

STRENGTHENING MALAYSIA'S LEADERSHIP IN HALAL TOURISM: A SWOT ANALYSIS OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

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Abstract: Malaysia is widely recognised as a global leader in halal tourism, a position underpinned by robust institutional frameworks and a mature halal ecosystem; however, sustaining this competitive advantage increasingly depends on the strategic development of specialised human capital. This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), guided by the PRISMA protocol, to examine the structural readiness of Muslim-friendly hospitality education in Malaysia as a critical enabling domain within the halal tourism sector. A total of 214 records published between 2010 and 2024 were retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, of which 42 studies met the final inclusion criteria following systematic screening and quality appraisal. Drawing on a theoretically grounded SWOT framework, the analysis interrogates internal institutional capacities alongside external market and geopolitical dynamics. The findings reveal two principal structural constraints: the absence of a nationally standardised Muslim-friendly hospitality curriculum and the limited availability of dual-competency educators possessing both Islamic jurisprudential expertise and professional hospitality experience. By integrating human capital theory and dynamic capability perspectives into the SWOT analysis, the study advances a governance-oriented strategic framework for curriculum institutionalisation. It concludes that coordinated regulatory alignment and structured industry engagement are imperative to consolidate Malaysia's ambition to position itself as a global hub for halal tourism talent and thought leadership.

Keywords: *SWOT analysis, halal tourism, Muslim-friendly hospitality, hospitality education, workforce development.*

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has firmly positioned itself as a global leader in the halal tourism industry, with the sector contributing an estimated RM 8.4 billion to the national gross domestic product in 2022 (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2023). This accomplishment is supported by a well-developed halal ecosystem, comprehensive policy frameworks, and strategic branding initiatives driven by key government agencies (CrescentRating, 2022). The nation's standing as a preferred destination for Muslim travellers is further strengthened by its rich cultural heritage and an enduring commitment to embedding Islamic values within tourism and hospitality practices.

While these achievements are commendable, sustaining Malaysia's competitive edge in an increasingly complex and competitive global marketplace demands more than the presence of advanced infrastructure and supportive regulatory mechanisms. Recent empirical evidence points to a persistent gap in human capital readiness, particularly within Muslim-friendly hospitality education and training (Irshad et al., 2022; Widodo et al., 2022). As the global Muslim travel segment matures, travellers are becoming more discerning, expecting not only unwavering compliance with Shariah principles but also service delivery that meets or exceeds international benchmarks of excellence (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Razak et al., 2019).

The challenge for Malaysia lies in aligning its higher education and vocational training systems with the evolving demands of this niche yet rapidly growing market segment (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Addressing this gap requires a holistic approach that integrates curriculum innovation, industry collaboration, academic staff development, and sustained policy support.

Against this backdrop, the present study employs the SWOT analytical framework to systematically examine the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats, that shape Malaysia's capacity to advance Muslim-friendly hospitality education, one of the most vital domains within the halal tourism sector.

Through this structured approach, the research generates evidence-based insights to inform policymakers, educators, and industry leaders in designing strategic and coordinated interventions. Such insights are intended not only to safeguard Malaysia's leadership in the halal tourism sector but also to strengthen the resilience, competitiveness, and global relevance of its human capital base amid evolving industry dynamics and emerging challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006), guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework for transparent reporting of systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021). The objective of the review was to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesise existing scholarship on Muslim-friendly hospitality education in Malaysia to assess its strategic capacity to support national halal tourism leadership. The review protocol was internally developed before data collection and structured around clearly defined research objectives, search strategies, screening procedures, and synthesis techniques to ensure methodological transparency, replicability, and analytical rigour.

Research Question

The central research question guiding the review was: *“How does Muslim-friendly hospitality education contribute to Malaysia's strategic positioning and competitiveness in the global halal tourism ecosystem?”*

To structure this inquiry analytically, the review was informed by a modified PICO framework adapted for education and policy research contexts. The population comprised stakeholders within the halal tourism ecosystem, including higher education institutions, educators, students, policymakers, and industry practitioners. The intervention examined formal and informal educational initiatives related to Muslim-friendly hospitality training and curriculum development. The comparison dimension considered institutional environments with structured halal tourism education versus those lacking formalised frameworks. The outcomes assessed included workforce competency development, institutional capability building, service quality enhancement, industry alignment, and strategic competitiveness.

