STRATEGY FOR HALAL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT IN RELIGIOUS TOURISM: A STUDY ON THE OMAR 'ALI SAIFUDDIEN MOSQUE DESTINATION IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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Abstract

This research explores halal management development strategies in religious tourism at Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque, Brunei Darussalam. The main problems identified in this research include limited digital promotion, insufficient multilingual information, and a lack of innovation in halal tourism services, all of which can enhance the destination's global attractiveness. This research aims to analyze the implementation of halal management in this religious destination and identify halal tourism management strategies. The research method employed is a qualitative approach, utilizing data collection techniques that include observation, in-depth interviews with stakeholders, and literature reviews on halal tourism management. The results showed that the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque has implemented the Brunei Halal Standard, which is strictly supervised by the Islamic Religious Council of Brunei (MUIB). Some of the main challenges include the limited number of tour guides with a deep understanding of the halal concept and the lack of digital platforms that facilitate information and service bookings for global travellers. Based on theories of halal management, destination competitiveness, and digitization, this research proposes an integrated framework to enhance Sharia services, multilingual guide training, digital innovation, and global promotion. The strategy for developing halal management in religious tourism requires integrating technological innovation, improving the quality of Sharia-compliant services, and strengthening digital promotion to increase destinations' global competitiveness.

Keywords: Halal management, Religious tourism, Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque, Brunei Darussalam.

Introduction

Religious tourism has become a growing sector in the global tourism industry, especially in countries with a Muslim majority population (Akhmedenov and Idrisova 2021; Gedecho and Nyikana 2023; Musa, Ghadas, and Kadir 2023) . As a country that applies Islamic law in its governance system, Brunei Darussalam has excellent potential to develop religious tourism based on halal management. One of the main religious tourist destinations in the country is the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque, which is an icon of Islamic architecture in Southeast Asia. However, Brunei has strict regulations in implementing the halal concept; there are still challenges in managing religious tourism to meet the expectations of global Muslim tourists (Notarstefano & Gristina, 2021).

Data from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) indicates that tourism is expected to contribute approximately 5.1% to Brunei Darussalam's GDP in 2022. However, this contribution is still lower than neighbouring countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, which have developed the concept of religious tourism (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2021). According to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), Brunei Darussalam has not been included among the top 10 religious tourism destinations in the world, indicating potential for further development in halal management in the religious tourism sector (GMTI, 2021).

Brunei Darussalam has implemented a Sharia legal system that supports the development of the halal sector. Research on halal management development strategies in religious tourism is still limited (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2023). Many previous studies have focused on the analysis of religious tourism in countries with more advanced tourism industries, such as Malaysia and Indonesia (Mawardi 2022; Musthofa et al. 2023; Alam et al. 2024). Studies on specific strategies applied in Brunei Darussalam, especially in destinations such as the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque, are still rare in the academic literature (Asbol Mail, 2007).

The main problems faced in the management of religious tourism in Brunei Darussalam include the lack of promotion and digitization of religious tourism services, the limited availability of supporting facilities for international Muslim tourists, and the lack of academic research that discusses the effectiveness of halal management strategies that have been implemented (Noorashid and Chin 2021; Chin and Noorashid 2022; Nyau and Chin 2023; Chin, Tham, and Noorashid 2024). Thus, this research seeks to fill this gap by exploring halal management development strategies in the destination of the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque.

This research uses a halal tourism management theory approach (Halal Tourism Management), which emphasizes the integration of Sharia principles in

all aspects of tourism operations, including services, products, and marketing (Chanin et al. 2015; Al Qital 2022; Sunarya and Al Qital 2022). The theory of Destination Competitiveness was used to analyze the competitiveness of Brunei Darussalam's religious tourism relative to other countries. This theory is relevant in evaluating the extent to which factors such as policies, infrastructure, and the tourist experience contribute to the attractiveness of a destination (Hanafiah, Hemdi, and Ahmad 2016; Altinay and Kozak 2021; Zaman 2023).

