

Religious and Sharia Tourism: Unveiling the Appeal of Penyengat Island as a Halal Destination in Indonesia

Yudhi Martha Nugraha ^{1*}, Awang Azman Awang Pawi ¹, Nur Azlin Binti Hamidon ², Nur Yuhanis Binti Mohd Nasir ³

¹ Department of Arts, Academy of Malay Studies, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

² Department of Language dan Communication, College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Shah Alam, Malaysia.

³ Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

* E-mail Corresponding: ymnugraha@uin-suska.ac.id

Received: June 1st, 2025

Revised: July 1st, 2025

Accepted: September 5th, 2025

Academic Editor: Alamsyah

Publisher's Note: Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (LP2M), Universitas Mulawarman remains neutral With respect to jurisdictional claims in the figures or designs published in this journal.



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

ABSTRACT: Penyengat Island, a historically significant island in Indonesia's Riau Archipelago, emerges as a compelling destination for halal tourism due to its profound Islamic heritage and cultural richness. As the global halal tourism market continues to expand, destinations that integrate religious authenticity with sharia-compliant services are increasingly sought after by Muslim travelers. This study investigates Penyengat Island's potential as a halal tourism destination by comprehensively evaluating its religious assets, existing sharia-compliant infrastructure, and visitor experiences. Adopting a mixed-methods research design, the study combines qualitative interviews with key stakeholders—including local government officials, tourism operators, and religious leaders—with quantitative surveys of 150 domestic and international tourists. Additionally, document analysis of historical records and contemporary tourism policies provides contextual depth to the findings. The research reveals that Penyengat Island possesses strong foundational elements for halal tourism, most notably its iconic Masjid Sultan Riau, royal tombs of the Riau-Lingga Sultanate, and well-preserved Islamic cultural traditions. These assets contribute to the island's unique spiritual and historical appeal. However, critical gaps in halal service standardization were identified, particularly regarding gender-segregated facilities (only 40% compliance among accommodations) and comprehensive halal certification for food establishments (85% certified but with limited menu diversity). Tourist feedback indicates high satisfaction with religious sites (average rating of 4.2/5 for prayer facilities) but calls for improved infrastructure, including better signage and expanded halal dining options. This study makes significant contributions to the academic discourse on halal tourism by providing empirical evidence from an emerging Indonesian destination. Practically, it offers policymakers and tourism developers actionable strategies to enhance Penyengat Island's competitiveness in the global halal tourism market. Recommendations include strengthening public-private partnerships for infrastructure development, implementing community-based tourism initiatives to preserve cultural authenticity, and leveraging digital marketing to target Muslim travelers effectively. The findings underscore the importance of balancing heritage conservation with modern tourism demands to create sustainable halal tourism models.

KEYWORDS: Halal tourism; Islamic tourism; sharia-compliant tourism; religious heritage; cultural tourism; Penyengat Island

1. INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry has seen a rapid increase in niche markets that cater to specific demographic needs. Halal tourism is one of the fastest-growing and most dynamic segments. Halal tourism is defined as tourism activities that comply with Islamic principles. It encompasses not only the provision of halal food and prayer facilities, but also the broader ecosystem of Sharia-compliant services, including accommodation, transportation, and entertainment (Battour & Ismail, 2016). This sector's projected market value of \$225 billion by 2028

How to cite this article: Nugraha YM, Awang Pawi AA, Azlim Binti Hamidon N, Yuhanis Binti Nasir N. Religious and Sharia Tourism: Unveiling the Appeal of Penyengat Island as a Halal Destination in Indonesia. *Mulawarman J Soc Sci.* 2025; 1(1): 1-13.

underscores its significance, driven primarily by the increasing affluence and travel propensity of Muslim populations worldwide, particularly millennials (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2023). For Muslim travelers, halal tourism is a religious obligation, not merely a preference, making the development of destinations that authentically cater to these needs an economic imperative and a cultural responsibility.

As the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, Indonesia is uniquely positioned to capitalize on this trend. With a population of over 230 million, approximately 87% of whom are Muslim, Indonesia possesses a vast domestic market and the cultural and religious assets to attract international Muslim travelers (Pew Research Center, 2021). Recognizing this potential, the Indonesian government launched the Muslim-Friendly Tourism initiative in 2019 to promote the country as a global halal tourism hub (Ministry of Tourism, Indonesia, 2019). However, despite these efforts, the development of halal tourism in Indonesia is uneven. Destinations such as Bali and Lombok receive disproportionate attention, while historically significant, yet less commercially exploited, locations, such as Penyengat Island in the Riau Archipelago, remain understudied and underdeveloped.

Penyengat Island, a small island located approximately 6 kilometers from the city of Tanjung Pinang, holds profound historical and religious significance as a former center of Islamic learning and governance during the Riau-Lingga Sultanate in the 18th and 19th centuries. The island is home to architectural marvels such as the Masjid Sultan Riau, a vibrant yellow mosque constructed without nails, and the tombs of revered Islamic scholars and sultans, making it a repository of Malay-Islamic heritage (Andaya, 2008). These attributes position Penyengat Island as a compelling candidate for halal tourism development, offering a blend of spiritual, cultural, and historical experiences that align with the motivations of Muslim travelers seeking destinations that resonate with their religious identity (El-Gohary, 2022).

Despite its potential, Penyengat Island faces several challenges that hinder its transformation into a competitive halal tourism destination. Infrastructure gaps, such as the limited availability of gender-segregated facilities and inconsistent halal certification among local businesses, undermine the visitor experience for Muslim tourists (Hakim et al., 2020). Furthermore, the island's tourism narrative remains underdeveloped, with insufficient integration of its Islamic heritage into broader marketing strategies. These issues are compounded by a lack of empirical research on Penyengat Island's halal tourism potential, leaving policymakers and stakeholders without evidence-based insights to guide development.

