



SOR Model in Halal Tourism: A Systematic Review of Digital Stimuli and Tourist Responses

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Abstract

This study aims to synthesize the fragmented literature on the application of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model within the digital halal tourism ecosystem and to formulate an integrative conceptual model. Using a systematic literature review (SLR) based on the PRISMA 2020 protocol, the research evaluated twelve Scopus Q1 articles published between 2020 and 2026. The results reveal a paradigm shift from static physical attributes to dynamic and immersive digital stimuli, including social media, virtual reality (VR), and artificial intelligence (AI). Furthermore, the findings indicate that Muslim tourists' loyalty and spiritual satisfaction are driven primarily by affective evaluation and sharia values rather than conventional price and quality metrics, with religiosity and digital halal literacy acting as crucial internal filters that moderate the conversion of digital stimuli into behavioral responses. Theoretically, this research contributes a conceptual model that effectively aligns spiritual dimensions with advanced digital technology. Practically, the study implies that successful digital marketing in halal tourism cannot rely on superficial commercial labeling, but must instead be built upon the genuine authenticity of the underlying ecosystem.

Keywords: *SOR Model, Halal Tourism, Systematic Review, Digital Stimuli, Tourist Responses.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Halal tourism has evolved from a local niche market into a pillar of global economic power that shapes the dynamics of the international travel industry. The demographic growth of the global Muslim population is projected to contribute substantially to regional spending capacity. The urgency of this shift, however, lies in the demands of global digital platforms, which force a radical restructuring of destination information governance (Sodawan & Hsu, 2026). The modern digital market requires tourism platforms to integrate real-time verification of sharia compliance, transparent recommendation algorithms, and responsive omnichannel ecosystems. Competition between destinations is no longer confined to physical accommodation capacity. It now extends to the digital capability to deliver valid and reliable information instantly to an increasingly specialized global market (Abror et al., 2025).

Within this competitive landscape, the meaning of halal tourism is often reduced to the provision of pork-free food or the absence of alcohol (Rohmatika et al., 2026). A more comprehensive analysis shows that Muslim-friendly attributes cover a much broader spectrum. These attributes include service ethics, adequate worship facilities, cleanliness, and assurance of a secure and comfortable environment that is consistent with sharia principles (Rohmatika et al., 2026). Digitalization has emerged as a catalyst that redefines how destinations engage with technologically literate travelers. A new generation of Muslim travelers, particularly millennials and Generation Z, demands the integration of spiritual values with advanced digital convenience (Fitriah Dwi Susilowati et.al, 2025). Digitalization also bridges the spiritual needs of Muslim tourists and the services offered by destinations through an integrative digital ecosystem (Abror et al., 2025). Digital transformation in this sector therefore extends beyond tactical steps such as replacing printed brochures with static websites. It involves a sophisticated restructuring of the pre-visit experience (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025).

Despite the widespread adoption of digital technology, market penetration remains challenging. The implementation of digital halal branding is constrained by disparities in digital halal literacy and by the high perceived risk of non-halal contamination, particularly in non-OIC destinations (Abror et al., 2025). This complexity requires practitioners and academics to move from conventional marketing logic toward a mechanistic understanding of how virtual interaction is translated into actual behavior. To bridge the conceptual gap between the digital environment and tourist behavior, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) offers a robust theoretical framework. Traditionally, studies of halal tourism have focused on the physical attributes of the actual environment (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025). Recent research confirms the need for a more complex branding logic. Such a logic explains how digital stimuli (S) are processed through the cognitive and emotional states of the tourist (O) before emerging as behavioral responses (R) (Abdullah & Quma, 2022).

