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HALAL TOURISM IN EAST AFRICA: ASSESSING MARKET POTENTIAL AND DESTINATION READINESS

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Abstract

This study examines the emerging potential of halal tourism in East Africa, focusing on Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania (including Zanzibar), Uganda, and Rwanda. It adopts a qualitative document synthesis approach guided by Bowen's document analysis framework. The study analyzed 79 documents, including 58 peer-reviewed articles, 13 industry and gray reports, and 8 policy documents. The findings were systematically organized using a comparative SWOT framework to generate cross-country insights into demand conditions, supply-side readiness, and institutional contexts. The findings indicate substantial potential demand, driven by large Muslim populations, rising arrivals from Middle Eastern markets, and rich Islamic heritage assets. However, weak certification systems, inadequate facilities, limited human resource capacity, and fragmented governance structures constrain development. Zanzibar shows relatively higher readiness, while Rwanda and Uganda remain at early stages of development. Theoretically, the study contributes to the halal tourism literature by extending the analysis to an under-researched African context and linking demand indicators to institutional readiness. From a policy perspective, it highlights the need for harmonized certification systems, targeted infrastructure development, workforce training, and regional collaboration to reduce fragmentation and improve competitiveness. In practical terms, the findings offer actionable insights for policymakers and industry stakeholders to better align demand potential with supply capabilities and position East Africa as a credible halal tourism destination.

Keywords: *Certification, Muslim-friendly travel, East Africa, Islamic hospitality, SWOT analysis*

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INTRODUCTION

Halal tourism, also known as Muslim-friendly or Shariah-compliant tourism, encompasses travel-related goods and services that meet the requirements of Muslim tourists in accordance with Islamic law (Hidayah, 2025; Hussain, Jamaluddin, & Hashim, 2021). These requirements include halal food, alcohol-free environments, prayer facilities, modest entertainment and attire, and gender-segregated facilities (Ashton & Islam, 2025). Globally, halal tourism is among the fastest-growing segments of the travel industry, driven by the expanding global Muslim population and rising disposable incomes in Muslim-majority countries (Rasyid & Hatta, 2025). The Global Muslim Travel Index 2024 (Mastercard & Crescent Rating, 2024) reports that over 80 million Muslim tourists traveled internationally in the first half of 2024, with projections suggesting this figure could reach 230 million by 2028. While halal tourism has become well established in Asia and the Middle East, countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates have emerged as leading halal tourism hubs (Musthofa, Pranita, Rasul, & Haidlir, 2023).

East Africa has significant potential for halal tourism, supported by cultural assets such as pilgrimage sites, Muslim-majority regions, and growing interest from the hotel sector (Mohamed, Miricho, & Nzioka, 2022). However, recent studies provide limited market sizing and lack comprehensive cross-country demand data. Existing research offers only limited country-level estimates of halal tourism demand, and comparative analyses of demand and supply alignment across East Africa are largely absent (Akbaba & Ahmed, 2021). The absence of government-led frameworks for halal tourism, inconsistent certification processes, and limited stakeholder knowledge pose significant challenges for the sector.

East African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia have substantial Muslim populations and rich natural, cultural, and historical resources, giving them considerable potential for halal tourism development (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2023). These nations also have sizable Muslim populations. According to World Population Review (2026), Ethiopia is home to 34.7 million Muslims; Tanzania has 19.4 million; Kenya has 5.5 million; Uganda has 5.4 million; and Rwanda has 576,100. Rwanda's Muslim population is relatively small within the region. Collectively, these markets could generate significant demand for halal tourism and become attractive destinations for Muslim tourists from Asia, the Middle East, and other regions. In response, some East African companies and governments have begun to recognize this potential; for example, Kenya's Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) has introduced a program enabling hotels to obtain halal certification (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2023; Fredrick & Authority, 2019; Maingi, 2019). Although the industry remains in its infancy, no comprehensive assessment of the halal tourism market's potential in East Africa or any existing product gaps has been conducted. Furthermore, despite a promising outlook, East African halal tourism faces several obstacles. Industry analysts note that miscommunication, opposition, and market control efforts have impeded the expansion of halal tourism in East Africa (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2023). Despite the sector's potential, few studies have systematically examined East Africa’s halal tourism market and product gaps. While researchers have extensively studied global halal tourism in Asia and the Middle East, research in East Africa remains fragmented, with most studies focusing on individual countries or isolated case analyses. Existing scholarship provides limited country-level estimates and lacks systematic cross-country comparisons of demand and supply alignment. This lack of comparative evidence leaves policymakers and industry stakeholders without a coherent framework to guide coordinated strategies across the region. By synthesizing secondary data from Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania (including Zanzibar), Uganda, and Rwanda, this study