Several previous studies have explored various aspects of religious tourism management. For example, Battour et al. (2018) examine the factors influencing Muslim tourist satisfaction in religious tourism in Malaysia. Other research by Yahya, Uzair, and Rofiqo (2022) examines the importance of regulation in supporting the development of religious tourism in Muslim countries. Meanwhile, Wahyono and Razak (2020) discuss the opportunities and challenges of digitalization in the religious tourism industry in Southeast Asia. However, there has been no study that specifically examines the strategy for developing halal management at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque in Brunei Darussalam.

The strategy for developing halal management in religious tourism is a study that requires an in-depth understanding of relevant concepts and theories (Muhamad et al., 2022). In this research, several main theories are used to explain, understand, and evaluate the implementation of halal management in religious tourism destinations, especially at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque, Brunei Darussalam. The theoretical approach not only aims to provide a systematic overview of the phenomenon being studied but also to show the theory's position in identifying problems, explaining phenomena, and predicting the effectiveness of the strategies applied (Muhamad et al., 2022).

Halal management theory is one of the main theories used in this research. Halal management in tourism refers to a set of principles and practices that aim to ensure all services, products, and facilities in the tourism sector comply with Sharia principles. Halal management in the study of religious tourism does not only include the provision of halal-certified food and beverages, but also concerns aspects of services, worship facilities, accommodation, and tourist experiences that are aligned with Islamic values (Azmi et al., 2021). This theory suggests that the successful implementation of halal management in tourism is highly dependent on the regulations in place, stakeholder understanding, and the industry's readiness to meet Muslim tourists' needs.

Another theory that underpins this research is destination competitiveness. This theory explains the factors that determine a tourist destination's

attractiveness and competitive advantage in the global market. The competitiveness of destinations in religious tourism is not only determined by the uniqueness of a place's culture and history, but also by the extent to which the destination can meet the needs of Muslim tourists by providing halal and Sharia-compliant services (Kusumawardhani, 2020). The success of destinations in competing with other countries, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, which are more advanced in managing religious tourism, is primarily determined by the extent to which governments and stakeholders can develop policies and strategies that support the development of this sector.

This research also draws on the theory of digitalization in tourism as a conceptual foundation to understand the role of technology in the development of religious tourism. Digitalization in the tourism industry involves the use of information and communication technology to improve accessibility, marketing, and services for tourists (Lukiyanto et al., 2022). Digitalization in religious tourism has enabled information about halal services, facilitated online service bookings, and increased interaction between destination managers and tourists through digital platforms (Jansson, 2020). This theory suggests that applying technology to religious tourism management can enhance the tourist experience, expand market reach, and boost destinations' global competitiveness.

Regulatory and policy approaches are also factors that cannot be ignored in developing halal management strategies. The regulatory approach in the religious tourism sector emphasizes the government's role in fostering an ecosystem conducive to the industry's growth. Strict regulations in the implementation of halal standards can assure Muslim tourists that the services they receive are in accordance with halal management (Adinugraha et al., 2023). However, the fact that regulations are too strict without flexibility in their implementation can be an obstacle to the development of the sector, especially in attracting tourists from various cultural and religious backgrounds (Santoso et al., 2022). Therefore, this approach is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Brunei Darussalam government's policies in supporting the development of religious tourism at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque.

This research examines the socio-cultural management of religious tourism. It explores how interactions between tourists and local communities shape the overall experience. Specifically, the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim tourists, alongside local community reception, is are key factor in the success of halal management strategies (Fatmawatie, 2022). Such interactions demonstrate

how religious tourism fosters cross-cultural understanding and strengthens ties between global Muslim communities (Amin et al., 2024).

This research not only aims to describe and explain the phenomenon that occurs in the management of religious tourism in the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque using various relevant theories as described above, but also to provide a deeper understanding of the factors that affect its success. This research aims to predict the impact of various strategies that can be implemented and to evaluate the effectiveness of government policies in Brunei Darussalam. This research can provide recommendations grounded in a strong theoretical foundation, serving as a reference for the development of religious tourism in other destinations. This research, from a broader perspective, also considers the impact of social access resulting from the development of religious tourism.