The existing literature still shows a gap in understanding how external stimuli are translated into the internal psychological states and behavioral responses of tourists. The SOR model offers an analytical framework for bridging this gap, because it explains how digital features trigger the emotional and cognitive reactions that lead to loyalty (Fitriah Dwi Susilowati et.al, 2025). Global research interest in the SOR model within halal tourism increased sharply between 2020 and 2026. The literature, however, remains fragmented (Aimon et al., 2023). A theoretical gap remains in defining which taxonomy of digital stimuli most effectively triggers positive psychological reactions. Current studies are also inconsistent in mapping how religiosity and digital halal literacy act as intervening or moderating variables for these internal responses (Nora Zulvianti, 2023). A systematic mechanism explaining how digital stimuli are transformed into internal psychological states, such as halal brand image, destination trust, and spiritual satisfaction, remains fragmented. These states subsequently shape long-term loyalty, word of mouth (WOM), and revisit intention (Saif & Nofal, 2026).

This systematic literature review (SLR) is therefore needed to synthesize the fragmented findings reported in internationally reputable journals (Scopus Q1) between 2020 and 2026 (Moshin et al., 2020). The review aims to build an integrative conceptual model of the SOR mechanism in the digital halal tourism ecosystem. It also evaluates the effectiveness of digital stimuli in strengthening destination trust and maps the agenda for future research (Nora Zulvianti, 2023).

1.1 Research Questions

To guide the critical evaluation and the conceptual integration presented in this review, three research questions were formulated:

RQ1: Which digital stimuli, including user-generated content, immersive VR and AR technologies, and AI-based systems, are most dominant and most effective within the halal tourism ecosystem?

RQ2: How do the cognitive and emotional states of Muslim tourists, together with religiosity and digital halal literacy, mediate the conversion of these stimuli into spiritual value and satisfaction?

RQ3: How are behavioral responses, such as destination loyalty, willingness to recommend, and revisit intention, structured within an integrative SOR model of digital halal tourism?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 HALAL TOURISM AND MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOURISM

Halal tourism is defined as any object or activity within the tourism industry that Muslims are permitted to use or to take part in according to Islamic teachings (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025). The terminology varies, and terms such as Islamic tourism, Sharia tourism, halal-friendly travel, and Muslim-friendly tourism are used interchangeably across geographical contexts (Sodawan & Hsu, 2026). Conceptually, halal tourism provides products and services that meet the specific needs of Muslim tourists in fulfilling their religious obligations while traveling. These provisions include clean prayer facilities, halal-certified food, and a social environment free from activities prohibited by sharia (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025).

Recent Scopus Q1 literature indicates a paradigm shift from a rigid definition toward a more inclusive and universal approach. This approach extends to business ethics, design aesthetics, and the integration of local wisdom. Halal tourism is now regarded as a market segment built on cleanliness, health, quality, and ethics. It attracts Muslim tourists and, increasingly, non-Muslim tourists who seek higher service standards (Al-ansi & Han, 2020). In non-OIC destinations such as South Korea and Japan, halal-friendly performance is measured by the ability of a destination to reduce the perceived religious risk of Muslim tourists. This reduction strengthens trust and improves the image of the destination in the global market (Al-ansi & Han, 2020).

2.2 STIMULUS-ORGANISM-RESPONSE (SOR) THEORY

The SOR theory proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) remains the dominant framework for analyzing consumer behavior in the digital tourism environment (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) (Hakim et al., 2025). The strength of this theory lies in its capacity to explain the cognitive and emotional mechanisms that link exposure to digital information with the actual behavior of tourists. In halal tourism, digital platforms designed for Muslim travelers connect spiritual needs with destination services and create a safe destination image that stimulates the intention to visit (Azzabi, 2026).

2.2.1 Digital Stimuli

Within the SOR framework, stimuli are external environmental cues that trigger psychological reactions (Nguyen et al., 2025). In digital halal tourism, these stimuli have evolved from textual information into rich and interactive multimedia content. User-generated content (UGC) produced by other travelers on social media, including photographs, reviews, and TikTok videos, is regarded as more credible than commercial marketing. Its credibility derives from the depiction of real experience, which is often accompanied by on-site validation of halal compliance (Azzabi, 2026). Immersive technologies form a second category. Virtual reality (VR) allows prospective tourists to take virtual tours of halal destinations and to view prayer facilities and halal restaurants directly. Such exposure increases flow experience and emotional enjoyment before departure (Fitriah Dwi Susilowati et al., 2025). Artificial intelligence (AI) is used on digital travel platforms to personalize recommendations according to prayer times and food preferences. The resulting digital accessibility is a key driver of traveler satisfaction (Hakim et al., 2025).