This study aims to address this gap by examining the viability of Penyengat Island as a halal tourism destination. Specifically, the research aims to: (1) identify and evaluate key religious and cultural assets on the island that could form the foundation of halal tourism offerings, (2) assess the current state of Sharia-compliant services, including the availability of halal food, prayer facilities, and accommodation standards, and (3) analyze tourist perceptions and satisfaction levels regarding the island's adherence to halal tourism principles. Adopting a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative interviews with local stakeholders, quantitative surveys of tourists, and document analysis of historical and policy records provides a holistic understanding of Penyengat Island's strengths and limitations in the context of halal tourism.

The research is significant for two reasons. First, academically, it contributes to the growing literature on halal tourism by focusing on an understudied destination, thereby expanding the geographical and cultural scope of existing studies, which have predominantly centered on urban centers in the Middle East and Southeast Asia (Samori et al., 2016). Practically, the findings offer actionable recommendations for policymakers, tourism operators, and community leaders to enhance the island's competitiveness in the global halal tourism market. These include strategies for infrastructure development, community engagement to preserve cultural authenticity, and targeted marketing campaigns to position the island as a premier destination for religious and cultural tourism.

The central question guiding this research is: How can Penyengat Island leverage its Islamic heritage and cultural assets to develop into a sustainable, competitive halal tourism destination? In answering this question, the study advances scholarly understanding of halal tourism in non-urban settings and provides a roadmap for other destinations looking to capitalize on the growing demand for Sharia-compliant travel experiences. The study underscores the importance of balancing commercial objectives with cultural preservation to ensure that halal tourism development on Penyengat Island benefits visitors and the local community while safeguarding the island's unique historical and religious identity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Halal Tourism: Definition and Global Trends

Halal tourism has emerged as a specialized segment of the global tourism industry. It is characterized by services and experiences designed to comply with Islamic principles. This concept goes beyond dietary requirements and extends to the entire tourism ecosystem, including accommodations, transportation, entertainment, and financial transactions that adhere to Sharia principles (Battour & Ismail, 2016). According to the Global Muslim Travel Index (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2023), the halal tourism market is projected to reach

\$225 billion by 2028, with Muslim travelers accounting for an estimated 230 million international arrivals annually. Several factors are driving this growth, including the increasing affluence of Muslim populations, particularly in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, and the rising demand for faith-based travel experiences among younger generations (Salamoura et al., 2021).

The theoretical foundations of halal tourism are rooted in Islamic teachings that emphasize maintaining religious obligations while traveling. Key requirements include halal food, prayer facilities, gender-segregated amenities, and alcohol-free environments (El-Gohary, 2022). The concept also incorporates ethical dimensions, such as environmental sustainability and social responsibility, aligning with the broader principles of *maqasid al-sharia*, or the objectives of Islamic law (Samori et al., 2016). Despite its rapid growth, the sector faces challenges related to standardization due to varying interpretations of what constitutes "halal-friendly" services across different cultural contexts (Henderson, 2016).

2.2. Religious Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Religious tourism is one of the oldest and most enduring forms of travel. Destinations of spiritual significance attract millions of visitors each year. Rinschede (1992) defines it as journeys undertaken for pilgrimage, spiritual enrichment, or cultural exploration. This distinguishes religious tourism from secular tourism, as it focuses on sacred sites and rituals. In the Islamic context, religious tourism is exemplified by the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. However, it also encompasses visits to lesser-known sites of historical and theological significance, including the tombs of saints and scholars (Timothy & Iverson, 2006).

The potential of Penyengat Island as a religious tourism destination lies in its unique blend of Islamic heritage and Malay cultural identity. Serving as the intellectual and political center of the Riau-Lingga Sultanate in the 18th and 19th centuries, the island left behind architectural treasures, including the Masjid Sultan Riau, a masterpiece of traditional Malay-Islamic design (Andaya, 2008). The mosque, along with the royal tombs and historical manuscripts preserved on the island, offers visitors a tangible connection to the region's Islamic golden age. These sites attract not only devout Muslims, but also cultural tourists interested in the intersection of religion, history, and art (Olsen & Timothy, 2022).

Integrating cultural heritage into religious tourism experiences is critical for destination differentiation. Studies have shown that visitors to religious sites increasingly seek immersive experiences that combine spiritual activities with cultural learning (Shackley, 2001). For Penyengat Island, this could entail curated tours of historical landmarks, calligraphy workshops, and performances of traditional Islamic arts. However, the commercialization of religious heritage must be carefully managed to avoid compromising the sanctity of these sites (Raj & Griffin, 2015).

2.3. Sharia-Compliant Tourism in Indonesia

Indonesia's approach to sharia-compliant tourism has evolved significantly in recent years, driven by government initiatives and market demand. The Ministry of Tourism's Muslim-Friendly Tourism program, launched in 2019, aims to position the country as a global leader in halal tourism by certifying accommodations, restaurants, and attractions that meet sharia standards (Ministry of Tourism, Indonesia, 2019). The program builds on Indonesia's competitive advantages, including its large Muslim population, diverse Islamic cultural heritage, and established tourism infrastructure (Hakim et al., 2020).

Despite these efforts, the implementation of sharia-compliant tourism practices remains uneven across the archipelago. While destinations like Aceh and West Java have successfully developed halal tourism ecosystems, others struggle with issues such as inconsistent certification, limited awareness among local businesses, and inadequate infrastructure (Battour et al., 2020). Penyengat Island exemplifies these challenges, as its rich Islamic heritage contrasts with the underdevelopment of supporting services like halal-certified restaurants and prayer facilities (Yusuf et al., 2022).

A critical gap in Indonesia's halal tourism strategy is the lack of localized approaches that account for regional variations in Islamic practice and cultural context. For example, the Malay-Muslim communities of the Riau Archipelago have distinct traditions and interpretations of sharia compliance that differ from those in Java or Sumatra (Faqih, 2021). Addressing these nuances requires collaborative governance models that involve local religious leaders, community organizations, and tourism stakeholders in the planning process (Prastowo et al., 2023).

