

DEVELOPING HALAL TOURIST DESTINATION: INVESTIGATING LOMBOK'S POTENTIALS FROM DESTINATION MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

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Submission date: 12-Feb-2023 06:49PM (UTC-0600)

Submission ID: 2012473945

File name: developing_halal_tourist.pdf (360.41K)

Word count: 5008

Character count: 28634

Chapter 8

Developing *Halal* Tourist Destination: Investigating Lombok's Potentials from Destination Marketing Perspective

Sulhaini, Akhmad Saufi and Rusdan

Abstract Lombok is one of the most Muslim-populated Islands of Indonesia and is entitled 'island of a thousand mosques'. Such status may be one of the reasons behind the plan of Indonesian Government to develop Lombok as an Islamic (*halal-friendly*) tourist destination in Indonesia. This study is aimed at investigating the potentials of Lombok and its surroundings (a number of small islands or gilis around Lombok) to adopt the Islamic principles (followed to develop *halal-friendly* tourist destination) from the destination marketing perspectives. Data was collected from electronic and non-electronic promotional materials used by tourism agencies and private tourism enterprises (travel agents, hotels, and restaurants) in promoting Lombok and its surroundings. The data was then analyzed using content analysis approach. The study finds two main categories: (1) the *potential halal-friendly* tourist destinations, including all tourist destinations from within Lombok Island, and (2) the *moderate halal-friendly* tourist destinations, including the gilis. These findings suggest that the Islamic tourism principles can be adopted by all tourism enterprises in Lombok, and used to market Lombok as a *halal-friendly* tourist destination. However, such principles cannot be fully adopted by all tourism enterprises on the gilis. Instead, the *halal-friendly* tourism can be adopted by individual tourism enterprises and used as an individual market positioning on the gilis. The study brings implications to both tourism studies and management.

Keywords Islamic tourism · Halal-friendly tourism · Positioning · Promotion · Lombok · Three gilis

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A. Saufi et al. (eds.), *Balancing Development and Sustainability
in Tourism Destinations*, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1718-6_8

Introduction

In Muslim world, tourism is about God's command to mankind, and is an important topic to study (Jafari and Scott 2014). This includes the marketing management of Islamic tourism (Haq and Wong 2010). Islamic tourism can be defined as tourism by Muslims and non-Muslims in the Muslim world. It facilitates non-Muslims to understand Muslims and creates greater market opportunities of Islamic destinations (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson 2010). Since Islamic principles govern much of business practices including tourism as acceptable or halal, it is also called 'halal tourism' (Battour et al. 2014). According to the concept, private tourism enterprises and tourism agencies' commitment in Islamic tourism may promote non-Muslims' understanding towards Muslim worlds while adopting Islamic principles. Then, their roles are not only involving economic but also, and perhaps more importantly, religious considerations.

Since Islamic tourism has religious motives, it can be seen as an exploration on all creations that have been created by God in order to obtain knowledge and increase faith (Jafari and Scott 2014) and thus it can also be called as 'purposeful tourism' (Elsamadiy and Negm 2013) or 'spiritual tourism' and people who carry out this have special interest to achieve specific objectives with specific needs (Haq and Wong 2010). Meanwhile, Islamic travelling that is compatible to Islamic principles is regarded as 'purposeful movement' (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson 2010). The core purpose is to conduct a spiritual journey to serve God and to get to know more of His creations including other people from other countries. This entails social and religious benefits of Islamic tourism. Muslims are then encouraged to take spiritual journeys. The holy book of Islam (Qur'an) endorses travelling in at least fourteen chapters/surah (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson 2010). Islam encourages people to travel by mean observing and learning God's creation to gain more understandings and thus travelling can also be seen as spiritual journeys since it can strengthen travellers' faith. This involves the principle of Tawhid, which is the oneness of God. By travelling, one Muslim is experiencing, seeing and learning the beauty of God's creations and knowing the greatness of God. Therefore, travelling must convey Islamic principles and adopting the principles can be viewed as worship of God or *ibadah* requiring the service providers to be good hosts. Put simply, Islamic tourism provides economic, social and religious benefits for the hosts/service providers, their activities are guided by the Islamic principles.