2.2.2 Internal Conditions of Tourists (Organisms)

The organism in the SOR model represents the internal state of tourists and covers cognitive, affective, and spiritual

aspects (Nguyen et al., 2025). The cognitive component involves rational assessment of service quality, price, and the credibility of halal information. The affective component covers pleasure, emotional involvement, and psychological safety (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025). In halal tourism, religiosity acts as the primary spiritual filter within the organism, because the level of religious commitment determines how digital stimuli are interpreted (Abror et al., 2025). Muslim travelers with high religiosity emphasize halal values and the presence of authentic religious symbols as the basis of their satisfaction and trust in a destination (Abror et al., 2025).

2.2.3 Behavioral and Attitudinal Responses (Response)

The response is the outcome of the interaction between the stimulus and the organism, and it is manifested in behavioral intentions or actual behavior (Saif & Nofal, 2026). In halal tourism, the most desirable response is destination loyalty. Loyalty is characterized by revisit intention, willingness to pay more for superior sharia-compliant services, and long-term commitment to the destination brand (Wardi & Trinanda, 2022). Digital responses also include electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Satisfied tourists share positive experiences through digital storytelling, which then acts as a stimulus for other prospective tourists and creates a continuous cycle of digital influence (Saif & Nofal, 2026).

2.3 RELEVANT THEORIES IN DIGITAL-RELIGIOUS INTERACTION

An in-depth analysis of internationally reputable literature (Scopus Q1) shows that the SOR model rarely stands alone and is often integrated interdisciplinary with companion theories to accurately capture the nuances of Muslim tourist behavior.

2.3.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

TAM is often integrated with SOR to evaluate technology adoption in halal tourism. TAM emphasizes perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) as the primary drivers of interest in using digital platforms to obtain halal information (Azzabi, 2026). Recent research indicates that for Generation Z travelers, functional usability is less important than hedonic enjoyment and emotional engagement when immersive technologies such as VR are used. This finding indicates an evolution of TAM in which the affective aspect becomes the dominant organismic variable in the digital halal context (Fitriah Dwi Susilowati et.al, 2025). TPB, in turn, explains how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape halal travel intentions (Pancy, 2024).

2.3.2 Experience Economy and Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)

The experience economy theory developed by Pine and Gilmore offers aesthetic, entertainment, educational, and escapist dimensions as triggers of meaningful digital experience (Jiang et al., 2024). This theory adds a further dimension to the stimulus component, particularly for immersive technologies. The four experiential domains, namely aesthetics, education, entertainment, and escape, trigger the flow experience in which tourists feel fully absorbed in digital interaction (Fitriah Dwi Susilowati et.al, 2025). Previous results show that visual aesthetics and emotional connection in digital content influence the formation of halal destination image more strongly than purely textual information (Jiang et al., 2024).

2.3.3 Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Source Credibility Theory

SIT explains how a sense of belonging to a particular religious group (Muslim identity) influences consumption behavior. Digital stimuli that display symbols of Muslim identity, such as the hijab, the halal logo, or Islamic greetings, act as triggers of social identification. These triggers strengthen the bond between tourists and the destination brand (Putra et al., 2024). Source credibility theory is equally relevant to the use of social media influencers (SMIs). The credibility, attractiveness, and expertise of influencers in representing a halal lifestyle are key stimuli that build trust in halal hotels and restaurants. This trust is a vital component of pre-purchase behavior among Muslim travelers (Muhammad et al., 2025).