The academic literature also highlights the need for empirical research on visitor perceptions of sharia-compliant tourism in Indonesia. While studies have examined Muslim travelers' preferences in international contexts (Carboni & Janati, 2016), few have focused on domestic tourists, who constitute the majority of visitors to destinations like Penyengat Island. Understanding these preferences is essential for designing services that balance religious compliance with contemporary travel expectations (Stephenson, 2014).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a sequential mixed-methods research design to comprehensively evaluate Penyengat Island's potential as a halal tourism destination. The approach combined qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis phases, allowing for triangulation of findings and a more robust understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The methodology was designed to address three key aspects: (1) stakeholder perspectives on halal tourism development, (2) tourist experiences and satisfaction levels, and (3) policy and historical contexts influencing current tourism practices.

3.2. Research Design

3.2.1. Participant Selection and Recruitment

Purposive sampling was employed to identify 20 key informants representing four stakeholder groups critical to halal tourism development:

1. Government officials (n=5): Including representatives from the Riau Islands Tourism Office, Cultural Heritage Department, and Religious Affairs Office.
2. Business operators (n=7): Comprising hotel managers, restaurant owners, and tour guides operating on Penyengat Island.
3. Religious leaders (n=4): Consisting of local imams and Islamic scholars familiar with the island's religious heritage.
4. Community representatives (n=4): Including leaders of local NGOs and traditional community groups.

Participants were selected based on their professional involvement with tourism activities on the island for at least three years and their influence in decision-making processes. Recruitment continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, where no new substantive information emerged from additional interviews (Saunders et al., 2018).

3.2.2. Data Collection Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted between June and July 2024 using an interview guide organized around four themes:

1. Perceptions of Penyengat Island's readiness for halal tourism
2. Existing sharia-compliant services and infrastructure gaps
3. Challenges in preserving Islamic cultural heritage
4. Recommendations for sustainable development

Each interview lasted 45-60 minutes, conducted in Bahasa Indonesia (with selected Arabic terms for religious concepts), and audio-recorded with participants' consent. Field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations.

3.2.3. Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed using NVivo 14 software through a six-phase thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

1. Familiarization with the data through repeated reading
2. Initial code generation
3. Theme development
4. Theme review
5. Theme definition and naming
6. Report production

Intercoder reliability was established by having two researchers independently code 30% of the transcripts, achieving a Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.82, indicating substantial agreement (McHugh, 2012).

3.3. Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

3.3.1. Survey Instrument Development

A structured questionnaire was developed based on:

1. Literature review findings
2. Preliminary qualitative results
3. Adaptation of standardized scales from previous halal tourism studies (Battour et al., 2020)

The instrument comprised four sections:

1. Demographic characteristics (5 items)
2. Travel behavior and motivations (7 items)
3. Satisfaction with halal services (15 items using 5-point Likert scales)
4. Open-ended suggestions for improvement

The questionnaire was piloted with 30 tourists in May 2024, resulting in minor revisions to improve clarity (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89 for satisfaction items).

3.3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

A convenience sampling approach was used to survey 150 tourists (domestic and international) visiting Penyengat Island during peak visitation days (Fridays-Sundays) from June to August 2024. The sample size was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for a population of approximately 500 daily visitors, with a 95% confidence level and 7% margin of error.

Trained enumerators administered the surveys in multiple languages (Bahasa Indonesia, English, Arabic) at key tourist sites. The response rate was 84%, with 18 incomplete surveys excluded from analysis.

3.3.3. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 26 with the following procedures:

1. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations)
2. Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha)
3. Factor analysis to identify underlying dimensions of halal service satisfaction
4. Independent samples t-tests to compare domestic and international tourist perceptions

3.4. Document Analysis

3.4.1. Data Sources

Three categories of documents were analyzed:

1. Historical records: Colonial-era manuscripts, sultanate decrees, and Islamic texts from the Riau Lingga Royal Library
2. Policy documents: Local tourism development plans (2015-2025), halal certification regulations, and heritage conservation guidelines
3. Promotional materials: Tourism brochures, websites, and social media content

3.4.2. Analytical Approach

Document analysis followed Bowen's (2009) framework:

1. Sourcing and authenticating materials
2. Content analysis for explicit and latent meanings
3. Thematic organization of findings
4. Cross-verification with interview and survey data

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research principles:

1. Institutional Review Board approval obtained (No. UIRB/2024/456)
2. Informed consent secured from all participants
3. Anonymity guaranteed through pseudonym use
4. Data stored securely with restricted access

3.6. Methodological Limitations

While comprehensive, the study had several limitations:

1. Temporal constraints limiting data collection to peak season
2. Potential response bias in self-reported tourist surveys
3. Challenges in accessing some historical documents due to preservation conditions

These limitations were mitigated through methodological triangulation and member checking with key informants.

4. RESULT

4.1 Key Religious and Cultural Assets

4.1.1. Masjid Sultan Riau

The 19th-century Masjid Sultan Riau emerged as Penyengat Island's most significant attraction, with 90% of surveyed tourists rating their experience as "satisfactory" or "highly satisfactory" ($M=4.5$, $SD=0.6$). Architectural analysis revealed three distinctive Islamic design elements contributing to its appeal:

1. Structural Innovation: The mosque's nail-free construction using a traditional Malay jointing system (63% of tourists commented on this feature)
2. Decorative Elements: Intricate calligraphy and geometric patterns incorporating Quranic verses (observed in 92% of visitor photos)

3. **Spiritual Atmosphere:** 87% of respondents reported feeling a "strong sense of spiritual connection" during visits

Historical documents confirmed the mosque's role as a center for Islamic scholarship, with records showing it hosted prominent ulama from across the Malay world between 1832-1911.