Islamic Tourism Marketing

Islamic marketing is a very new concept and its emergence reflects trends in the Muslim world and beyond (Wilson 2012). For Muslims, Islam is not just a religion nor a part of culture but it is a way of life providing guidelines on how to conduct

business, yet research on Islamic marketing is still very limited (Sandikci 2011; Hussnain 2011). Then, this study contributes to knowledge by studying Islamic tourism on Lombok and its surroundings through integration of Islamic marketing in the analysis.

Islamic marketing has been defined as the process of identification and implementation of value maximization strategies for the welfare of the stakeholders in particular and the society in general governed by the guidelines given in the Qur'an and Hadith (Hussnain 2011). This means Islamic marketing advances value creation in business for a wider society. This idea is transferable and relevance to a wider non-Muslim customers/community generating sustained advantages (Wilson 2012). Then, it is reasonable to assume that the adoption of Islamic principles will bring benefits to Muslims and non-Muslim consumers/visitors.

Islamic marketing implies that when targeting Muslims consumers, the practice of marketing needs to take on Islamic principles and thus it is different from marketing in general. All marketing activities must convey the Qur'an and Hadith eschewing selfish pursuit of profit maximation to suit individual marketer desires and ambitions. The guidance in the Qur'an and Hadith comes into individual conscience and influences their behaviour from within (Saeed et al. 2001). Wilson (2012) therefore suggests that Islamic marketing can be seen as an acknowledgement of a God-conscious approach to marketing, which tends towards the Islamic norms and values. Muslim consumers may have distinctive characters and behaviour. In targeting this segment, marketers offer a wide variety of products, which are positioned as Islamic or Halal including tourism products/destinations (Sandikci 2011). Islamic teachings influence Muslim tourists' behaviour. The consumers may evaluate a product or a destination's attributes such as: the inclusion of prayer/worship facilities, halal food, alcoholic and gambling free zones, Islamic entertainments, Islamic dress codes, general Islamic morality and the Islamic call to prayer (Battour et al. 2014). Muslim consumers/visitors choose the best destination, which is permissible according to Islamic law. Therefore, in targeting this segment, marketing strategies of an Islamic destination must be aligned with Islamic law.

Islamic marketing literature seems to emphasize segmentation where religion is the main factor explaining Muslim consumers' behaviour and ensuring products' halalness is the only objective. Nonetheless, it should refocus on the daily practices for which the product may be relevant and provide solutions that will assist Muslims be better Muslims and live proper Islamic lives. Also, one has to understand that Islamic marketing is unique since all commercial endeavours taken by a person are part of worship (ibadah) of God (Saeed et al. 2001). Service providers in the tourism industry can thus obtain religious benefits. However, this entails multiple and dynamic interpretations among Muslims. Understanding the variations will be fruitful as the basis of market segmentation (Sandikci 2011; Saeed and Azmi 2014).

Abdullah et al. (2013) identified factors (five Cs) affecting Islamic marketing mix. First, *commitment* stresses instilling assurance in business dealings via

trustworthy marketing activities by implementing Islamic principles. Second, *character* describes the distinctive character of Islamic marketing. This can be seen in product design, specification and promotion, which are in accordance with Islamic principles. Third, *conformity* relies on compliance in terms of process involved in creating and delivering Islamic products/services. Fourth, *conscience* relates to ethical dimensions of Islamic marketing stressing true sense of promoting and clarity in pricing in accordance with Islamic teaching. Fifth, *customer centric* describes as an approach towards the customers, this mainly deals with the concept of marketing in general. It seems that Islamic marketing extends the general marketing concept with these interesting factors, which are dictated by the Islamic principles. Islamic marketing emphasizes developing marketing strategy in terms of marketing mix in accordance with the principles by offering permissible products, design, pricing, distribution and even promotions to meet customers' needs.