2.3.4 Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM)

This theory is also relevant in evaluating the response phase. ECM explains that satisfaction and continuance intention are determined by the confirmation of initial expectations. Digital experiences delivered through chatbots or mobile applications either confirm or disconfirm the expectations held of halal services (Azzabi, 2026). This integration allows a more holistic understanding of how religious values and technological expectations interact to shape cultural identity and continuance

intention in the digital age (Zulvianti, 2022).

2.4 PREVIOUS RESEARCH MAP (2020-2026)

Research on the application of the SOR model in halal tourism has increased sharply, driven by the need to understand the Muslim market in the post-pandemic era of digital transformation. A map of previous research summarized from reputable Scopus Q1 journals is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 | Previous Research Map

Author (Year)	Journal (Quartile)	Research Title	Stimulus Variable (S)	Organism Variable (O)	Response Variable (R)	Key Findings / Novelty
Sodawan & Hsu (2026)	<i>Tourism and Hospitality (Q1)</i>	Shariah-Compliant Attributes and Muslims' Intention to Visit Non-Muslim Countries	Tangible & Intangible Sharia Attributes	Perception of halal safety, Muslim beliefs	Intention to visit a non-Muslim country	Found a negative direct effect of halal safety on visit intention, while Muslim belief acts as the main positive mediator. ¹
UGC & Rel (2026)	Innovative Marketing (Q1)	Impact of User-Generated Content and religiosity	UGC & Social Cues	Tourist Expectations	Visit Decision	UGC raises expectations; religiosity does not always strengthen those relationships.
Susilowati et al. (2025)	J. of Islamic Marketing (Q1)	How virtual reality can affect gen Z tourists' intention	Virtual Reality (VR) Tours	Flow Experience & Enjoyment	Visit Intention	VR increases enjoyment and flow, but has no effect on PU/PEOU.
Surenda et al. (2025)	Health, Science, Technology (Q1)	Cultural Values as a Branding Logic	Minangkabau Cultural Values	Object-Based Authenticity (OBA)	Destination Image & Loyalty	Local cultural values strengthen the authenticity and image of halal destinations.
Aini et al. (2025)	MSJ / JHTT (Q1)	How Digital Content Influences Visit Intention	TikTok Digital Information	Destination Image & Perceived Value	Visit Intention	TikTok content works through psychological evaluation, not direct effects.
Phuket Study (2025)	Q1 Conf / AI Journal	AI-driven system for halal travel recommendation	AI Optimized Itineraries	User-centric Design/Prayer-time Satisfaction	Route Choice/Loyalty	AI increases prayer-time satisfaction and route efficiency by 18–25%.
SMI Study (2025)	J. of Islamic Marketing (Q1)	The role of social media influencers in trust building	SMIs Credibility (Trust/Expertise)	Trust in Halal Hotels	Muslim Tourist Satisfaction	Influencer credibility is crucial in building trust in halal hotels.
Supriono et al. (2024)	Tourism & Hosp. Management (Q1)	Muslim tourist perceived value as determinant	Tourism Package & Price	Cognitive, Affective, & Halal Value	Brand Loyalty	Affective and halal values are more dominant than cognitive values in triggering loyalty.
Zulvianti et al. (2023)	Sustainability (Q1)	PEV, Destination Image, and Tourist Loyalty	Environmental Value & Image	Satisfaction & Religiosity	Tourist Loyalty	Religiosity moderates the effect of satisfaction on Muslim tourists' loyalty.
Abdullah & Quma (2022)	Heliyon (Q1)	The contestation of the meaning of halal tourism	Government & Stakeholder Branding	Meaning of Halal Tourism	Practical Implementation	Perceptions differ between the political branding of the government and the halal practices of the community.
Wardi et al. (2022)	J. of Islamic Marketing (Q1)	Modelling halal restaurant's brand image	Restaurant Attributes	Brand Image	Revisit Intention	Halal brand image mediates the relationship between restaurant attributes and revisit intention.
Al-Ansi & Han (2021)	J. of Destination Mktg & Mgmt (Q1)	Role of halal-friendly destination performances	Halal-friendly Performances	Value, Satisfaction, Trust	Destination Loyalty	Trust is a crucial indicator in building loyalty in non-OIC countries.