4.1.2. Royal Tombs Complex

The royal necropolis attracted 75% of visitors primarily interested in cultural heritage (M=4.1, SD=0.8). Key findings included:

1. **Visitor Composition:** 68% domestic Muslims, 22% international tourists, 10% academic researchers
2. **Dwell Time:** Average 47 minutes per visit (compared to 82 minutes at the mosque)
3. **Interpretation Gaps:** Only 35% found existing information panels "sufficiently informative"

Stakeholder interviews revealed ongoing preservation challenges, particularly regarding humidity damage to 19th-century grave markers (mentioned by all 4 heritage managers interviewed).

4.1.3. Islamic Cultural Performances

Traditional arts emerged as an underdeveloped potential asset:

1. **Current Offerings:** Limited to occasional Quran recitals (monthly frequency)
2. **Visitor Demand:** 62% expressed interest in regular cultural shows
3. **Economic Impact:** Performers earn approximately IDR 150,000 (USD 10) per event

4.2. Halal Service Infrastructure

4.2.1. Food and Beverage Services

Audits of 28 food establishments revealed:

1. **Halal Certification:** 85% certified (24/28), though 40% displayed certificates inconspicuously
2. **Menu Analysis:**
 - a. 100% offered rice-based dishes
 - b. 32% included Western options
 - c. 11% provided vegetarian menus
3. **Pricing:** Halal meals averaged IDR 35,000 (USD 2.30), considered "reasonable" by 78% of tourists

Notable gaps included:

1. No dedicated halal seafood restaurants despite coastal location
2. Limited child-friendly dining options (raised by 43% of family travelers)

4.2.2. Prayer Facilities

Assessment of 15 tourist sites showed:

1. **Availability:** Prayer spaces at all major attractions but only 20% of minor sites
2. **Quality Ratings:**
 - a. Cleanliness: 4.3/5
 - b. Privacy: 3.7/5
 - c. Wudu facilities: 3.5/5
3. **Gender Allocation:** 90% provided separate areas for men and women

4.2.3. Accommodation Standards

Evaluation of 12 lodging properties demonstrated:

1. **Sharia Compliance:**
 - a. 40% had gender-segregated floors
 - b. 25% offered Quran in rooms
 - c. 8% provided prayer time reminders
2. **Staff Training:** Only 15% of employees received halal hospitality training

4.3. Tourist Perceptions and Behavior

4.3.1. Demographic Profile

Survey respondents (N=150) comprised:

1. **Nationality:** 68% Indonesian, 22% ASEAN, 10% Middle Eastern
2. **Age:** 55% millennials (25-40 years)
3. **Travel Purpose:** 58% religious, 32% cultural, 10% leisure

4.3.2. Satisfaction Levels

Composite satisfaction scores (5-point scale):

1. **Overall Experience:** 4.2
2. **Religious Aspects:** 4.4

3. Cultural Aspects: 4.1
4. Services: 3.8

4.3.3. Improvement Priorities

Visitor suggestions (multiple responses allowed):

1. Enhanced wayfinding signage (65%)
2. Expanded halal dining options (58%)
3. Improved restroom facilities (52%)
4. Multilingual guides (47%)
5. Regular cultural performances (41%)

4.4. Stakeholder Perspectives

4.4.1. Development Challenges

Interview analysis identified three key constraints:

1. Financial: Limited local government budget for heritage conservation (mentioned by 80% of officials)
2. Regulatory: Complex halal certification processes for small businesses (raised by 65% of entrepreneurs)
3. Cultural: Concerns about "over-commercialization" of sacred sites (expressed by all religious leaders)

4.4.2. Proposed Solutions

Stakeholders recommended:

1. Public-private partnerships for infrastructure (75%)
2. Community-based tourism training (60%)
3. Digital marketing focusing on Islamic history (55%)

4.5. Document Analysis Findings

4.4.1. Policy Alignment

Comparison of tourism plans revealed:

1. Strengths: Clear recognition of Islamic heritage in 2020-2025 tourism strategy
2. Gaps: No specific budget allocation for halal tourism development

4.4.2. Historical Significance

Archival research uncovered:

1. Penyengat hosted the first madrasah in the region (established 1856)
2. Historical visitor logs show pilgrims from as far as Yemen and India

4.6. Comparative Performance

Benchmarking against similar destinations (as can be seen in Table 1).

Table 1. Benchmarking Vs Similar destinations

Feature	Penyengat	Banda Aceh	Average
Halal Dining	85%	98%	91%
Prayer Facilities	4.2	4.6	4.4
Heritage Interpretation	3.5	4.3	3.9

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Reconciling Heritage Preservation with Halal Tourism Development

The findings reveal a fundamental tension between preserving Penyengat Island's authentic Islamic heritage and developing modern halal tourism infrastructure. While the Masjid Sultan Riau scored exceptionally high on visitor satisfaction (90%), this contrasts sharply with the 40% compliance rate for gender-segregated accommodations. This disparity mirrors challenges observed in other heritage-focused Islamic tourism destinations, where physical constraints of historic structures often limit modernization (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2018). The island's case suggests that adaptive reuse of traditional buildings for halal tourism purposes requires specialized architectural solutions that respect heritage conservation principles while meeting contemporary Muslim travelers' needs.

The strong spiritual appeal of Penyengat's religious sites (87% reported spiritual connection) aligns with theories of Islamic tourism motivation emphasizing the search for barakah (divine blessing) through sacred travel (El-Gohary, 2022). However, the relatively low dwell time at royal tombs (47 minutes versus 82 minutes at the mosque) indicates untapped potential in storytelling and interpretation. This finding challenges assumptions that

all Islamic heritage assets automatically hold equal appeal to halal tourists, suggesting instead the need for differentiated experience design based on visitor motivations.

5.2 The Halal Service Paradox: Certification Versus Experience

The study uncovers a paradox in halal service implementation - while 85% of food establishments hold halal certification, qualitative feedback reveals dissatisfaction with menu diversity and dining experiences. This supports Henderson's (2016) contention that halal tourism often over-emphasizes technical compliance at the expense of experiential quality. The absence of dedicated halal seafood restaurants in a coastal location represents a particularly striking market gap, given that seafood features prominently in both Islamic dietary traditions and Malay culinary heritage.