addresses this gap by providing integrated insights into demographic demand, institutional readiness, and policy challenges. This comparative approach advances theoretical understanding of halal tourism in under-researched African contexts and offers practical guidance for harmonized regional development. The study evaluates current demand indicators, supply-side readiness, and the institutional context to identify areas requiring product development. Specifically, the study aims to:

RQ1. Assess the current status of halal tourism demand in East Africa.
RQ2. Evaluate the current halal tourism infrastructure, amenities, and services across East African countries.
RQ3. Identify the key challenges and opportunities for developing halal tourism in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global halal tourism trends

Global halal tourism research reveals a fundamental paradox at the heart of the sector's development. Fragmented and uncoordinated institutional support remains a major challenge to halal tourism development (Bamiro, Oshoba, Yahya, & Li, 2025b).

The halal tourism sector has drawn significant global attention, driven by the rapid growth of the Muslim population and rising disposable incomes. According to the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report (2023), Muslim travelers contributed approximately USD 189 billion to the global tourism economy in 2023, with expenditures projected to reach USD 225 billion by 2028. The global Muslim population, estimated at 1.97 billion people and comprising nearly 25% of the world's population, represents a substantial market for halal travel experiences (Azam, Muflih, & Al Haq, 2024). However, the development of halal tourism destinations remains uneven across regions. This disparity underscores the need for coordinated institutional frameworks, standardized halal certification systems, and supportive policies to translate growing demand into sustainable destination development.

Geographic hierarchies and institutional advantage in halal tourism

A prominent theme in the literature is geographic inequality in halal tourism development (Said, Adham, Muhamad, & Sulaiman, 2022). Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and certain regions of Europe have emerged as leading halal destinations, primarily because of robust institutional frameworks and certification systems rather than the size of their Muslim populations (Nurdiansyah, 2018; Rahman, Mustapha, & Fauzi, 2026). Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey are considered benchmarks for halal tourism because of substantial government investment in branding, infrastructure, and certification programs (Adinugraha, Rahmawati, & Andrean, 2025; Sumardi, Osman, & Sumardi, 2025). These cases indicate that institutional coordination and government-led policy interventions are critical determinants of competitiveness in halal tourism (Fang et al., 2025). Africa is increasingly viewed as a new frontier for halal tourism, yet it remains peripheral in the global halal economy compared to established Asia-Pacific and Middle Eastern hubs (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2023). This geographic hierarchy is also evident within Africa. North African countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt have made notable progress in integrating Islamic values into their hospitality industries (Seyfi & Hall, 2020). In contrast, sub-Saharan Africa, including East Africa, is characterized by limited research and development in this sector (Ruiz-Muñoz, Sánchez-Sánchez, & Sánchez-Sánchez, 2025). This disparity stems not only from differences

in Muslim populations or tourism infrastructure but also from variations in institutional capacity and policy coherence. Studies consistently identify the primary barriers to scaling halal tourism in emerging regions as a lack of awareness among policymakers, insufficient training for tourism providers, and a limited number of halal certification agencies, all of which are structural factors amenable to policy intervention (Bukhari & Fatima, 2025).

Halal tourism in Africa

Halal tourism is a relatively recent development across African destinations. North African countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt have made notable progress in integrating Islamic values into their hospitality sectors (Afifi, Mohsin, & Farouk, 2021). In contrast, sub-Saharan Africa, including East Africa, has seen limited research and development in this field. Recent studies (Ali Shah, Fianto, Sridadi, & Kayani, 2023; Ruiz-Muñoz et al., 2025) identify key challenges, including insufficient awareness among policymakers, inadequate training for tourism providers, and a scarcity of halal certification agencies.