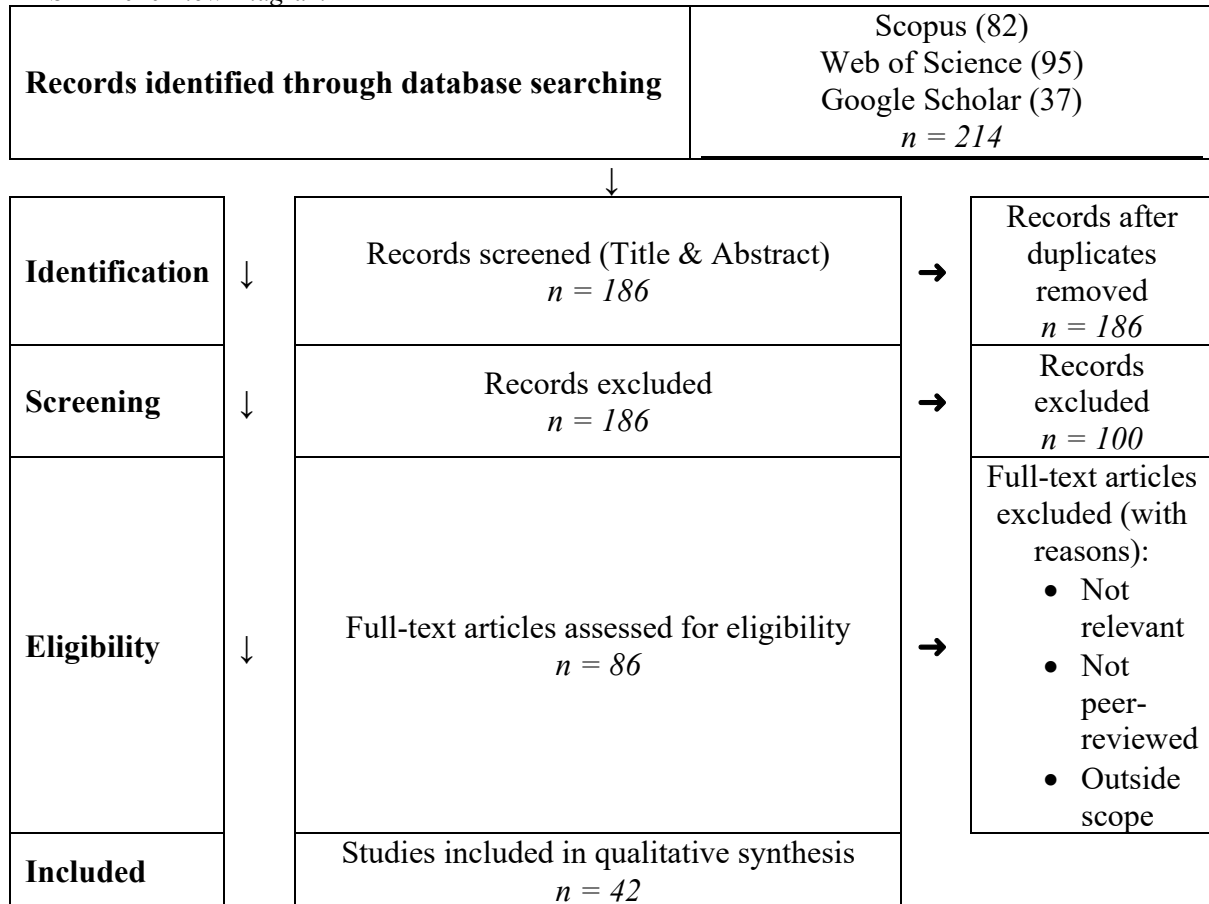
Search Strategy and Study Selection

A comprehensive search was conducted across three major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, covering publications from 2010 to 2024 to ensure contemporary relevance while permitting inclusion of seminal theoretical contributions where appropriate. Boolean operators and truncation techniques were employed to refine search results using combinations of the following keywords:

- “Halal tourism” and “hospitality education”
- “Muslim-friendly hospitality” and “curriculum”
- “Shariah-compliant hotels” and “training”
- “Islamic tourism” and “human capital development”
- “Halal hospitality” and “Malaysia”

The initial search yielded 214 records. After duplicate removal, 186 studies remained for title and abstract screening. Following this preliminary review, 86 articles were shortlisted for full-text assessment. Full texts were evaluated against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were included if they were peer-reviewed, published in English between 2010 and 2024, and directly addressed halal tourism, Muslim-friendly hospitality, Shariah-compliant practices, or hospitality education within Malaysia or comparable Muslim-majority contexts. Both empirical and conceptual works were considered eligible. Non-peer-reviewed materials, editorials, inaccessible articles, and studies lacking relevance to education or strategic capability development were excluded. After eligibility assessment and quality appraisal, 42 studies were retained for final synthesis. The multi-stage screening process ensured procedural transparency and minimised selection bias in accordance with PRISMA standards. The full PRISMA 2020 flow diagram summarising the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram



Quality Appraisal

A structured quality appraisal was conducted to ensure methodological robustness and conceptual clarity of included studies. Evaluation criteria were adapted from established SLR guidelines (Gough et al., 2017; Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Tranfield et al., 2003) and incorporated elements of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) and Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) frameworks.

Each study was assessed based on the following criteria:

1. Clarity of research objectives and theoretical positioning (Gough et al., 2017; Tranfield et al., 2003).
2. Appropriateness of research design (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007).
3. Transparency of data collection and analysis methods (CASP, 2018; JBI, 2020).
4. Strength and coherence of findings (Gough et al., 2017).
5. Relevance to hospitality education strategy or institutional capability (Gough et al., 2017; Tranfield et al., 2003).

Only studies meeting a minimum threshold of methodological and conceptual adequacy were retained. This layered appraisal strengthened the validity, credibility, and analytical reliability of the final synthesis.

Data Extraction and Analytical Strategy

A standardised data extraction matrix was developed to systematically capture key study characteristics, including research focus, methodology, theoretical framework, principal findings, and policy or industry implications. The structured extraction process facilitated cross-study comparison and thematic consolidation.

Data were synthesised using a thematic-analytical approach informed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Thomas and Harden (2008). The synthesis proceeded through three iterative stages:

1. Line-by-line coding of extracted findings;
2. Development of descriptive themes reflecting recurring institutional, pedagogical, and strategic patterns;
3. Generation of higher-order analytical themes linked to capability development and governance implications.