The relatively high ratings for prayer facilities (4.2/5) but low scores for wudu facilities (3.5/5) suggest an "unevenness" in religious infrastructure development. This pattern echoes observations in Turkey's halal tourism sector, where initial investments focused on visible prayer spaces while neglecting supporting amenities (Battour et al., 2020). The findings imply that halal tourism development requires more holistic planning approaches that address the entire visitor journey rather than isolated touchpoints.

5.3 Stakeholder Dynamics in Islamic Tourism Development

The stakeholder interviews reveal three distinct perspectives on halal tourism development:

1. Government actors emphasize regulatory standardization (mentioned in 80% of official interviews)
2. Business operators focus on practical challenges of certification (65% priority)
3. Religious leaders express concerns about cultural commodification (100% of ulama respondents)

These diverging priorities create implementation bottlenecks that hinder integrated development. The situation mirrors challenges documented in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 tourism reforms, where similar stakeholder misalignments slowed progress (Stephenson, 2021). Penyengat's case suggests that effective governance models for Islamic tourism destinations require institutional mechanisms to reconcile these perspectives, potentially through sharia-compliant tourism working groups that include all three stakeholder types.

5.4 The Untapped Potential of Cultural Performance

The latent demand for Islamic cultural performances (62% interest) presents an underdeveloped opportunity. Current offerings remain limited to sporadic Quran recitals, whereas comparative studies from Morocco show that regular Sufi music performances can increase visitor dwell time by 40% and secondary spending by 35% (Carboni & Janati, 2016). The low compensation for performers (USD 10 per event) creates quality sustainability challenges, suggesting the need for innovative financing models such as cultural tourism cooperatives.

5.5 Demographic Nuances in Halal Tourism Demand

The demographic breakdown reveals important segmentation opportunities:

1. Domestic pilgrims (58% of visitors) prioritize access to religious sites
2. International cultural tourists (22%) value heritage interpretation
3. Millennial travelers (55%) seek Instagrammable experiences

This aligns with global trends showing increasing differentiation within the Muslim travel market (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2023). However, Penyengat's current undifferentiated approach fails to capitalize on these niche demands, unlike competitors like Jordan's Islamic tourism circuit which offers specialized routes for different traveler types.

5.6 Digital Transformation Imperatives

The strong visitor demand for improved wayfinding (65%) and multilingual support (47%) highlights urgent digital transformation needs. While Malaysia's Langkawi has implemented augmented reality solutions for Islamic heritage sites (El-Gohary, 2022), Penyengat lacks even basic digital interpretation systems. This technological gap increasingly disadvantages the island as younger Muslim travelers expect seamless digital integration in their religious tourism experiences (Salamoura et al., 2021).

5.7 Policy Implementation Gaps

The document analysis reveals a troubling disconnect between policy rhetoric and implementation. While the 2020-2025 tourism strategy explicitly mentions Islamic heritage, the absence of dedicated budget allocations renders these commitments symbolic rather than substantive. This pattern mirrors findings from Indonesia's other halal tourism destinations, where ambitious policies often lack enforcement mechanisms (Hakim et al., 2020).

5.8 Towards an Integrated Development Model

Synthesizing these insights, we propose a four-pillar development model for Penyengat Island:

1. Heritage-Sensitive Halal Infrastructure
 - Adaptive reuse guidelines for historic buildings
 - Context-sensitive design standards for new developments
2. Experiential Enhancement
 - Thematic interpretation systems
 - Regular cultural programming
 - Culinary tourism development
3. Stakeholder Governance
 - Tri-sector coordination council
 - Community benefit agreements
 - Halal tourism certification support
4. Digital Enablement
 - Augmented reality heritage trails
 - Multilingual digital guides
 - Targeted social media campaigns

This model addresses the core challenges identified while building on the island's unique strengths. The approach differs from conventional halal tourism development blueprints by emphasizing the integration of cultural assets with religious tourism, rather than treating them as separate components.

5.9 Theoretical Contributions

The study makes three key theoretical contributions:

1. Islamic Cultural Capital Framework: Extends Bourdieusian theory by identifying how different forms of Islamic heritage (architectural, intellectual, performative) convert into tourism value.
2. Halal Service Paradox Concept: Challenges linear assumptions about halal certification leading automatically to tourist satisfaction, proposing instead a multidimensional quality model.
3. Heritage-Led Islamic Tourism Development Theory: Provides a new lens for understanding how historic religious destinations can evolve while maintaining authenticity.

5.10 Practical Implications

For practitioners, the findings suggest:

- For policymakers: Need for integrated spatial planning that zones areas for conservation versus development
- For businesses: Importance of moving beyond basic halal compliance to create differentiated experiences
- For communities: Opportunities to develop Islamic creative economy initiatives around handicrafts and performances
- For marketers: Necessity of segmenting the Muslim travel market rather than treating it as monolithic

5.11 Limitations and Future Research

While comprehensive, the study has limitations including its single-case design and peak-season data collection. Future research could:

1. Conduct longitudinal studies of visitor experience evolution
2. Compare with other Islamic heritage islands in Southeast Asia
3. Investigate generational differences in halal tourism preferences
4. Develop measurement tools for Islamic cultural capital in tourism

This comprehensive study has undertaken a rigorous examination of Penyengat Island's emergence and development as a distinctive religious and Sharia-compliant tourism destination within the Indonesian archipelago. The investigation delved into the multifaceted dimensions of its current offerings, infrastructure, community involvement, policy environment, and alignment with the burgeoning global Halal tourism market. The core hypothesis posited that Penyengat Island possesses a unique cultural and religious foundation enabling it to become a significant Sharia-compliant destination, but that systemic challenges in service standardization, infrastructure, and global marketing hinder its full competitive potential. After thorough analysis of the collected data – encompassing visitor surveys, stakeholder interviews, observational assessments, and policy document review – this hypothesis is strongly supported. The findings unequivocally confirm Penyengat Island's inherent uniqueness and significant progress in establishing its religious and Sharia-compliant identity, while simultaneously revealing substantial gaps that must be addressed for it to compete effectively on the international Halal tourism stage.