This study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of halal management development strategies in religious tourism by integrating various theories described above. The theories used not only provide a strong conceptual foundation but also help identify the challenges and opportunities that exist in managing religious tourist destinations. The results of this research provide a significant contribution to the development of religious tourism in Brunei Darussalam and serve as a model for other countries seeking to develop this sector. This research proposes a strategic halal management model for the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque, focusing on digitalization, Sharia services, and destination competitiveness. It addresses a research gap in Brunei's halal tourism and serves as a reference for global policies and practices.

Method

This research used a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the development strategy of halal management in religious tourism at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque, Brunei Darussalam. This research employs a single intrinsic case study, focusing in-depth on one destination to understand the development of halal management strategies within the specific context of religious tourism. This method was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation of halal principles in the management of religious tourism destinations, as well as to identify the challenges and opportunities faced in their development. The Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque was chosen because it is a religious tourism icon in Brunei Darussalam and represents the implementation of halal management based on strict Shariah regulations; however, it still faces challenges in digitalization and global promotion, as identified in the study.

The data for this research were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Purposive sampling was used to select informants directly involved in the management, regulation, services, and experience of halal religious tourism. Interviews were conducted with mosque managers, government representatives, tourism industry players, and Muslim tourists who visited this destination. A total of 8–10 informants were interviewed, comprising mosque administrators, government representatives, tourism industry stakeholders, and international Muslim tourists. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, and participatory observation of halal facilities and services was conducted over approximately three months. Policy documents, halal regulations, and tourism reports were also analyzed. Observations were conducted on-site to understand the implementation of halal services across worship facilities, culinary services, and tourist information. The documentation study involves analyzing government policies, applicable halal regulations, and industry reports related to the development of religious tourism in Brunei Darussalam.
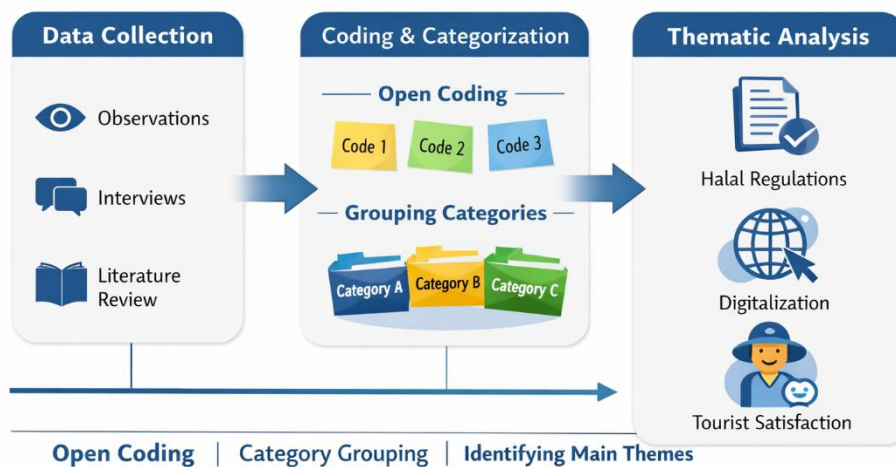

Figure 1. Thematic approach to the research process
Source: Methodology results, 2025.

The data obtained were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach through open coding, category grouping, and the development of main themes such as halal regulations, digitalization, and tourist satisfaction. The analysis stages include data reduction, categorization, and interpretation of findings. The results of the interviews and observations are coded based on the main themes, including the effectiveness of halal regulations, the digitization of services, and

tourist satisfaction. The results of the analysis were then compared with previous studies to identify patterns and gaps in related research (Mills & Birks, 2017).

This research method ensures that the data obtained are highly valid in describing real conditions in the field. Credibility is maintained through data triangulation, reliability through audit trails, and confirmability through documentation of analysis. Ethical considerations include informed consent, informant anonymity, and adherence to international research standards.