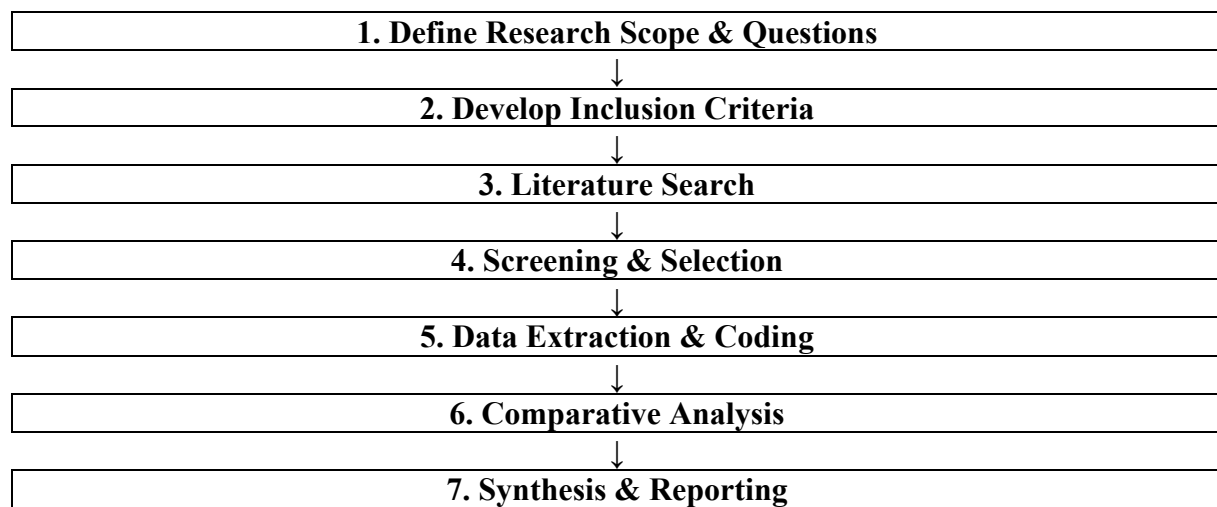
Emergent themes were subsequently mapped onto a strategically enhanced SWOT framework. Unlike conventional descriptive SWOT applications, this study operationalised SWOT as a strategic capability diagnostic instrument, informed by Human Capital Theory, Curriculum Alignment Theory, and Dynamic Capabilities Theory. This theoretical triangulation enabled evaluation of internal educational readiness alongside external competitive and geopolitical pressures, thereby positioning SWOT as an analytical bridge between institutional design and national strategic ambition.

Methodological Contribution

By integrating PRISMA-guided systematic review procedures with a capability-based SWOT analysis, this study advances a hybrid methodological framework for assessing niche education ecosystems within emerging industries. The approach extends beyond descriptive policy commentary by offering a structured and replicable model for the strategic evaluation of specialised curriculum domains, particularly within culturally embedded and religiously informed sectors such as halal tourism. Figure 2 illustrates the Systematic Literature Review process underpinning the SWOT analysis of Muslim-friendly hospitality education in Malaysia.

Figure 2

Systematic Literature Review Process for SWOT Analysis of Muslim-Friendly Hospitality Education in Malaysia



SWOT ANALYSIS OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

Strengths

Malaysia's sustained position as the top-ranked destination in the Global Muslim Travel Index reflects its enduring credibility as a premier halal tourism hub (CrescentRating, 2022). This internationally recognised status not only strengthens the nation's tourism brand but also enhances the attractiveness of its higher education institutions to prospective learners from Muslim-majority countries (Sumardi et al., 2025). Such individuals often seek Shariah-compliant learning environments that align closely with their cultural and religious values, thereby reinforcing Malaysia's position as a natural destination for specialised hospitality education (Battour & Ismail, 2016).

The presence of robust national policies, such as the National Tourism Policy 2020–2030, reflects a strategic governmental commitment to fostering talent development and enhancing professional competencies in the sector.

Such policy frameworks offer a stable foundation for educational reforms, particularly in aligning curricula with the needs of the halal tourism industry (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia, 2020). Malaysia's demographic composition as a Muslim-majority nation further facilitates curriculum integration of Islamic principles. This cultural alignment ensures that Shariah-based ethics and practices are not simply supplementary content but are embedded as fundamental pillars in academic programme design (Henderson, 2010).

The existence of pioneering halal tourism programmes at institutions such as Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) demonstrates a tangible commitment to this educational niche. These institutions serve as important proof-of-concept models, offering foundational curricula, applied research, and industry engagement strategies that can be scaled up into a comprehensive national framework (Pratama et al., 2023). By capitalising on these early successes, Malaysia can develop an integrated and coherent educational pathway from diploma to doctoral level in Muslim-friendly hospitality studies.

Weaknesses

Despite notable progress, several structural weaknesses remain. Foremost among these is the absence of a nationally standardised and comprehensive curriculum specifically dedicated to Muslim-friendly hospitality service delivery (Irshad et al., 2022). Although various institutions incorporate elements of Islamic hospitality into their programmes, many do not systematically address the full spectrum of Islamic commercial jurisprudence, resulting in graduates who may be insufficiently prepared for the nuanced operational demands of halal service environments (Zulkafli et al., 2024).