Source: Data processed in 2026

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This systematic review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 protocol to ensure the transparency and replicability of the study. (Respati et al., 2025) First, a literature search was conducted on the Scopus and ScienceDirect databases, using the combined keywords: ("halal tourism" OR "Muslim-friendly travel") AND ("SOR model" OR "stimulus-organism-response") AND ("digital stimuli" OR "virtual reality" OR "social media"). The initial search yielded 163 records (Respati et al., 2025). Second, in the screening stage, duplicates and non-journal documents such as proceedings and book chapters were removed. Articles not written in English and those still in press were also excluded (Respati et al., 2025), which left 80 records. Third, in the eligibility stage, titles and abstracts were screened to confirm a focus on digital stimuli and tourist responses in a halal context. Articles that addressed the general concept of halal without an SOR framework were excluded. Forty-two articles were then assessed in full text. In the final inclusion stage, only Q1 Scopus journal articles published between 2020 and 2026 were retained. Each of them offered a significant theoretical or empirical contribution to the halal SOR model (Sodawan & Hsu, 2026), and 12 articles met all of the criteria.

Before conducting further analysis, the articles were mapped based on their research locations to gain deeper insight into the geographical context of the selected topics. The selected articles were mapped based on journal sources, including Q-Rank, H-Index, Publisher, and Coverage. In addition, the Google Citation Score (GCS) was used to identify the most frequently cited articles on halal tourism, the SOR model, and tourist responses to digital stimuli. Differences between studies were then explored on the basis of theoretical framework, key behavioral construct, and research limitation.

The inclusion criteria covered articles published between 2020 and 2026, indexed in Scopus, written in English, and restricted to the fields of business, management, marketing, and tourism. Only research articles were considered, and their focus on halal tourism, the SOR model, and tourist responses to digital stimuli was verified through the title, abstract, and keywords. The exclusion criteria covered non-English publications, book chapters, books, editorials, short surveys, letters, and duplicate records. Studies unrelated to halal tourism and articles that did not address the SOR model or tourist responses to digital stimuli were also excluded.

In the second stage, the selected articles were assessed for quality against four criteria: journal ranking in the Scopus Q1 quartile, relevance to the research objectives, sample size, and the theoretical framework applied. This assessment ensured that only relevant and high-quality studies were included in the analysis. In the third stage, data were extracted systematically and thematically from each article, covering the author and year, research location, theoretical framework, key variables, sample size, and limitations. After that, the selected articles were categorized into thematic groups based on the research focus. Each article was reviewed and grouped according to three themes: the theoretical framework applied in halal tourism studies, the SOR mechanism of tourist responses to digital stimuli, and the reported research limitations. This thematic categorization facilitated systematic analysis and comparison between studies, as presented in the following sections.