Result and Discussion

Evaluation of Halal Management Implementation in Religious Tourism Services and Facilities at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque

The implementation of halal management in this destination has reached high standards in several areas, but there are still some areas that need improvement. The observations revealed that the main facilities, including places of worship, ablution areas, and halal food provision, have met the halal standards set by the Brunei Darussalam authorities. However, service aspects related to religious tourism guidance and the availability of multilingual information on halal aspects still require improvement. Interviews with mosque managers revealed that the main obstacles they faced were a limited workforce that did not fully understand the concept of religious tourism and a lack of digital promotion related to this destination.

Strict government regulations greatly influence the implementation of halal management at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque in maintaining the halal of every aspect of the service. This aligns with halal tourism management theory, which emphasizes the importance of regulations, infrastructure, and tourist experiences in developing halal destinations. The regulations implemented by the government of Brunei Darussalam have made this mosque a destination that adheres to high standards of Sharia compliance. In practice, it was found that there are still aspects of service that are not optimal, especially in terms of more interactive religious tourism services.

The implementation of halal management in services and facilities at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque has reflected the principles of halal tourism, which emphasizes adherence to Islamic law in aspects of cleanliness, safety, and comfort for Muslim tourists. From the perspective of halal tourism management theory, the services available have met halal standards by providing certified food, hygienic ablution facilities, and clear separation of worship spaces for men and women. This was aligned with the view Lestari, Saidah, and Aliya Putri (2022)

which emphasizes the importance of halal elements in creating a tourist experience that meets the needs of Muslim tourists.

Application of the concept Destination Competitiveness. The phenomenon of mosques as destinations for religious tourism is evident in their architectural appeal and historical significance. The mosque's unique design, which seamlessly combines classical and modern Islamic elements, gives it a competitive edge in attracting tourists. In theory, Destination Competitiveness, González-Rodríguez, Díaz-Fernández, and Pulido-Pavón (2023) emphasizing that the competitive advantage of a destination is not only determined by physical attractions, but also by the quality of service and ease of access. This research confirms that Muslim-friendly facilities, such as digital-based tourist information and halal-conceptual tour guide services, have also increased the competitiveness of mosques as a leading religious tourism destination in Brunei Darussalam.

There are still challenges in increasing awareness among non-Muslim tourists about the concept of halal, so that there are no misunderstandings regarding the use of facilities, even though the implementation of halal management has been successful. More effective education and communication strategies are needed to bridge the understanding gap (Mannaa, 2020). Strengthening halal management based on digitalization and service innovation can further increase the competitiveness of the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque as a sustainable religious tourism destination.

The results of interviews with several tourists show that they really appreciate the cleanliness, comfort, and tranquillity offered at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque. However, they also expect more supporting facilities, such as a more comprehensive halal information center and digital technology that supports religious tourism experiences. The following is a summary of the results of observations and interviews in the following table:

Table 1. Religious tourism services and facilities at Omar 'Ali Saifuddiendi Mosque

Evaluation Aspects	Positive Findings	Obstacles Faced
Worship Facilities	Clean and well-maintained, there are ablution places that meet halal standards	Lack of multilingual information boards about worship procedures
Tour Services	Management according to Sharia principles, tour guides available	Limited number of tour guides with in-depth knowledge of religious tourism

Digitization	Official website and active social media	Lack of interactive apps and digital guides about destinations
Halal Culinary	All available foods are guaranteed to be halal	Lack of international menu variety to suit the preferences of global Muslim travellers

Source: Results of observation analysis and interviews (2025).

Previous research supports these findings. Judge (2019) emphasized that the success of halal destinations is greatly influenced by the availability of services that not only meet halal standards but also provide a comfortable and memorable experience for tourists. Shinde and Olsen (2023) explains that the sustainability of religious tourism requires technological adaptation to enhance destination attractiveness in the digital era. The results of this research confirm that the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque has met halal standards in terms of facilities, but still needs innovation in services and digitalization to increase its competitiveness at the global level.