The principles prohibit public displays of affection, physical contact between members of the opposite sex, gambling, breaking fast in daylight during the holy month of Ramadan, consumption of pork and alcoholic drinks and inappropriate dressing (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson 2010). An Islamic destination can differentiate itself from other by placing a greater emphasis on Islamic attributes in their promotional campaigns. For example: a clear message on the availability of Halal foods and the availability of Islamic entertainments may represent a high priority for tourists in destination selection (Battour et al. 2014). Also, Saeed et al. (2001) explained that promotional techniques may not rely on sexual appeal, emotional appeal, fear appeal, pseudo research appeal, false testimonies or create the dullness of the mind and encourage extravagance. Then, it is not permissible for stereotyping of woman, excessive use of fantasy, the use of suggestive language and behaviour. This means that it strongly prohibited the use of women as promotional objects to attract customers/visitors' attention and influence their behaviour. In Islamic marketing, an advertisement must draw the true picture of destinations since Islam prohibits the practice of over promising and exaggeration. Promotional campaigns must follow the Islamic principles and must not contain false statements or promises or over praise the offering (Saeed et al. 2001; Abdullah et al. 2013). Therefore, making a false impression by giving incorrect and misleading information to promote a destination is strictly prohibited.

There is a common point of view between the Islamic tourism and Islamic marketing concepts that economic, social and religious benefits can be attained when enterprises adopt the Islamic principles. Those concepts highlighted that a destination must confirm Islamic principles to attract both Muslim and non-Muslim. This study is aimed to make preliminary investigation of the potentials to adopt Islamic tourism in Lombok, Indonesia. In turn now, we portray the methodology of the study.

Methods

Research Context

Lombok is located in Indonesia and is one of the two main islands of West Nusa Tenggara province. The island of Lombok has been popularly viewed as a thousand-mosque island where the majority of the population are practicing Islam (Saufi et al. 2014). In the beginning of tourism development, Lombok and its surroundings were promoted as '*beyond Bali*' tourist destination, to create an image of Indonesia's second Bali and attract visitors to enjoy and experience the beauty of Lombok (Dahles and Bras 1999).

To differentiate Lombok from Bali, Lombok tourism agencies created promotional campaign, i.e. '*you can see Bali in Lombok, but you can't see Lombok in Bali*'. Such *moto* was intended to create tourists' perception that Lombok is 'different' from Bali, while expecting the success of Bali influencing Lombok as a tourist destination. Nevertheless, such *moto* did not result in a clear and distinctive differentiation from Bali, and did not satisfy the majority of local people in Lombok (Saufi et al. 2014). Furthermore, Lombok as a tourist destination is often associated with Bali until recently. Consequently, it is reasonable to develop a new positioning for Lombok by adopting the Islamic principles. Knowing that Lombok's people are majority Muslim, such positioning may result in a clearer differentiation with Bali, and increase Lombok's tourism potentials.

Data Collection

We collected data from electronic and non-electronic promotional materials used by Tourism Agencies and private tourism enterprises (travel agents, hotels and restaurants) in promoting Lombok. The promotional materials include websites, magazines (Lombok Magazine and Lombok Guide), brochures and other non-electronic promotional materials. The materials were analyzed in a highly iterative process and put into the unit of analysis. We focused our interpretation to the effect of the message from the texts and figures. We did not exclude figures in the analysis since they were main parts of marketing communication and contained important messages through which we identified the potentials of the destinations.

Analysis Process

This study combines the frameworks built by Mayring (2000) and Thomas (2006) as the strategy for data analysis. Once the research methodology was established, it dictated the rest of the journey: it determined how the study engaged with data and

theory. Identifying variations in terms of the messages was the first step of the analysis. Through constant comparison among the materials, it was possible to identify unique features/themes based on which categories were established. During the process, we also identified the frequencies of themes occurred in the promotional materials. The comparison also facilitated the identification of shared features across two categories to find patterns across the materials. The materials that had similarities were placed into the same group and when one or more materials showed differences, this led to the establishment of a new group/category of the potentials of Lombok and its surroundings' tourism in implementing Islamic principles.

The existence of various sects among Muslims leads to different interpretations of halalness and other religious strictures. Our interpretation is influenced by our social, cultural and educational backgrounds. In the process of analysis, our subjective interpretation on the materials played a great role. For example, materials which we considered as 'potential' or 'moderate' were based on our subjective judgments. Therefore, the categories were inductively and subjectively identified.

3 Findings and Discussion

The aim of the study is to investigate the potentials of Lombok and its surroundings to be developed as a *halal*-friendly tourist destination in Indonesia. Using content analysis approach, the analysis focused on the promotional materials based on which we identified the potential of Islamic principles adoption. For the purpose of the analysis, we defined Islamic principles adoption as implementation of Islamic principles on all promotional materials, which are developed to influence visitors' behaviour and decision. The materials have to be clear about Islamic destination attributes, contain attractive messages without false contents/impression, use of woman as promotional objects, no display of affection and offering alcoholic drinks or non-halal meals. We then come up with two main categories including 'the potential *halal*-friendly tourist destination' and 'the moderate *halal*-friendly tourist destination' as portrayed in Fig. 8.1.