In addition, the level of sustained engagement between academic institutions and industry stakeholders remains limited (Ibrahim et al., 2024). The absence of continuous consultation mechanisms, active advisory boards, and structured feedback loops heightens the risk of curriculum obsolescence, as programme content may fail to keep pace with evolving industry trends and technological advancements (Razak et al., 2019).

This challenge is further compounded by inconsistencies in terminology, particularly the interchangeable use of “Muslim-friendly” and “Shariah-compliant” without clearly articulated operational definitions (Dabphet, 2021). Such conceptual ambiguity may generate confusion among learners, educators, and employers, thereby weakening the credibility and transferability of qualifications.

Table 1
Conceptual Distinction in Islamic Hospitality Terminology

Term	Core Focus	Operational Scope	Certification Requirement	Main Reference
<i>Muslim-Friendly</i>	Accommodation of Muslim needs	Prayer facilities, halal food availability	Not mandatory	1. MS 2610:2015 2. MFAR
<i>Shariah-Compliant</i>	Full adherence to Islamic jurisprudence	Finance, operations, service ethics	Institutional compliance required	1. MS 1900:2014
<i>Halal-Certified</i>	Product/process compliance	Food & beverage, supply chain	Certified by halal authority	1. MS 1500:2009 2. MPPHM

Note. MS 2610:2015 = Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services Requirements; MFAR = Muslim-friendly Tourism and Hospitality Assurance and Recognition; MS 1900:2014 = Shariah-based Quality Management Systems (Requirements with guidance); MS 1500:2009 = Halal Food (General Requirements); MPPHM = Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia.

Moreover, there remains a shortage of qualified educators who possess both expertise in Islamic jurisprudence and practical experience in hospitality management (Hashim & Mohd Fauzi, 2025). This dual competency is critical to ensuring programmes are both academically rigorous and religiously authentic (Pratama et al., 2023). Without strengthening human capital in this domain, efforts to enhance curriculum quality and achieve broader global recognition are likely to encounter significant constraints.

Opportunities

The global halal tourism market is forecast to surpass USD 300 billion by 2030 (DinarStandard, 2020), creating a substantial talent gap that Malaysia is uniquely positioned to fill. The country's established reputation, coupled with its supportive policy environment and strong cultural alignment, offers a robust platform from which to emerge as a leading exporter of skilled professionals in Muslim-friendly hospitality (Halal Development Corporation, 2024). This strategic positioning extends beyond traditional markets in Southeast Asia to emerging destinations in Europe, Africa, and Central Asia that are increasingly adapting their tourism infrastructure to accommodate Muslim travellers (Isaac, 2024). As global demand expands, structured educational reform can catalyze Malaysia to strengthen its human capital export potential and reinforce its influence within the international halal tourism ecosystem.

Expanding academic–industry collaboration represents a particularly significant opportunity (Esangbedo et al., 2024). Co-created curricula, structured internships, and industry-endorsed certification schemes can enhance graduate readiness while ensuring that educational provision remains responsive and adaptive to evolving industry standards (Hanafiah et al., 2022). In the Turkish higher education context, universities offering hospitality and tourism programmes operate within a structured collaboration framework in which industry stakeholders actively participate in curriculum design, provide compulsory industry placements, and contribute to practice-oriented teaching modules (Yayla & Çatir, 2023). This integrated model of university–industry partnership, which embeds professional practice directly into academic programmes, offers an instructive benchmark for structured industry engagement (Krystev et al., 2021). Institutionalising comparable partnerships within Malaysia would strengthen competency alignment and enhance the practical applicability of Muslim-friendly hospitality programmes.