The development of halal management in religious tourism at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque needs to be focused on improving more interactive tourism services, increasing the number of professionals in religious tourism, and optimizing digital technology to strengthen the attractiveness of this destination. Strengthening existing regulations must be balanced with innovation to enable this destination to compete with other countries in the religious tourism industry.

The Impact of Brunei Government Policies on Religious Tourism Management at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque

The government's regulations strongly support the application of halal principles in the tourism sector. Several challenges need to be addressed to optimise the management of this destination. The results of the observation show that halal regulations in Brunei Darussalam have ensured that all aspects of services and facilities at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque are in accordance with halal management. The government, through the Brunei Darussalam Islamic Religious Council (MUIB) and the Ministry of Main Resources and Tourism (KSSUP), closely supervises the implementation of halal standards in accommodation, culinary, and tourism services (Salleh et al., 2020). However, interviews with mosque managers revealed that although the regulations have been well implemented, there are some challenges in practice, especially in terms

of openness to non-Muslim tourists and the digitization of religious tourism services.

Strict government policies support the authenticity of religious tourism in Brunei Darussalam, but also pose obstacles to expanding the international tourist market. Halal tourism management theory emphasizes that a balance between regulation and flexibility of services is essential to increase the attractiveness of halal destinations. The implementation of strict regulations at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque does increase its credibility as a halal destination, but the lack of promotion and adaptation to technological developments limits the broader reach of tourists (Sumarto et al., 2020).

The regulations and policies of the Brunei Darussalam government have a central role in the management of religious tourism at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque. Strict policies based on halal management create a tourism environment aligned with Islamic values, thereby shaping a strong image of halal destinations. From the perspective of halal tourism management theory, the implementation of these regulations reflects the importance of the principle of halal-friendly tourism, where the sustainability of destinations is highly dependent on the consistency of regulations and facilities that support Muslim tourists (Romanelli et al., 2021).

Government policies that establish dress codes, restrict non-religious activities, and provide supporting facilities for Muslim tourists have also enhanced the competitiveness of destinations. Based on the theory of Destination Competitiveness, a destination's competitive advantage depends on a combination of policies, cultural appeal, and supporting infrastructure (Zhu et al., 2021). The regulations implemented at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque reinforce this aspect by ensuring that the tourist experience remains in accordance with religious norms, which ultimately increases the loyalty of Muslim tourists.

This research found that limited access for non-Muslim tourists and the lack of digital promotion are challenges in increasing global competitiveness. Information disclosure and technology-based marketing strategies in the digitization of religious tourism have been a key factor in expanding the reach of the religious tourism market (Stoica et al., 2022). Therefore, even though government regulations have created an environment conducive to halal tourism, optimizing digital marketing strategies and improving inclusive facilities for tourists from diverse backgrounds can be a strategic step in strengthening Brunei Darussalam's position as a leading religious tourism destination.

Interviews with Muslim tourists show that they feel comfortable and safe with the services provided due to adherence to halal management. However, some tourists stated that limited digital access and a lack of information in foreign languages were obstacles. The following is a summary of the results of observations and interviews in the following table:

Table 2. Impact of Brunei Darussalam government regulations and policies

Evaluation Aspects	Positive Findings	Obstacles Faced
Halal Regulations	Strict implementation by the government, periodic supervision	Strict regulations limit the flexibility of services for international travellers
Tourist Facilities	As per halal standards, a clean and comfortable environment	Lack of innovation in the provision of digital-based services
Promotion and Digitalization	Official website available, accurate information	Lack of international promotional media and limited multilingual information
Accessibility for Non-Muslim Travellers	Open to all tourists	Some rules restrict the interaction and experience of non-Muslim tourists

Source: Results of observation analysis and interviews (2025).

Previous research supports these findings. Aziza, Prasnowo, and Khoirul Hidayat (2020) emphasizing that strong halal regulations can increase the competitiveness of halal destinations; however, if not balanced with effective marketing strategies, the growth of this sector becomes limited. Effendi et al. (2021) It also shows that countries with strict regulations need to adjust policies to be more inclusive without sacrificing halal principles. The study confirms that although Brunei Darussalam has implemented strict regulations, the lack of innovation in services and marketing is a significant obstacle in the management of religious tourism at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque.