Halal tourism in East Africa: current reality and gap

East Africa offers a distinctive blend of natural beauty, wildlife, coastal attractions, and Islamic heritage sites, including Lamu in Kenya, Zanzibar in Tanzania, Harar in Ethiopia, and the mosques of Somalia and Djibouti. Despite these assets, existing research (Akbaba & Ahmed, 2021) shows that most destinations lack the institutional and infrastructural capacity required to meet Muslim travelers' expectations. Kenya and Tanzania achieve the highest rankings in East Africa on the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI 2023), largely due to Zanzibar's Muslim-friendly environment and the presence of a limited number of halal-certified hotels in Mombasa. Ethiopia and Uganda are identified as having potential for halal tourism development, attributed to their cultural diversity and accessibility (Pranika, Ghofur, Madnasir, Zaelani, & Fasa, 2023). In Ethiopia's Somali Region, research highlights significant opportunities for halal tourism, but also identifies challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and limited awareness that may hinder growth (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2018). The literature generally affirms that most East African destinations have not established formal halal standards or developed specific tourism products (Rasul, 2019). Local stakeholders recognize the potential of halal tourism but face persistent obstacles. For example, an Ethiopian tourism specialist notes that basic arrival and departure statistics for halal-conscious tourists are scarce, and information regarding their travel habits remains limited (Akbaba & Ahmed, 2021).

The reviewed literature consistently identifies governance, branding, supply gaps, and segmentation complexity as primary barriers to halal tourism development and recommends prioritized, evidence-based interventions. Studies highlight inconsistent governance, weak branding, a shortage of Muslim-aligned products, and insufficient institutional coordination as significant obstacles to scaling halal tourism globally and in emerging regions (Fauzi & Battour, 2025; Hanafiah, Hasan, & Mat Som, 2022).

Analyses focused on Ethiopia outline both opportunities and operational challenges for implementing halal tourism at the local level, including issues related to coordination, awareness, labeling, and capacity (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2018). Regional tourism studies further note low intra-East African Community (EAC) leisure demand and fragmented value chains, which complicate the coordinated introduction of halal tourism products across countries (Daly & Guinn, 2016).

Demand characteristics shaping muslim travel behavior

A comprehensive understanding of Muslim travel behavior is essential for accurate demand forecasting and effective product development within halal tourism (Said et al., 2022). Muslim tourists consistently prioritize adherence to Islamic practices, including access to halal food, prayer facilities, gender-segregated recreational activities, and observance of Ramadan and other religious obligations (Wahyuningtiyas & Ramadhan, 2020). Research highlights that halal certification is a critical determinant influencing Muslim tourists' decision-making processes and their trust in destinations and services (Chang & Amalina, 2025). This demand extends beyond Muslim-majority countries, as Muslim travelers from non-Muslim regions also seek halal-compliant experiences globally (Shmailan, 2023). In East Africa, the cultural heritage and religious practices of the Muslim community play a significant role in shaping demand. Key factors such as the presence of halal-certified food outlets, adequate worship facilities, privacy in recreational settings, and avoidance of non-halal activities are essential for attracting and satisfying Muslim tourists (Wahyuningtiyas & Ramadhan, 2020). These distinct religious and cultural requirements necessitate intentional product and infrastructure development tailored to Muslim travelers (Azam et al., 2024). Furthermore, marketing strategies that utilize social media influencers, including halal lifestyle vloggers, have demonstrated a positive impact on Muslim tourist behavior by enhancing travel decisions and awareness (Sunaidah, 2024). Consequently, East African destinations may benefit from employing digital marketing tools aimed at the millennial Muslim demographic to increase the visibility and appeal of halal tourism offerings (Azam et al., 2024).