Category I: Potential Halal-Friendly Tourist Destination

The category reflects that materials confirm the Islamic principles containing attractive messages/pictures without relying on sexual appeal, affection, false statements but emphasize on the availability of mosques and halal foods. The promotional materials of this category do not contain false impressions and over praise the destinations. All promotional materials in this category were not only developed by tourism department but also private tourism enterprises. For example, a promotional material wrote: 'Lombok Island has beautiful tourism objects, unique

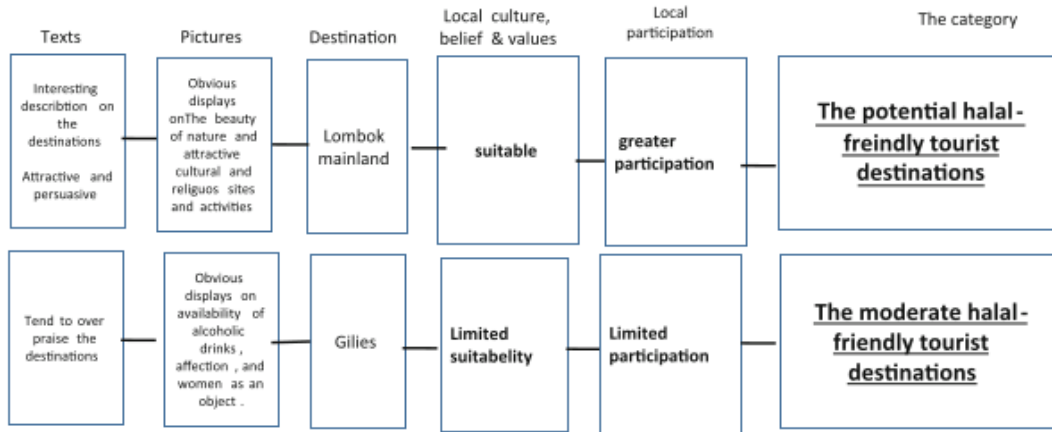


Fig. 8.1 The emergent categories on the potentials of Islamic principles adoption

culture and traditions...’ (Lombok Magazine 2015). Other promotional materials also contain objective information, for example: ‘Lombok is a truly unique and enchanting holiday destination, pristine beaches with calm clear waters, abundant coral reefs, mystical ancient traditions, volcanic treks and spectacular sunsets make this the perfect destination’ (Sheraton’s leaflet). Such information is in line with Islamic principles as it is ethical and stresses on true sense (Abdullah et al. 2013).

The materials in this category mainly promote various destinations in the mainland of Lombok including religious sites/heritages to encourage Muslims to visit for *ziarah*. Visiting the sites may provide knowledge of how Islam developed and influenced local people’s way of live. This may attract non-Muslim visitors. Accordingly, the figures displayed on the materials do not contain a false message and no sexual appeals. The materials that we collected regarding the mainland also provide, although still limited, information on availability of Halal food. The materials provide information on the availability of mosques which are easily found in every part of the island. This facilitates Muslim visitors to pray during their journey. This may create differentiations on Lombok’s tourism, which may offer the beauty of nature, culture and availability of praying facilities.

The uniqueness and distinctive messages in the promotional materials seem to offer *Syariah* permissible destinations, i.e. nature and cultural attractions. They also contain information on local mosques and Islamic-cultural events. They deliver the differentiation and thus positioning of the destinations as Islamic tourism destinations. The destinations as illustrated in the materials may meet the visitors’ needs and wants and thus they are beneficial to the visitors. The benefits may include supporting Muslim visitors to be good Muslims since the destinations are displayed as very beautiful, charming, enchanting and attractive God’s creations. These may induce consciousness within individuals on the God’s greatness and oneness. Visiting the destinations may be perceived as the act of worship (*ibadah*). Islamic principles, as suggested by the finding, are adopted by private tourism enterprises in Lombok by offering the beautiful island as *halal-friendly* destinations.