Based on these findings, the management of religious tourism in Brunei Darussalam requires a more flexible strategy while maintaining halal principles. There needs to be an increase in digital promotion, the provision of multilingual information, and the development of policies that are more adaptive for non-Muslim tourists without compromising the values of Islam that are upheld. A more open policy towards technological innovation will enable Brunei Darussalam to expand its global share of the religious tourism market and increase its competitiveness as a major religious tourism destination.

Tourists' Perceptions of Religious Tourism at Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque

Most Muslim tourists are satisfied with the facilities and services provided, especially in terms of cleanliness, comfort, and adherence to halal principles (Krisna & Yusuf, 2023). However, some aspects, such as the limitation of information in various languages and the lack of digital innovation, are still the main challenges in increasing the attractiveness of the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque destination. The Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque has provided excellent worship facilities, including a clean ablution place, a comfortable prayer area, and a calm environment in accordance with Islamic values. Interviews with Muslim tourists revealed that they felt safe and comfortable during their visit, particularly because of the strict enforcement of halal regulations by the Brunei Darussalam government. However, some international tourists state that the limited information in foreign languages makes it difficult for them to understand the mosque's history and spiritual value in depth.

The level of tourist satisfaction is closely correlated with the implementation of good halal management (With 2020). The theory of halal tourism management emphasizes that an optimal religious tourism experience requires a combination of Sharia-compliant facilities, tourist-friendly services, and technological support to enhance information accessibility. The application of halal principles in services at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque has succeeded in creating a comfortable environment for Muslim tourists, but it has not been entirely appealing to non-Muslim tourists who want to gain a more in-depth experience of Islamic culture.

Figure 2. Religious tourism location of the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque

Source: Documentation results, 2025.

Tourists' perception of religious tourism experiences at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque is influenced by the factors of architectural beauty, spiritual value, and accessibility of facilities. These findings align with halal tourism management theory, which emphasizes the importance of providing services that adhere to Islamic principles, including comfort in worship and the availability of Muslim-friendly facilities (Muslim & Harun, 2022). The mosque's architecture, which combines traditional Islamic elements with modern aesthetics, is the main attraction, enhancing the tourist experience and strengthening the image of the halal destination.

The limited availability of tourist information in various languages and the lack of integration of digital technology into tourism services hinder this destination's competitiveness. Based on the theory of Destination Competitiveness, Rian Hilmawan et al. (2024) emphasizing that the competitiveness of destinations is highly dependent on product excellence, accessibility, and marketing strategies. Without innovations in the digitization of services, such as technology-based tour-guide applications or social media-based promotions, the potential of mosques as a leading destination for religious tourism has not been maximized.

Development opportunities can be realized by enhancing the infrastructure of halal-based tourism services, such as offering tour packages that incorporate local religious and cultural values. Collaboration among the government, mosque managers, and the tourism industry is necessary to enhance the global marketing strategy. The implementation of sustainability-oriented halal tourism management principles will support the long-term appeal of these destinations, aligned with the concept of Destination Competitiveness, which prioritises innovation and the quality of the tourist experience (Lee et al., 2021). Destination managers can design more effective strategies to improve the tourist experience and strengthen the position of the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque as a leading religious tourism destination in the Southeast Asian region.

Interviews with tourists reveal that they greatly appreciate the serene atmosphere and tranquillity this mosque provides. However, they also expressed hope for more tour guides who can explain the history and values of Islam in multiple languages. The following is a summary of the results of observations and interviews in the following table:

Table 3. Tourists' perception of religious tourism experiences at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque

Evaluation Aspects	Positive Findings	Obstacles Faced
Worship Facilities	Clean, comfortable, and in accordance with Sharia principles	There is no multilingual information about the rituals of worship and the history of the mosque
Tour Services	Friendly staff and service that was aligned with Islamic values	Lack of tour guides with foreign language skills
Digitization	The official website is available with basic information	Lack of interactive apps or technology to improve the travel experience
Access Information	Halal regulations are correctly implemented and transparent	Lack of educational materials in multimedia form for international travellers

Source: Results of observation analysis and interviews (2025).