Market potential and considerations for product development

The literature delineates the specific attributes that constitute effective product development for Muslim tourists (Yuliviona, Alias, Abdullah, & Azliyanti, 2019). Essential elements include halal-certified food, prayer rooms and ablution facilities in hotels and attractions, environments free from alcohol and gambling, and, in many cases, gender-segregated spaces (Razak, Hall, & Prayag, 2019). The market potential for halal tourism in East Africa is considerable. Factors such as proximity to the Middle East, direct flight connections from Gulf countries, and shared cultural heritage position East Africa as an attractive destination for Muslim tourists. A multi-dimensional strategy encompassing infrastructure, services, certification, branding, and human resource development is essential. Halal tourism in East Africa is considered a viable niche due to its cultural and historical assets, local Muslim populations, and initial industry engagement. However, peer-reviewed, country-level market size estimates are not available in the current literature. Ethiopia’s historical Islamic connections and geopolitical position are identified as key enablers for attracting halal tourists (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2018). Evidence from Kenya indicates that industry stakeholders, such as star-rated hotels in Mombasa, are exploring halal adoption when commercial benefits are evident, reflecting growing interest in coastal (Mohamed et al., 2022). Regional analyses of East African tourism value chains indicate weak regional integration and relatively low intra-EAC leisure demand, suggesting that the halal tourism market remains nascent and fragmented across East African Community countries (Daly & Guinn, 2016).

Product development in East Africa should combine core halal amenities with destination-specific experiences; hotel case studies and global reviews identify the product components that drive adoption. Evidence from Mombasa indicates that star-rated hotels assess halal adoption primarily based on perceived commercial benefits (service differentiation, market capture) rather than ideological concerns, suggesting that incentive-driven product rollout is

effective (Mohamed et al., 2022). Global reviews and bibliometric mapping highlight that successful halal product mixes pair halal-compliant food and accommodation with privacy, access to prayer, and faith-aligned itineraries to increase satisfaction and loyalty (Fauzi & Battour, 2025).

Infrastructure and facility requirements

Halal tourism facilities must comply with the religious requirements of Muslim visitors (Romadon et al., 2025). These requirements include halal-certified food and beverage options, clean and accessible prayer rooms, water-friendly washrooms for ablutions, and recreational spaces that ensure privacy and gender sensitivity (Wahyuningtiyas & Ramadhan, 2020). Recent assessments in similar contexts identify gaps in halal certification among food service providers and inadequate prayer room facilities, both of which negatively affect the tourist experience (Singgalen, 2024a). East African destinations could benefit from incentivizing halal certification for local food vendors and accommodation providers to enhance consumer trust. The development of physical infrastructure that adheres to Islamic norms may also provide a competitive advantage in the halal tourism sector (Hariani & Hanafiah, 2024).

Human resource capacity building

Comprehensive knowledge of halal tourism principles among tourism service providers is essential for delivering high-quality, compliant experiences (Wahim, 2025). Training programs that address halal tourism concepts, customer service tailored to Muslim tourists, and cultural sensitivity can significantly enhance service quality across the sector (Irawan, 2024). These capacity-building initiatives strengthen the local workforce and improve the overall readiness of destinations for halal tourism (Jauhari et al., 2025). Tourism stakeholders in East Africa may implement similar strategies to promote local leadership and sustainable governance in halal tourism.

Branding and marketing

Branding that emphasizes adherence to halal principles is critical for demonstrating readiness for halal tourism to prospective Muslim travelers (Mursid, Pujiastuti, Rinwantin, & Wibowo, 2025). Destinations should establish clear halal tourism identities through destination marketing organizations and partnerships with halal certification bodies (T. Ahmed & Shuvo, 2024). Promotional campaigns must uphold Islamic values while highlighting the destination's distinctive cultural and natural features (Azmi, 2024). In non-Muslim majority countries such as Thailand and regions of Southeast Asia, halal tourism branding has successfully attracted a substantial Muslim tourist segment, including travelers from non-Islamic countries (Wahyuningtiyas & Ramadhan, 2020).

Digital marketing initiatives, including engagement through social media platforms, influencer collaborations, and virtual tours, have proven effective in raising awareness of halal tourism and influencing travel decisions among younger Muslim populations (Azam et al., 2024). Utilizing these tools enables East African destinations to access broader markets and foster more personalized interactions with prospective tourists.