Category 2: Moderate Halal-Friendly Tourist Destination

This category is characterized by the adoption of one or two main principles of Islamic tourism and Islamic marketing in the tourism promotional materials. Nevertheless, we did not identify any of promotional materials that totally reject the Islamic principles. The category is therefore entitled the *moderate halal-friendly* tourist destinations. For example: ‘Gili Kondo, the quiet island like paradise’ (Lombok Magazine, December 2014); ‘This is once in a lifetime occasion to own your paradise...’ (Gili Gede island in the Lombok Guide); ‘The beautiful Gili islands of Lombok are paradise, with white sand beaches, few people and some great snorkeling and diving spots’ (The Three gilis in the web of A&T Holidays)

The word ‘paradise’ is often used in the promotional materials to describe the beauty of the gilis and create an illusion of perfection in consumers’ mind. This may be the way of developing Lombok’s positioning in tourism: manipulating consumers’ mind primarily through a communication exercise (Ries and Trout 1982). Nevertheless, the use of ‘paradise’ seems to over praise a destination as a paradise. Islamic marketing emphasizes the delivery of a true message and prohibit giving false impression and overpraising a destination. In Islamic marketing perspective, a differentiation can be developed through improving products and communicating them to the market by giving a true picture.

Indeed, the gilis are free from gambling areas since gambling is prohibited by the nation law. However, hotels and restaurants in the destinations clearly promote alcoholic drinks. Women in swimsuits are obviously displayed in the promotion. Tourism in the gilis seems to be closely positioning them close to Bali but they actually pose a different character. Tourism enterprises in the gilis rely their offering on beautiful beaches which are more peaceful, quieter and calmer compare to that of Bali’s.

The gilis’ promotions seem to overlook other attractions such as: reef, birds and turtle conservations. In northwest, among the three gilis, Gili Trawangan is the main tourist destination that has been popular as the party island yet the local culture is missing. Meanwhile, Gili Air has the largest local population and thus visitors can observe local culture (A&T Holidays 2015). In the southwest off Lombok, some gilis such as Gili Nanggu, Gili Tangkong, Gili Sudat, Gili Gede, Gili Ringgit, Gili Layar and Gili Asahan are largely uninhabited (The Lombok Guide Magazine 2015). However, as the Gilis are located near many villages close to villages in Lombok, tourists still have opportunity to interact with locals. Thus, the promotional materials on gilis should include information of places of prayer for Muslim. The lack of such information may discourage Muslim visitors to come, and inhibit the harmony between local people’s culture and religious beliefs and tourism.

In Lombok, a wide variety of attractions is offered, through which visitors can see local culture and belief by visiting traditional villages, old mosques, Islamic festivals and traditions. Calendar event (2015) identified a wide variety of events in which indigenous people perform unique traditions such as ‘*baunyale*’, ‘*peresean*’ (stick fighting), ‘*begasingan*’ game, *ruahsegare*, ‘*belanjakan*’, ‘*topat*’ war,

'*gendangbelek*' festival. The island is also rich with Islamic festivals/traditions for example: Celebration on the birth of the Prophet, '*berzanji*', '*zikirzaman*' and '*burdah*', '*Qasidah*' competition, and '*Takbiran*' night parade. All of the events need native people participation and contribution to perform and sustain the traditions. Social and local sustainability are two main dimensions in sustainable tourism. Tourism increase people's control over their lives and local identity without damaging indigenous culture by increasing local involvement and benefits to the local community (Brokaj 2014).

Islamic tourism attributes refers to the availability of Islamic norms and practices at the destinations (Battour et al. 2014). The attributes may improve visitors' religiosity as visiting the destination creates spiritual experiences in terms of the feeling of getting closer to the God, happiness, peace and secure. Muslim visitors may choose a destination, which offers Islamic atmosphere where they can hear call to prayer and find halal meals, hotel rooms with markers indicating the direction to Mecca and information of availability of praying facilities. Business practitioners who understand and implement the Islamic principles can be viewed as good hosts since they facilitate their visitors' *ibadah* and their service can be viewed as part of their worship of the God. The Qur'an emphasizes Muslim to be good hosts through indigenization of product and human capital in the tourism industry (Stephenson et al. 2010). A destination should not be in isolation from local community life. Indeed, they should play a great role and the main actors of tourism development. In Lombok's context, adopting Islamic principles in tourism leads to sustainable tourism in the destination.