Previous research supports these findings. Abror et al. (2020) explained that the success of religious tourism is highly dependent on the tourist experience, which is not only based on Sharia compliance but also provides inclusive and informative services. Fitriani and Indra Marzuki (2020) adding that digitalization in the religious tourism sector can increase the attractiveness of destinations through easy access to information and more interactive tourist experiences. These findings show that although the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque has become a superior destination in terms of Sharia compliance, there are still opportunities for development in the aspect of more modern and inclusive tourism services.

Based on the results of this research, the management of religious tourism at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque requires improvement in several strategic aspects. There needs to be an increase in the number of tour guides who master multiple languages, optimization of digital technology to improve information accessibility, and the development of educational materials that can introduce Islamic values to non-Muslim tourists. The Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque can be a model of a religious tourist destination that is not only compliant with halal management, but also able to provide a more in-depth tourist experience for all people by innovating in this aspect.

Digital Innovation in Developing Religious Tourism at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque

The application of digital technology in these destinations remains limited, although efforts are underway to increase visibility through social media and official websites. Innovations in the provision of digital-based services, such as tour guide apps and online booking systems, have not been fully utilized to enhance the religious tourism experience (Maghfuri et al., 2016). The results of the observations show that although the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque has excellent potential as a leading religious tourism destination, the lack of an optimal digitization strategy hinders the broader dissemination of information. Interviews with mosque managers revealed that the government has encouraged the use of technology in the tourism sector; however, collaboration with digital industry players is still necessary to enhance the effectiveness of implementation. The Muslim tourists interviewed also stated that they expect technology-based innovations, such as mobile apps with navigation features, interactive historical information, and online booking facilities for halal services.
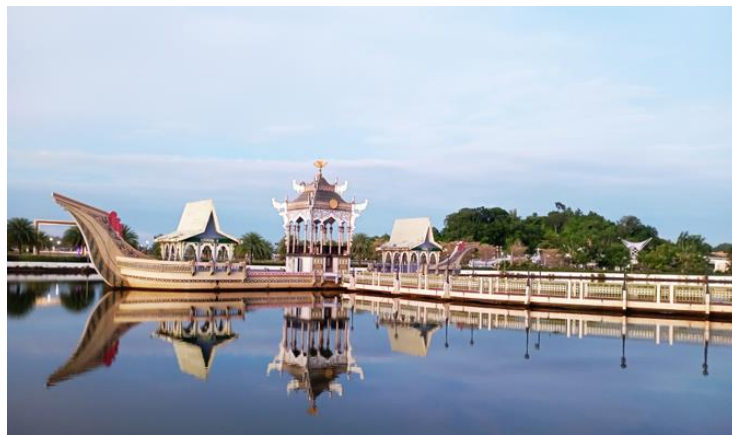

Figure 3. Ark Tour in the area of the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque
Source: Documentation results, 2025.

Figure 3 shows the physical potential of the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque area. While the destination holds significant appeal, current management faces challenges regarding information accessibility. This image is central to the study's emphasis on digital strategies, such as virtual tours, navigation apps, and social media promotion to enhance visibility and modernize the visitor experience. Ultimately, digital innovation bridges the gap between the mosque's existing infrastructure and the demand for globally competitive, technology-driven services.

Innovation and digitalization strategies play an important role in the development of religious tourism at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque. The innovations implemented include developing technology-based services, improving infrastructure quality, and optimizing digital promotions. Digitalization, primarily through social media platforms and location-based applications, is able to increase the visibility of mosques as a leading religious destination. These findings were aligned with halal tourism management theory, which emphasizes the importance of innovation in creating a tourism experience that is in accordance with halal management and the needs of Muslim tourists (Said et al., 2022).

This research found that halal tourism management theory emphasizes the importance of adopting technology to increase the competitiveness of halal destinations. Digital-based innovation strategies can help overcome information accessibility constraints, expand promotional reach, and improve tourist comfort. The Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque already has basic infrastructure that supports religious tourism, but the implementation of digitalization still needs improvement to better align with global trends in the religious tourism industry.