Halal certification system

A unified and credible halal certification system is vital for establishing trust among Muslim consumers. Global variations in certification standards and procedures have resulted in interoperability challenges and uncertainty regarding halal integrity (Randeree, 2019). East African countries may benefit from developing or enhancing regional halal certification authorities that align with international best practices to ensure consistency and transparency. Certification bodies should collaborate with tourism operators to streamline certification processes and potentially offer subsidized or government-supported programs to promote compliance, particularly among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). These initiatives also contribute to local economic development alongside growth in the tourism sector.

Conceptual framework of the study

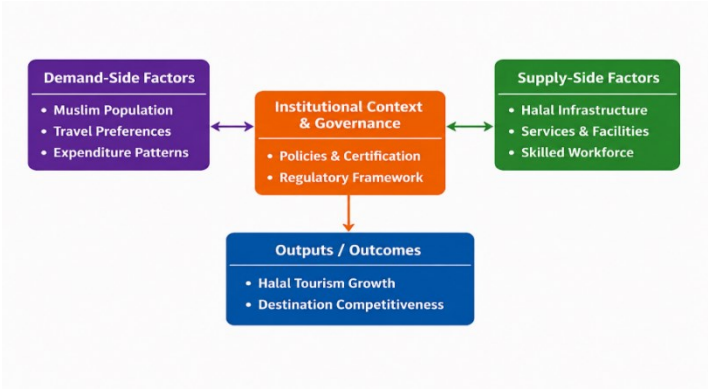


Figure 1: Qualitative conceptual framework of halal tourism development in East Africa (Authors' own)

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 was developed by synthesizing the literature reviewed in Sections 2.1-2.3. The demand-side component draws on studies documenting the expansion of the Muslim travel market, rising demand for halal-compliant tourism products, and evolving travel preferences among Muslim tourists (Azam et al., 2024; Standard, 2023). The supply-side component is based on research that underscores the importance of halal-certified accommodations, food services, transportation, prayer facilities, and destination preparedness for developing competitive halal tourism destinations (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Ruiz-Muñoz et al., 2025). Institutional and governance elements, such as government commitment, halal certification systems, supportive policies, stakeholder collaboration, and marketing strategies, were included based on studies identifying them as essential enablers of halal tourism development (Bamiro, Oshoba, Yahya, & Li, 2025a; Ruiz-Muñoz et al., 2025).

METHODOLOGY

Research design and data sources

A qualitative document synthesis approach was employed, grounded in Bowen's (Bowen, 2009) framework for systematic document analysis. Given the limited availability of primary halal tourism data in East Africa, this method enabled a comprehensive understanding of regional patterns and trends by systematically synthesizing secondary sources. The sparse and fragmented nature of primary data in the region made document synthesis the optimal method for generating a comprehensive regional perspective.

Document selection and inclusion criteria

The analysis drew on 79 diverse secondary sources, including 58 peer-reviewed journal articles, 13 industry reports, gray literature such as government tourism reports, halal certification bulletins, and Global Muslim Travel Index reports, and 8 policy documents from East African tourism authorities and regional organizations. A structured literature and document search was conducted for publications from 2015 to 2025, with particular emphasis on those from 2020 to 2025 to capture recent developments in halal tourism and post-pandemic recovery patterns. This timeframe was chosen to ensure both relevance and sufficient historical context for identifying trends and institutional evolution.

Inclusion criteria

Studies were included if they primarily addressed halal or Muslim-friendly tourism in East Africa, particularly in Kenya, Tanzania/Zanzibar, Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia, or if they presented global comparative analyses relevant to the East African context. Eligible documents examined key areas, including market demand and demographics, infrastructure and facilities, halal certification systems, government policies, human resource capacity, and branding and marketing strategies. The review encompassed peer-reviewed publications in tourism, Islamic studies, hospitality management, and development journals, as well as government tourism strategy documents, recognized halal tourism industry reports, and reports from international organizations such as the World Population Review, the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), and the East African Community. Only documents published in English were considered.

Exclusion criteria

The review excluded non-peer-reviewed opinion pieces lacking empirical or institutional support; studies focused exclusively on non-Muslim-majority destinations and with limited relevance to East African contexts; publications lacking methodological rigor or clear data sources; and studies that addressed tourism only tangentially, without explicit engagement with halal or Muslim-friendly tourism frameworks.