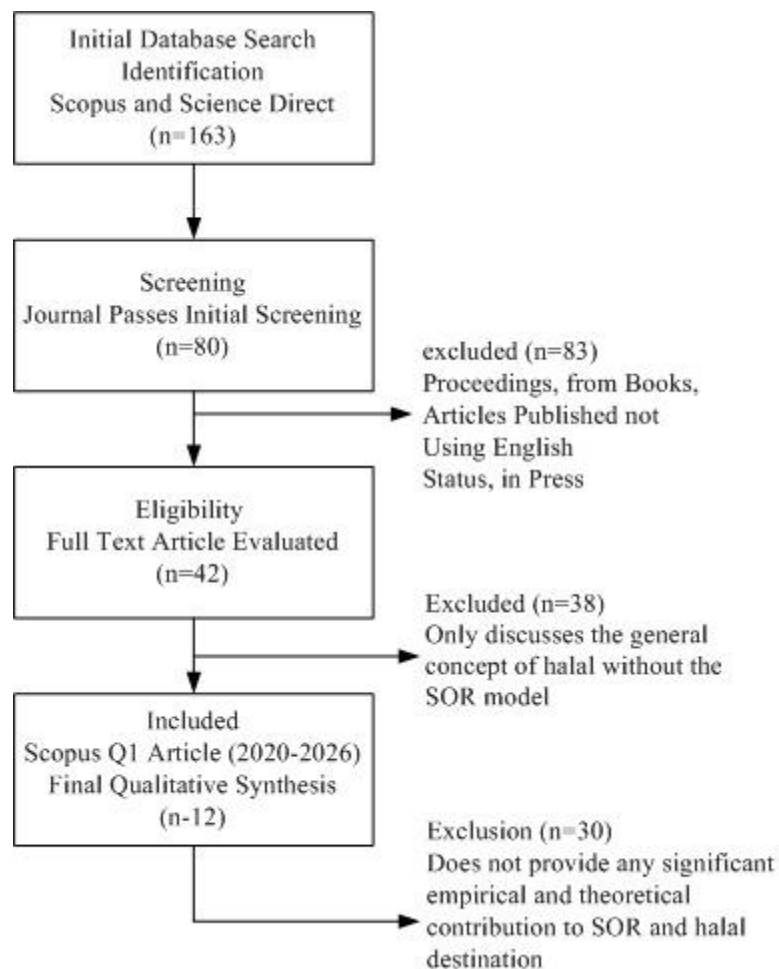


Figure 1. Illustration of the PRISMA Protocol
Source: Processed Scopus data, 2026

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 12 articles included in the final analysis represent recent empirical studies that applied structural equation modeling (SEM) through either PLS-SEM or CB-SEM (Sodawan & Hsu, 2026). All of these articles appeared in Scopus Q1 journals such as *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, and *Sustainability* (Sodawan & Hsu, 2026). A summary of the methodology, variables, and key findings of the 12 articles is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 | Summary of the 12 Articles Analyzed

Author (Year)	Journal (Quartile)	Research Title	Stimulus Variable (S)	Organism Variable (O)	Response Variable (R)
Sodawan & Hsu (2026)	<i>Tourism and Hospitality</i> (Q1)	Shariah-Compliant Attributes and Muslims' Intention to Visit Non-Muslim Countries	Tangible & Intangible Sharia Attributes	Perception of halal safety, Muslim beliefs	Intention to visit a non-Muslim country
UGC & Rel (2026)	<i>Innovative Marketing</i> (Q1)	Impact of User-Generated Content and religiosity	UGC & Social Cues	Tourist Expectations	Visit Decision
Susilowati et al. (2025)	<i>J. of Islamic Marketing</i> (Q1)	How virtual reality can affect gen Z tourists' intention	Virtual Reality (VR) Tours	Flow Experience & Enjoyment	Visit Intention
Surenda et al. (2025)	<i>Health, Science, Technology</i> (Q1)	Cultural Values as a Branding Logic	Minangkabau Cultural Values	Object-Based Authenticity (OBA)	Destination Image & Loyalty
Aini et al. (2025)	<i>MSJ / JHTT</i> (Q1)	How Digital Content Influences Visit Intention	TikTok Digital Information	Destination Image & Perceived Value	Visit Intention
Phuket Study (2025)	<i>Q1 Conf / AI Journal</i>	AI-driven system for halal travel recommendation	AI Optimized Itineraries	User-centric Design/Prayer-time Satisfaction	Route Choice/Loyalty
SMI Study (2025)	<i>J. of Islamic Marketing</i> (Q1)	The role of social media influencers in trust building	SMI's Credibility (Trust/Expertise)	Trust in Halal Hotels	Muslim Tourist Satisfaction
Supriono et al. (2024)	<i>Tourism & Hosp. Management</i> (Q1)	Muslim tourist perceived value as determinant	Tourism Package & Price	Cognitive, Affective, & Halal Value	Brand Loyalty
Zulvianti et al. (2023)	<i>Sustainability</i> (Q1)	PEV, Destination Image, and Tourist Loyalty	Environmental Value & Image	Satisfaction & Religiosity	Tourist Loyalty