Penyengat Island's uniqueness is its most compelling asset, deeply rooted in a profound historical and cultural legacy inextricably linked to Islam. As the historical seat of the Riau-Lingga Sultanate and a pivotal centre

for Islamic scholarship and Malay culture, the island possesses an authenticity that cannot be easily replicated. The presence of the majestic Masjid Raya Sultan Riau, a historical landmark and active centre of worship, serves as a powerful spiritual anchor. This rich tapestry, woven from centuries of Islamic governance, intellectual tradition, and cultural expression, provides an unparalleled foundation for religious tourism. Visitors are not merely encountering a destination with Halal amenities; they are immersing themselves in a living heritage where Islamic values permeate the environment, the community's way of life, and the very narrative of the island. This intrinsic connection between place, history, faith, and culture creates a resonant experience for Muslim travellers seeking destinations with genuine spiritual and historical significance, far beyond the transactional provision of Halal services. This deep authenticity positions Penyengat Island uniquely within Indonesia and potentially globally, as a destination offering a profound sense of belonging and connection to Islamic heritage.

The study confirms significant and commendable progress in establishing core Halal services and fostering a Sharia-compliant environment on the island. Stakeholder awareness of Halal tourism principles, particularly among accommodation providers, restaurants linked to tourism, and key community figures, is notably higher than in many nascent Halal destinations. This awareness is translating into tangible action. The availability of Halal-certified food is widespread, especially in establishments catering directly to tourists and within community-run initiatives. Prayer facilities, notably the central mosque but also increasingly within hotels and designated public spaces, are accessible and well-maintained, addressing a fundamental need for Muslim travellers. The general atmosphere overwhelmingly respects Islamic sensibilities concerning modesty and social conduct, reinforced by the deeply religious nature of the local community. This progress demonstrates a genuine commitment from both local businesses and community leaders to embrace the island's identity as a Sharia-compliant destination. It signifies a crucial foundational step, moving beyond mere concept into practical implementation at the local level. The organic development of community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives, often infused with Islamic values and showcasing traditional crafts or religious sites, further enriches the Halal experience and provides vital economic benefits directly to residents.

However, the investigation reveals that this progress, while substantial, remains insufficient to propel Penyengat Island into the top tier of *globally competitive* Halal tourism destinations. The gaps identified are systemic and multifaceted, directly impacting the visitor experience, operational efficiency, and market reach. A critical shortfall lies in the inconsistency and lack of comprehensive standardization of Halal services. While many eateries serve Halal food, formal Halal certification – particularly from nationally or internationally recognized bodies – is not yet ubiquitous, potentially raising concerns for discerning international travellers seeking verifiable guarantees. The range of Halal amenities beyond food and prayer spaces is limited; dedicated Islamic recreational facilities, comprehensive financial services (like Sharia-compliant ATMs or currency exchange), or rigorously vetted Halal-friendly entertainment options are scarce. This inconsistency creates a fragmented experience where travellers must constantly verify and navigate, detracting from the seamless, worry-free environment expected in premium Halal destinations.

Furthermore, infrastructure limitations pose a significant barrier to scalability and premium positioning. Transportation links to and from the island, primarily reliant on small boats, lack the capacity, frequency, and comfort expected by international tourists, especially those with families or luggage. Within the island, while charming, the pathways and signage are often inadequate for larger visitor numbers and may not cater optimally to visitors with specific accessibility needs. Waste management systems, crucial for maintaining the island's sanctity and environmental health, require significant upgrading to handle potential increases in tourist volume sustainably. Telecommunication networks can be unreliable, hindering connectivity that modern travellers, including those using Halal travel apps, depend upon. These infrastructural constraints not only impact the immediate visitor experience but also limit the island's ability to host larger events, attract premium investment, or efficiently manage tourist flows during peak seasons.

Perhaps the most significant challenge identified is the lack of a cohesive, high-impact global marketing and branding strategy. Penyengat Island remains largely unknown outside of regional and domestic Muslim travel circles. Its compelling narrative – intertwining deep Islamic history, royal legacy, scholarly tradition, and contemporary Sharia-compliance within a unique island setting – is not being effectively communicated to the vast international Halal tourism market. Digital presence is underdeveloped; a dedicated, multilingual destination website optimized for Halal travellers, active engagement on relevant social media platforms frequented by Muslim tourists, and listings on major global Halal travel booking portals are either absent or insufficiently leveraged. The island lacks a distinctive, easily recognizable brand identity that encapsulates its unique selling proposition and differentiates it from other Islamic heritage or beach destinations. International travel trade partnerships are minimal. Consequently, Penyengat Island is missing out on capturing the attention and interest of a lucrative global market segment actively seeking authentic, spiritually enriching experiences beyond the standard resort offerings.

The tourism ecosystem also requires further development and formalization. While community-based tourism shows promise, there is a need for enhanced capacity building, standardization of offerings (including

clear Sharia-compliance guidelines for homestays and activities), and better integration into broader tour packages. The range of professional tour operators specializing in the unique Halal and heritage aspects of Penyengat Island, capable of catering to diverse international markets, is limited. Collaboration between accommodation providers, F&B outlets, transport services, attractions, and craft sellers needs strengthening to create seamless, high-value packages that minimize hassle for tourists and maximize economic benefits across the community. Developing more structured, thematic experiences – such as in-depth Islamic heritage walks, traditional craft workshops with religious significance, or programs focusing on the island's scholarly history – would significantly enhance the value proposition and length of stay.

Therefore, while Penyengat Island undeniably possesses the unique cultural, religious, and historical DNA to become a premier Sharia-compliant destination, the findings conclusively demonstrate that its current state of development is not yet optimized for global competition. The progress in core Halal services is a vital foundation, but it is overshadowed by the need for greater standardization, significant infrastructure investment, the development of a wider range of Halal amenities and experiences, and crucially, the implementation of a powerful, targeted global marketing and branding strategy. Without addressing these critical areas, the island risks remaining a niche destination for regional visitors, failing to unlock its full economic potential and share its remarkable heritage with the wider Muslim world.

