic outreach) and the formation of spiritual awareness. Thus, the research problem of how to build a strong, ethical, and sustainable halal destination identity has been addressed through in-depth conceptual synthesis.

The recommendations from this study encompass two main dimensions. First, a theoretical recommendation: the need to develop a conceptual model for halal tourism that is not solely based on consumer behavior but also emphasizes moral and theological aspects as a scientific foundation. Academics in the fields of marketing and tourism are advised to develop a methodological approach that integrates value communication theory, Islamic ethics, and destination identity theory into a comprehensive framework. Second, a practical recommendation: for policymakers and tourism industry players, the integration of Islamic values must be realized through concrete actions such as service ethics training, destination management based on the maqasid al-shariah (obligatory objectives of sharia), and consistent brand communications that reflect honesty, justice, and social concern. Through the implementation of these values, halal destinations will not only become competitive tourist destinations but also moral role models for sustainable tourism practices globally.

In conclusion, this study confirms that the true power of halal destination branding lies in its ability to deliver authentic spiritual experiences rooted in universal Islamic values. By making Islamic ethics the foundation of destination identity and communication, halal tourism can bridge the gap between spirituality and modernity, between the global market and humanitarian missions. Therefore, the future direction of halal tourism is not merely toward economic growth, but also toward a profound sense of moral awareness and sustainability.

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