Technological innovation offers further potential for expansion and diversification in Islamic hospitality pedagogy (Oktadiana et al., 2016). Beyond conventional digital learning platforms and mobile-based training modules, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence-driven halal auditing simulations, virtual reality-based service training environments, and blockchain-enabled halal traceability modules present transformative educational opportunities. Integrating AI-based compliance simulations into curriculum design can facilitate experiential learning in Shariah auditing scenarios (Abu Bakar et al., 2025), thereby strengthening applied competencies and critical decision-making skills within authentic service contexts (Aitkazinov, 2023). These digital tools not only enhance pedagogical effectiveness but also allow institutions to scale specialised training across borders.

In addition, digital credentialing systems and micro-certification frameworks offer promising mechanisms for enhancing the international portability and recognition of qualifications (Raj et al., 2024). Stackable credentials in areas such as halal compliance auditing, Shariah governance in hospitality operations, and Muslim-friendly service design could reinforce Malaysia's strategic positioning as a halal education exporter. Such innovations align with broader internationalisation strategies, enabling Malaysia to attract learners from Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries alike, thereby positioning itself as a centre of knowledge diplomacy in the halal tourism sector.

Aligning these technological and institutional initiatives with global policy agendas, particularly the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, and SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production, would further strengthen the legitimacy and global resonance of reform efforts (United Nations, 2015). Strategic alignment with these global frameworks enhances policy coherence, supports funding justification, and reinforces Malaysia's commitment to sustainable and inclusive development within the halal tourism knowledge economy.

Threats

Malaysia's leadership in the halal tourism sector faces mounting competition from other countries with similarly ambitious agendas, notably Indonesia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. These nations are increasingly integrating educational reforms with tourism sector development to capture a greater proportion of the global Muslim travel market (Krystev et al., 2021). As competing destinations strengthen institutional alignment between hospitality education, certification systems, and industry practice, Malaysia risks losing its first-mover advantage if reforms are not systematically institutionalised and continuously updated.

Beyond regional competition, broader geopolitical shifts present additional uncertainty for Muslim-friendly hospitality education. Rising Islamophobia in certain Western markets may influence student mobility patterns,

international recruitment strategies, and cross-border academic collaborations (Hopkins, 2025). Such sociopolitical dynamics could indirectly affect Malaysia's aspiration to position itself as a global hub for halal tourism education. Furthermore, post-pandemic travel behaviour has increasingly shifted toward digital-first service models and sustainability-conscious tourism practices (Yepez & Leimgruber, 2024), requiring rapid curriculum adaptation to incorporate digital service delivery, risk management, and ethical sustainability frameworks.

An additional risk stems from the potential imbalance between religious content and universal hospitality standards within the curriculum (Tukiran et al., 2025). While adherence to Islamic principles is a distinctive strength, excessive emphasis on religious components without parallel integration of international service excellence frameworks may inadvertently limit inclusivity and reduce opportunities for broader global collaboration. Achieving an equilibrium that upholds Islamic values while remaining internationally competitive is therefore crucial to sustaining long-term relevance (Henderson, 2010).

Regulatory and administrative processes also present significant structural challenges. Lengthy approval procedures for new programmes can delay the introduction of urgently needed curricular updates, thereby reducing institutional agility in responding to market shifts and technological transformation (Widodo et al., 2022). Political transitions and regulatory reforms affecting halal governance structures could further alter accreditation standards, creating uncertainty for institutions investing heavily in specialised programmes (Maifiah & Azam, 2025). Funding constraints remain a persistent threat, particularly within public universities that face budgetary limitations restricting investment in curriculum innovation and digital infrastructure (Baharuddin et al., 2025). Private institutions may likewise hesitate to expand Muslim-friendly hospitality education without clear policy incentives or demonstrable market demand (Irshad et al., 2022).

Collectively, these macro-environmental, regulatory, and financial risks underscore the necessity for dynamic curriculum governance mechanisms rather than static programme structures. Without adaptive institutional frameworks capable of responding to geopolitical volatility, technological change, and evolving consumer expectations, Malaysia's competitive positioning in Muslim-friendly hospitality education may gradually erode.