The innovation strategy applied reflects the concept of destination Competitiveness that emphasizes the excellence of the destination through differentiation of services and unique attractions (Oktadiana et al., 2016). The implementation of digitalization improves service efficiency and information accessibility, which ultimately contributes to the competitiveness of destinations. The use of technology, such as virtual tours and online reservation systems, not only expands market reach but also increases the convenience of travelers in planning their visits.

Collaboration with stakeholders, including governments, religious institutions, and the tourism industry, is a key factor in the success of this strategy (Yip et al., 2023). The digital-based approach allows for synergy between various actors in the halal tourism ecosystem, which in turn reinforces the image of the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque as a globally competitive religious destination. The findings of this research confirm that the combination of innovation and digitalization in the management of religious tourism not only enhances the attractiveness of destinations but also strengthens the position of mosques in the global halal tourism landscape.

Some tourists reported difficulty finding comprehensive information about halal services and activities available near the mosque. Additionally, the unavailability of online booking services for religious tourism and the limited use

of interactive technology pose obstacles to providing a more modern and engaging tourist experience. The following is a summary of the results of observations and interviews in the following table:

Table 4. Innovation and digitalization strategy for religious tourism at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque

Evaluation Aspects	Positive Findings	Obstacles Faced
Digital Promotion	Official website available, active social media usage	Lack of interactive content and app-based services
Technological Innovation	Internet infrastructure supports the development of digitalization	There is no dedicated mobile app for religious tourism in this mosque
Information Accessibility	Basic information available online	Lack of educational materials in digital and multilingual form
Service Booking	Some services can be accessed online	There is no dedicated platform for booking religious tourism services

Source: Results of observation analysis and interviews (2025).

Previous research supports these findings. According to Squirrels (2019), digitalization plays an important role in increasing the attractiveness of religious tourism destinations by providing easy access to information and services. Fitriani and Marzuki (2020) It also shows that religious tourism destinations that adopt digital technology are better able to attract global tourists because they provide a more efficient and informative experience. The results of this research confirm that the development of innovation and digitalization at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque still requires a more comprehensive strategy to be more competitive in the religious tourism industry.

Based on the results of this research, strategic steps are needed to increase digitalization in the management of religious tourism at the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque. Optimizing digital promotions with more interactive content, developing mobile applications that provide real-time information on religious tourism, and integrating online booking services are some solutions that can be implemented. With the adoption of more effective technological innovations, the Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque can become a model of a religious tourism destination that not only excels in aspects of Sharia compliance but also in providing a more modern, comfortable, and informative tourist experience for global tourists.

Conclusion

This research concludes that halal management in this destination has met strict halal standards, particularly in worship facilities, culinary offerings, and tourism services. Several challenges hinder the development of this destination as a global religious tourism center, including limited multilingual information, a lack of tour guides who comprehensively understand the concept of halal tourism, and limited digitization of tourism services. Theoretically, this research confirms the relevance of halal tourism management theory, which emphasizes the importance of infrastructure, policy, and tourist experience in supporting the competitiveness of halal destinations. The results of this research enrich the literature on religious tourism by providing empirical evidence on the implementation of halal destination management strategies in Brunei Darussalam. This research also shows that although strict regulations and policies have helped maintain halal standards, innovation in digital services and marketing still needs improvement to make this destination more competitive internationally.

The main implications of this research are the enhancement of digital-based promotion, the development of multilingual information services, and the training of tour guides to better understand halal aspects of the tourism industry. The Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque has the potential to become a model for religious tourism destinations that not only uphold Sharia principles but are also able to compete globally as a leading destination for Islamic religious tourism. Future research should explore digital innovation strategies that foster a more inclusive and modern religious tourism experience. Specifically, studies should prioritize advancing digital tools, diversifying halal services, and strengthening public-private collaborations to expand Brunei Darussalam's share of the religious tourism market.

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