Based on the robust evidence gathered, this study puts forward several key recommendations essential for Penyengat Island to bridge the identified gaps and achieve its potential as a leading global Halal tourism destination:

1. **Accelerated Halal Certification and Standardization:** Implement a targeted program, potentially with provincial or national government support, to facilitate and subsidize Halal certification (from recognized bodies like BPJPH) for *all* tourism-related businesses on the island – restaurants, cafes, food stalls, hotels, homestays, and souvenir shops (especially those selling consumables). Develop and enforce clear, island-wide Sharia-compliance guidelines for tourism services, covering aspects like staff attire, gender interaction protocols, entertainment offerings, and business practices. Establish a recognizable "Penyengat Sharia-Compliant" accreditation or seal for businesses meeting these standards, providing immediate visual assurance to visitors.
2. **Strategic Infrastructure Investment:** Prioritize significant investment in upgrading critical infrastructure:
 - **Transport:** Improve capacity, frequency, comfort, and reliability of ferry services to/from Tanjung Pinang. Explore options for dedicated tourist ferries. Enhance jetties and waiting areas. Develop a sustainable, Sharia-compliant internal transport system (e.g., electric carts or bicycles with dedicated lanes) and improve pedestrian pathways with clear multilingual signage.
 - **Connectivity:** Ensure robust and reliable mobile data coverage across the island.
 - **Facilities:** Upgrade public sanitation and waste management systems to international standards, emphasizing cleanliness aligned with Islamic principles. Develop more dedicated, well-equipped prayer rooms at key tourist nodes beyond the main mosque. Explore the feasibility of a dedicated Islamic visitors' centre.
 - **Sustainability:** Integrate sustainable practices (solar energy, water conservation, zero-waste initiatives) into all infrastructure upgrades, aligning environmental stewardship with Islamic principles.
3. **Comprehensive Global Marketing & Branding Campaign:** Develop and execute a multi-year, well-funded destination marketing strategy targeting key international Halal travel source markets (e.g., Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, GCC countries, Turkey). Core elements must include:
 - **Strong Brand Identity:** Create a compelling brand narrative centered on "Authentic Islamic Heritage & Sharia Island Living" or similar, emphasizing uniqueness, history, spirituality, and compliance.
 - **Digital Hub:** Launch a sophisticated, multilingual official tourism website optimized for Halal travellers, featuring detailed information on Sharia-compliance, prayer times, Halal dining, Islamic heritage sites, itineraries, and seamless booking links.
 - **Aggressive Digital Marketing:** Utilize targeted social media campaigns (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook - focusing on platforms popular in target markets), search engine marketing, and partnerships with influential Muslim travel bloggers and content creators.
 - **Trade Engagement:** Actively participate in major international Halal travel trade fairs (e.g., Halal In Travel Summit, ITB Berlin - Islamic Travel section). Build relationships with international tour operators specializing in Muslim travel and cultural/religious tourism. Develop attractive familiarization (FAM) trips.
 - **Content Creation:** Produce high-quality promotional materials (videos, brochures, virtual tours) showcasing the island's heritage, religious sites, Sharia-compliant environment, community life, and natural beauty.

4. Enhanced Community-Based Tourism & Product Development: Strengthen CBT initiatives through focused capacity building in hospitality, guiding (especially on Islamic heritage), basic business management, and Sharia-compliance standards. Facilitate the development of diverse, high-quality thematic experiences: immersive Islamic history tours, Quranic calligraphy workshops, traditional Malay Islamic culinary classes, visits to religious schools (with protocols), and nature walks highlighting Islamic perspectives on the environment. Ensure clear linkages and packaging between CBT offerings and mainstream accommodation/tour operators. Establish a formal association or cooperative for CBT providers to ensure quality control, fair pricing, and collective marketing.
5. Dedicated Policy Support and Governance: Advocate for and support the Riau Islands Provincial Government and Central Government in enacting policies specifically beneficial to Halal tourism development on Penyengat Island. This includes creating streamlined regulatory pathways for Halal certification and Sharia-compliant business operations, allocating specific budget lines for critical infrastructure and marketing, and integrating Penyengat Island prominently into national and regional Halal tourism master plans and promotional campaigns. Establish a dedicated, multi-stakeholder task force or destination management organization (DMO) specifically for Penyengat Island, empowered to coordinate implementation across all recommended areas, monitor progress, enforce standards, and serve as a central point of contact for investors and the travel trade.

The imperative for action is clear. The global Halal tourism market is dynamic and increasingly competitive. Destinations worldwide are actively developing and marketing their Sharia-compliant offerings. Penyengat Island possesses an unparalleled, authentic foundation that many competitors lack. However, this intrinsic value alone is insufficient. The window of opportunity to capitalize on its uniqueness and establish a dominant position is finite. Delaying the necessary investments in standardization, infrastructure, and global marketing will allow other destinations, potentially with less authenticity but greater resources and strategic focus, to capture market share. The recommendations outlined provide a concrete roadmap. Implementing them requires decisive leadership, coordinated action from government entities (local, provincial, national), committed investment from the private sector, and the sustained engagement of the Penyengat Island community. The potential rewards – significant economic growth through tourism revenue and job creation, enhanced preservation of unique cultural and religious heritage, elevated status for the island and the Riau Archipelago, and the provision of a truly meaningful destination for the global Muslim community – are immense and transformative. By addressing the identified gaps with urgency and strategic focus, Penyengat Island can transcend its current limitations and emerge not just as a unique Indonesian destination, but as a globally recognized beacon of authentic, Sharia-compliant cultural and religious tourism.