Author (Year)	Journal (Quartile)	Research Title	Stimulus Variable (S)	Organism Variable (O)	Response Variable (R)
Abdullah & Quma (2022)	Heliyon (Q1)	The contestation of the meaning of halal tourism	Government & Stakeholder Branding	Meaning of Halal Tourism	Practical Implementation
Wardi et al. (2022)	J. of Islamic Marketing (Q1)	Modelling halal restaurant's brand image	Restaurant Attributes	Brand Image	Revisit Intention
Al-Ansi & Han (2021)	J. of Destination Mktg & Mgmt (Q1)	Role of halal-friendly destination performances	Halal-friendly Performances	Value, Satisfaction, Trust	Destination Loyalty

Source: Data processed in 2026

The 12 Scopus Q1 articles published between 2020 and 2026 that adopted the SOR framework in halal tourism were synthesized in depth to map the dynamics of the relationships between variables. The extracted theoretical and empirical data were grouped into several critical themes. These themes illustrate the shift in digital stimuli, the emotional and spiritual engagement of the organism, and the behavioral responses of Muslim tourists.

4.1 THE DOMINANCE OF DIGITAL STIMULI AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE ROLE OF THE ORGANISM

A critical analysis of the research map reveals a profound paradigm transition. Halal tourism stimuli have shifted from static physical attributes, such as entrance halal labels or qibla markers in hotel rooms, toward dynamic and immersive digital stimuli (Azzabi, 2026). Modern stimuli such as TikTok content and VR tours function as pre-experience tools. They shape cognitive expectations and affective engagement long before tourists arrive at a destination (Azzabi, 2026). Empirical findings, however, indicate inconsistency in the role of these variables. A study by (SUPRIONO et al, 2024) in Indonesia found that cognitive value, namely the rational judgment of price and quality, had no significant effect on brand loyalty. Affective value and halal value, in contrast, showed a strong effect (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025). In halal tourism, purely economic considerations are therefore often outweighed by the need for spiritual peace and tangible sharia compliance (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025). This pattern departs from the conventional consumption model, in which quality and price are the main drivers of loyalty.

4.2 RELIGIOSITY: BETWEEN DRIVER AND INHIBITOR (DOUBLE-EDGED ROLE)

The role of religiosity in the SOR model remains one of the most debated and contradictory topics. Religiosity has consistently been shown to strengthen the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. Devout tourists appreciate the efforts of destination managers to provide a Muslim-friendly environment (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025). A recent study conducted in East Java, however, found that religiosity did not strengthen the relationship between the expectations generated by UGC and visit decisions (Kusumawati et al., 2026). This phenomenon can be explained by the intention-behavior gap or by skepticism toward halal greenwashing in the digital environment. Highly religious travelers may perceive digital stimuli such as social media influencers as superficial or spiritually inauthentic. Such travelers rely more on personal judgment than on external cues (Kusumawati et al., 2026). This contradiction calls for closer examination of how digital authenticity can be constructed to match the depth of tourist religiosity.

4.3 CONTESTATION OF MEANING: BRANDING VS SERVICE REALITY

A theoretical and practical gap exists between the design of government-led digital stimuli and the expectations of tourists on the ground. A study by (Abdullah & Quma, 2022) revealed that governments tend to treat halal tourism stimuli as a political and economic branding label. Tourists and local stakeholders, by contrast, expect the practical implementation of halal values in services (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025). When digital stimuli emphasize the halal label without support from actual service quality, such as ethical staff behavior or clean facilities, tourists experience cognitive dissonance. This dissonance results in the loss of trust and loyalty (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025).