The materials in the *potential halal-friendly* category generate a differentiation of the tourism destinations by uniquely displaying and illustrating the destinations as beautiful and peaceful places. In Lombok, mosques are easily found in almost every part of the island and the people cannot live apart from mosques. According to recent data, 95.33 % of local people in Lombok are Muslims who have 3970 mosques and 1244 Islamic schools (BPS NTB 2014). For the native people, a mosque is not only a place of worship but also a people's pride. Muslim tourists can hear '*azan*' (the call to prayer) from their hotel room or restaurant and easily access a local mosque.

The potential of adopting the Islamic principles is dominantly found in Lombok where tourism enterprises respect local culture or belief and highly regard the local community participation and marketing of the destination will result in a better welfare of wider society. The participation is argued to be a main component of sustainable tourism development as it may reduce conflict and foster local community support (Stephenson et al. 2010; Zamani-Farahani and Henderson 2010). In the Lombok context, according to Saufi et al. (2014), indigenous people's participation in the tourism industry is strongly determined by local culture and religion. Developing tourism industry on the island by adopting Islamic principles is actually in line with local culture and belief and thus generates sense of belonging and participation among indigenous people as indicated in the findings of this study.

Ghadami (2012) argued that Islam influences the mode of tourism development and marketing of destinations. They have to be ordered in conformity with the principles of Islamic law. This means that Islamic tourism needs Islamic marketing where Islamic principles are credible tools to apply and marketing activities can be viewed as *ibadah* or 'worship of God' (Stephenson et al. 2010). Similarly, destination marketing is an essential tourism management tool to inform and influence visitors' behaviour and decision (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson 2010). Therefore, marketing the destinations should emphasize positioning strategy involving four main elements, namely: tourists' emotional attachment to the destinations, tourists' prior expectation, the element of learning and satisfaction from travelling to the destinations (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2008).

Learning God's creations in terms of natural beauty and local culture may lead to better knowledge and faith, which engender satisfaction and emotional attachment to the destination. Moreover, an Islamic destination produces 'meaningful experiences' by involving the local Muslim community and integrating the economic and religious motives in the destination (Stephenson et al. 2010). Community participation is now getting greater attention due to its crucial roles in sustainable tourism development as they have useful knowledge and may reduce conflicts (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson 2010).

Theoretical Implications

The study found the potential for the adoption of Islamic principles in Lombok Island where the majority of the native people are Muslims and the religion plays a central role in their daily life. The adoption stimulates the people's participation and contribution since it is suitable to local culture, belief and values. Islamic marketing emphasizes value maximation for the well-being of a wider society by confirming Islamic principles in the marketing strategies and tactics. Accordingly, Islamic tourism stresses the adoption of Islamic principles into tourism industry. This study further provides understanding that the adoption will indeed ensure the sustainability of the industry and therefore, delivering the right differentiation of a destination in a more sustainable way by adopting Islamic tourism strategy.

Managerial Implications

The study suggests religious values created and obtained by being good hosts in the tourism industry. This demands the adoption of Islamic principles by individual tourism enterprises on the gilis. Therefore, business practitioners of hotels, restaurants and other services need to understand and adopt Islamic principles of business conduct. The adoption generates individual enterprises' positioning in marketing their services. The promotional materials should display Islamic attributes of their service. This is particularly important to attract Muslim visitors who may still want to be in Islamic atmosphere and carry out their obligation to worship

of God. Descriptive information on the availability of halal meals and praying facilities as well as Islamic hotels and entertainments should be clearly demonstrated.

Limitation and Future Direction

This study used a content analysis approach to investigate the potential of Lombok and its surroundings to adopt Islamic principles. However, the study focused on promotional materials that may limit the findings on differentiation and promotion of the destinations. Marketing of Islamic destinations should be supported by marketing mix strategy, however in this study, two elements of the strategy, i.e. price and distribution might not be fully explored. Further research may uncover these issues by utilizing a more complex qualitative approach.

The study suggests that the adoption of Islamic principles may lead to sustainable tourism. Furthermore, studies are needed to reveal if this would also be true in other destination characterized by different situations.

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