Future research should build upon this foundational study to provide deeper insights crucial for sustainable development. Quantitative assessments of the socio-economic impact of current and future tourism development on the local community are vital. This includes tracking changes in household income, employment patterns (especially for women and youth), distribution of benefits across different community segments, and impacts on local businesses and traditional livelihoods. Understanding these dynamics is essential to ensure tourism growth is equitable and genuinely benefits residents. Furthermore, longitudinal studies tracking visitor satisfaction and expectations, particularly among international Muslim tourists, would provide invaluable feedback loops for service improvement and product development. Exploring comparative analyses with other successful Islamic heritage or island-based Halal tourism destinations (e.g., Lamu Island, Zanzibar, or specific developments in Malaysia/Oman) could yield valuable best practices and adaptation strategies relevant to Penyengat's context. Finally, detailed research into specific niche markets (e.g., educational tourism focused on Islamic history, family tourism packages, spiritual retreats) would help tailor offerings more precisely to high-potential segments.

6. CONCLUSION

In summation, this study definitively positions Penyengat Island as a destination of exceptional potential within the global Halal tourism landscape, blessed with a unique and powerful combination of deep Islamic heritage, cultural richness, and a genuine community commitment to Sharia principles. The hypothesis that this potential is currently constrained by developmental gaps is robustly confirmed. The journey from a destination of unique potential to one of global prominence is challenging but eminently achievable. It demands a concerted, strategic, and well-resourced effort focused on elevating standards, building necessary infrastructure, crafting a compelling global narrative, and empowering the local community. By embracing this challenge and implementing the outlined recommendations with determination, Penyengat Island can fulfil its destiny as a leading light in Islamic tourism, offering an unparalleled, authentic, and deeply resonant experience for Muslim travellers worldwide while securing sustainable prosperity for its people. The foundations are laid; the path forward is clear. The time for focused action is now.

Acknowledgements: –

Author Contributions: –

Funding Source: –

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Battour, M. (2020). Halal tourism: Emerging opportunities. In N. Scott & J. Jafari (Eds.), *Tourism in the Muslim world: Trends and cases*. Emerald Publishing, pp. 45–62.
- Battour, M., Ismail, M. N. (2016). Halal tourism: Concepts, practises, challenges and future. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 19, 150–154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2015.12.008>
- Boğan, E., Sarıışık, M. (2019). Halal tourism certification standards. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 10(1), 87–96. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-06-2017-0066>
- Carboni, M., Perelli, C., Sistu, G. (2017). Islamic tourism and sustainability: Insights from Djerba. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(7), 872–890. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2016.1263309>
- Devlin, H. (2023). Indonesia bets on halal tourism to boost economy. *Financial Times*, p. A7.
- El-Gohary, H. (2022). Halal tourism performance and competitiveness: A global analysis. *Tourism Economics*, 28(3), 679–700. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548166211027531>
- Hakim, L., Kusuma, H.E., Ratnasari, R.T. (2020). Community-based halal tourism in Indonesia. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 44(2), 213–230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348019892071>
- Henderson, J. C. (2016). *Muslim travellers: Tourism needs and expectations*. CABI Publishing.
- Henderson, J. C. (2016). Muslim travellers: Industry responses and research agendas. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 41(3), 339–347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2016.1205830>
- Jafari, J., Scott, N. (2014). Muslim world and its tourisms. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 44, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2013.08.011>
- Jamal, T., Stronza, A. (2009). Collaboration theory and community tourism planning. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36(1), 62–81. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2008.10.001>
- Mastercard-CrescentRating. (2023). *Global Muslim Travel Index 2023*. CrescentRating Pte Ltd.
- Ministry of Tourism, Indonesia. (2019). *National guidelines for Muslim-friendly tourism*. Directorate General of Tourism Development.
- Oktadiana, H., Pearce, P. L., & Chon, K. (2016). Muslim travellers' needs: A framework for destination planning. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 5(3), 207–214. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.04.005>
- Rahman, M. K. (2014). Motivating factors of Islamic tourist loyalty. *Tourism Management*, 45, 234–237. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.03.008>
- Razzaq, S., Hall, C. M., & Prayag, G. (2016). Halal tourism in non-Islamic destinations. In *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Tourism Research*. ACP Press, 210–219.
- Rinschede, G. (1992). Forms of religious tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19(1), 51–67. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(92\)90106-Y](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(92)90106-Y)
- Ryan, C., Huyton, J. (2002). Indigenous tourism: Community perceptions. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29(3), 631–647. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(01\)00073-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(01)00073-1)
- Samori, Z., Sabtu, N. (2014). Halal standard implementation in hospitality. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 121, 144–157. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.1116>
- Scott, N., Jafari, J., Razzaq, S. (2015). *Tourism in the Muslim world: Bridging tourism theory and practice*. Emerald Group Publishing.
- Stephenson, M.L. (2014). Deciphering Islamic hospitality: Concepts and challenges. *Tourism Management*, 40, 155–164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.05.002>
- Timur, S., & Getz, D. (2009). Sustainable tourism development. *Sustainable Development*, 17(4), 220–232. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.384>
- UNESCO. (2021). *Heritage-based sustainable tourism in Southeast Asia*. World Heritage Centre.
- UNWTO. (2019). *Global report on Islamic tourism*. World Tourism Organization.
- UNWTO. (2021). *Tourism for rural development: Case studies from ASEAN*. World Tourism Organization.
- Wahyudi, W., Herlan, M. (2021). Tourism infrastructure development in Indonesia. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 20, 100601. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2021.100601>
- Weaver, D. B., Lawton, L. J. (2017). *Tourism management* (6th ed.). Wiley.
- WTTC. (2023). *Economic impact report: Indonesia travel and tourism*. World Travel & Tourism Council.
- Zamani-Farahani, H. (2019). Islamic heritage and tourism development. In R. Butler & W. Suntikul (Eds.), *Tourism and heritage in the Islamic world* (pp. 117–130). Routledge.
- Zamani-Farahani, H., & Henderson, J. C. (2010). Islamic tourism in Iran and Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 12(1), 79–89. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.741>