4.4 INTEGRATIVE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Drawing on a critical analysis of recent Q1 literature, an integrative conceptual model is proposed. The model expands the traditional SOR framework by incorporating advanced technological dimensions and spiritual filters. First, the digital stimulus (S) structure is divided into three pillars that reflect the modern digital ecosystem. The immersive content spectrum includes interactive social media content, the information quality of AI chatbots, the VR digital atmosphere, the visibility of verified halal logos, and algorithm-based personalization (Azzabi, 2026). Social and influencer stimuli comprise the credibility of SMIs,

the information quality of UGC, eWOM interactivity, and Muslim social identity cues such as halal logos and the hijab (Rahmad & Hastriana, 2026).

Algorithmic and platform stimuli comprise AI-based route personalization, the reliability of online booking systems, and ease of website navigation (Hakim et al., 2025). Second, the multidimensional organism (O) structure describes how these stimuli are processed internally. The cognitive state comprises digital halal literacy, perceived usability of technology, halal consciousness, and cognitive trust in sharia guarantees (Rohmatika et al., 2026). The affective state comprises flow experience, digital enjoyment, emotional engagement, and a sense of attachment to a digital place triggered by visual aesthetics (Rahmad & Hastriana, 2026). Relational trust refers to confidence in the integrity of service providers and to the belief that digital services align with sharia values (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025). Religiosity and cultural identity act as filters that determine whether digital stimuli are perceived as authentic or as marketing labels (Kusumawati et al., 2026).

Third, the tourist response (R) structure represents the outcome of internal processing. Halal destination loyalty covers the intention to revisit and a deep commitment to the Muslim-friendly destination brand (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025). Advanced eWOM and storytelling refer to the willingness of tourists to share their spiritual experiences on social media and thus to act as voluntary promoters (Saif & Nofal, 2026). This includes revisit intentions, global destination loyalty, tourist citizenship behavior, and purchase intentions for tour packages through eWOM (Broekhuizen et al., 2021). Spiritual satisfaction is a transformative outcome that arises from the harmony between the enjoyment of travel and the strengthening of faith and religious identity. Within this structure, the internal condition of tourists (O) mediates the transformation of digital stimuli (S) into actual behavior (R). The distinctive feature of the model is the position of digital literacy as a cognitive factor that moderates the influence of intelligent technology on trust (Azzabi, 2026). Religiosity is positioned both as part of the organism and as a crucial moderator that strengthens or weakens the influence of digital stimuli on behavioral intention (Surenda Rian, Idris, 2025).

5. CONCLUSION

Research on halal tourism has entered a new phase in which digital stimuli and advanced technologies such as VR, AI, and social media shape tourist behavior. This review of Scopus Q1 literature published between 2020 and 2026 concludes that the SOR model remains a relevant and adaptive foundation for explaining the mental mechanisms of Muslim tourists. The key findings confirm that the loyalty of Muslim tourists is driven more by affective dimensions and adherence to halal values than by economic considerations such as price. Authentic and immersive digital stimuli build a strong destination image, although their effectiveness depends on the level of religiosity that acts as an internal filter.

6. LIMITATION AND IMPLICATION

This study has several limitations. First, only Scopus Q1 journal articles published between 2020 and 2026 were used, so findings reported in other relevant sources were not accommodated. Second, the review focused on the SOR framework, so other theories that might explain digital tourist behavior were not discussed in depth. Third, most of the reviewed studies used a descriptive cross-sectional design and relied on perception data, which limits causal inference. Fourth, a qualitative synthesis was applied without meta-analysis, so the strength of the relationships between variables could not be measured statistically.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the relevance of the SOR model for the digital behavior of Muslim tourists and confirms the moderating role of religiosity and digital halal literacy. Practically, destination managers and industry actors need to develop authentic digital strategies based on AI, VR, social media, and credible content, and to ensure that services comply with halal principles. For policymakers, the results of this study can serve as a foundation for building an integrated and globally competitive digital halal tourism ecosystem. Further research should test the proposed model in different national contexts and examine the role of emerging digital technologies in enhancing the experience of Muslim travelers.

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Conflict of Interest Statement:

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.
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