Table 2

SWOT Summary of Muslim-Friendly Hospitality Education in Malaysia

Factor	Key Points	Supporting References
Strengths	1. Malaysia ranked top in Global Muslim Travel Index, reinforcing credibility as a halal tourism hub and attracting students from Muslim-majority nations. 2. Strong national policies (e.g., National Tourism Policy 2020–2030) support talent development and curriculum alignment. 3. Muslim-majority demographic facilitates embedding Islamic principles into curricula. 4. Existing pioneering programmes at USIM, IIUM, and UUM act as proof-of-concept models for scaling up.	CrescentRating (2022); Battour & Ismail (2016); Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (2020); Henderson (2010); Pratama et al. (2023)
Weaknesses	1. Lack of a standardised, comprehensive Muslim-friendly hospitality curriculum. 2. Limited structured engagement between academia and industry, risking outdated curricula. 3. Inconsistent terminology ("Muslim-friendly" vs. "Shariah-compliant").	Irshad et al. (2022); Zulkafli et al. (2024); Razak et al. (2019); Pratama et al. (2023); Ibrahim et al. (2024); Dabphet (2021)

	4. Shortage of educators with both Islamic jurisprudence and hospitality expertise.	
Opportunities	1. Global halal tourism market projected to exceed USD 300 billion by 2030. 2. Potential to become a leading exporter of Muslim-friendly hospitality talent to markets in Europe, Africa, and Central Asia. 3. Academic–industry collaboration can enhance graduate readiness. 4. Technological innovations (VR, online learning) can broaden reach. 5. Internationalisation strategies can strengthen Malaysia’s role as a knowledge hub. 6. Alignment with UN SDGs (4, 8, 12) can increase legitimacy.	DinarStandard (2020); Isaac (2024); Hanafiah et al. (2022); Krystev et al. (2021); Oktadiana et al. (2016); United Nations (2015); Raj et al. (2024); Yayla & Çatir (2023); Abu Bakar et al. (2025); Aitkazinov (2023)
Threats	1. Rising competition from Indonesia, Turkey, UAE. 2. Potential imbalance between religious content and global hospitality standards. 3. Slow regulatory approval for new programmes limits responsiveness. 4. Funding constraints hinder programme expansion and innovation.	Krystev et al. (2021); Henderson (2010); Widodo et al. (2022); Irshad et al. (2022); Baharuddin et al. (2025); Maifiah & Azam (2025); Yepez & Leimgruber (2024); Hopkins (2025); Tukiran et al. (2025)

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

To sustain and strengthen its leadership in the global halal tourism sector, Malaysia must adopt a deliberate and coordinated strategy that integrates a comprehensive national curriculum framework with a robust governance ecosystem. The curriculum should merge Islamic ethical principles with internationally recognised service standards, creating an educational pathway that is both culturally authentic and globally competitive (Razak et al., 2019). Such an approach ensures standardisation across higher education institutions while enhancing the credibility and portability of Malaysian qualifications in Muslim-friendly hospitality.

Institutionalising this education model requires a multi-tier governance structure. At the macro level, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) should provide overarching policy direction aligned with national tourism objectives. The Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) would oversee accreditation, programme benchmarking, and quality assurance to maintain curricular consistency, while the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) sets Shariah compliance parameters to safeguard theological authenticity. Complementing these bodies, the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) strategically promotes best practices in halal tourism, provides industry intelligence, and facilitates collaboration between educational institutions and halal tourism enterprises. In addition, an advisory council comprising hospitality operators, halal auditors, and tourism practitioners is essential for competency mapping and ensuring curriculum relevance. Together, this collaborative ecosystem enables Malaysia to transition from fragmented programme offerings to a nationally coordinated capability framework, enhancing global recognition and graduate mobility.

Government intervention remains critical for operationalising this framework. Agencies should implement targeted policy incentives, expedite accreditation processes, and provide sustained support to educational providers (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia, 2020). Such measures create an enabling environment for

curriculum innovation and strengthen institutional capacity to deliver market-relevant, high-quality programmes (Salleh et al., 2020).

Formalised academia–industry linkages further reinforce this ecosystem. Structured partnerships with hotels, tour operators, and service providers ensure that course content remains responsive to evolving industry demands, enhancing employability and career readiness (Hanafiah et al., 2022; Zeithaml et al., 2020). Equally important is strategic investment in academic staff development. Training programmes that build dual competencies in Islamic jurisprudence and modern hospitality pedagogy help bridge talent gaps and elevate academic standards (Pratama et al., 2023), while professional certification pathways for educators can further strengthen quality assurance across institutions.

Complementing these initiatives, targeted promotional campaigns can highlight the professional value and global relevance of Muslim-friendly hospitality education. Leveraging Malaysia’s branding as a halal tourism leader, such campaigns attract a diverse mix of domestic and international students. Finally, establishing centres of excellence and dedicated research hubs will generate innovative solutions, produce authoritative scholarship, and reinforce Malaysia’s position as a global knowledge hub in halal tourism (Borzooei & Asgari, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Malaysia stands at a pivotal juncture in the evolution of its hospitality education ecosystem, where strategic decisions made today will shape its trajectory as a globally recognised leader in halal tourism for decades to come. The SWOT analysis conducted in this study reveals a complex landscape in which significant opportunities coexist alongside critical vulnerabilities that, if left unaddressed, could undermine the nation’s competitive advantage.

To capitalise on strengths and mitigate weaknesses, Malaysia must adopt a deliberate, coordinated, and forward-looking strategy. Central to this is comprehensive curriculum reform that integrates Shariah-compliant principles with internationally recognised standards of hospitality service excellence. Effective implementation demands alignment across multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, accreditation bodies, educational institutions, and industry partners. At the governance level, a multi-tiered model is essential: the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) provides strategic direction; the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) oversees accreditation, benchmarking, and quality assurance; the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) ensures theological authenticity; and the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC), together with industry advisory councils, maintains curriculum relevance and maps competencies. This coordinated approach allows Malaysia to transition from fragmented programme offerings to a nationally standardised, capability-driven framework, thereby enhancing graduate mobility and international recognition.

Equally important is strengthening academia–industry partnerships to ensure graduates acquire both the theoretical knowledge and practical competencies required by an evolving marketplace. Parallel faculty development initiatives should prioritise cultivating educators with expertise in Islamic jurisprudence and industry practice, supported by professional certification pathways to reinforce quality standards. Collectively, these measures will consolidate Malaysia’s leadership in Muslim-friendly hospitality while enhancing its resilience in responding to shifting consumer expectations, technological advances, and intensified international competition.

Looking ahead, sustained academic inquiry is crucial to understanding the long-term impact of Muslim-friendly hospitality education. Research should explore graduate employability, programme contributions to industry competitiveness, and the broader role of such education in strengthening Malaysia’s position in global tourism networks. Comparative studies across diverse cultural and regulatory contexts can provide valuable benchmarks, while longitudinal tracking of graduate career trajectories could yield insights into programme effectiveness over time.

This study contributes to scholarship and policy discourse in three key ways. Theoretically, it advances halal tourism education research by embedding Human Capital Theory and Dynamic Capabilities Theory within a strategically enhanced SWOT framework, shifting analysis from descriptive policy commentary to capability-based institutional assessment. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of integrating PRISMA-guided systematic review procedures with strategic analysis tools, offering a replicable model for evaluating niche

education ecosystems in emerging industries. From a policy perspective, it proposes a governance-oriented curriculum standardisation model that aligns regulatory authorities, accreditation bodies, and industry stakeholders.

Together, these contributions provide an evidence-based roadmap for strengthening Malaysia's strategic positioning in Muslim-friendly hospitality education while reinforcing its broader ambition to lead the global halal tourism knowledge economy. By generating rigorous, contextually relevant evidence, such scholarship equips policymakers, academic leaders, and industry practitioners to construct a sustainable, innovative, and internationally respected halal tourism education infrastructure, preparing future cohorts of professionals who are both globally competent and firmly grounded in Islamic values.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest in the preparation or dissemination of this paper.

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