Data extraction and thematic coding procedures

In accordance with established qualitative synthesis protocols (Zakaria, Othman, & Nor, 2023), an iterative thematic content analysis was conducted using a predefined coding structure with seven primary themes: market demand and demographics, infrastructure and facilities, halal certification systems, human resource capacity, branding and marketing, institutional context and governance, and economic contributions and tourism value chains.

Data extraction was conducted systematically by two independent coders to enhance reliability. Coding was iterative, with initial codes drawn from the literature and refined through successive rounds of analysis as patterns emerged. Inter-coder agreement was maintained through regular reconciliation meetings, and discrepancies were resolved by consensus. Qualitative data management software (NVivo 12) supported systematic tracking of coded segments, memo-writing, and mapping relationships across themes. To strengthen analytical rigor and facilitate cross-country comparisons, findings were synthesized using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) framework at both the regional and country

levels. This comparative approach enabled a systematic assessment of each country's readiness for halal tourism across multiple dimensions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Market demand and demographics

East Africa shows significant latent demand for halal tourism. The primary evidence is demographic, with large Muslim populations in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda, indicating cultural affinity and potential consumer bases for halal-compliant services. However, population statistics alone do not directly translate into tourism demand. As noted by (Saeed, 2023) accurate demand forecasting requires data on Muslim travelers' behaviors, preferences, and expenditure patterns, which are currently limited in the East African context. In the absence of halal-specific arrival statistics, this study infers latent demand from broader demographic trends, regional mobility, and global Muslim travel growth (Hakim, Hafidzah, Susanto, & Savitri, 2025; Wisker, Kadirov, & Nizar, 2023). Therefore, the claim reflects potential rather than empirically verified demand, highlighting the need for future research to collect primary data on halal-conscious tourist flows in East Africa.

The region's substantial Muslim populations suggest both local and regional market bases (Haynes, 2013). According to World Population Review (2026), Ethiopia alone has 34.7 million Muslims, representing 31.3% of its population, and is the second-largest Muslim population in sub-Saharan Africa. Kenya and Uganda each have 5.5 and 5.4 million Muslim residents, respectively. Zanzibar, a semi-autonomous part of Tanzania, is almost entirely Muslim (99%), while Tanzania's mainland is about one-third Muslim (Mshigeni, 2016). These demographics indicate strong cultural affinity for halal services and potential for intra-regional Muslim travel. Furthermore, East Africa is increasingly recognized in global Muslim-travel rankings.

International tourism trends also support the region's prospects. According to the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report (2025), the global Muslim travel market is expanding, with Muslim travelers contributing approximately USD 189 billion to the tourism economy in 2023. Tourism expenditure is projected to reach USD 225 billion by 2028, reflecting the strong and sustained growth of the halal tourism sector (Hakim et al., 2025; Wisker et al., 2023). Regional air connectivity and intra-African travel are improving, with Tanzania and Uganda each accounting for approximately 8–9% of Kenya's arrivals, indicating robust East African mobility (Eriksson & Söderlund, 2024; Samunderu, 2024). These trends suggest that demand-side fundamentals are strong, despite the scarcity of precise halal-specific arrival data.

SWOT analysis of halal tourism development in East Africa

The following table summarizes the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with developing halal-friendly tourism in East African countries (Kenya, Tanzania/Zanzibar, Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia), as identified in recent reports and studies.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of the development of halal tourism in East Africa.

	Internal		**External**	
No	Strength	Weakness	Opportunities	Threat
1	Rich attractions: World-class wildlife parks, beaches, and Swahili-Islamic cultural heritage (e.g., Kenya's coast, Zanzibar) provide a strong base for tourism.	Institutional and governance weaknesses: Limited institutional capacity, reflected in inadequate halal certification systems, low awareness and expertise among tourism providers,	Growing market: Global Muslim travel continues to expand, creating significant opportunities for East Africa to attract Muslim travelers.	Security risks: Terrorist attacks and crime targeting tourist sites and hotels may discourage international visitors.

		fragmented governance, and weak destination branding.		
2	Robust infrastructure: Established airports and resorts in Kenya/Tanzania; some high-end lodges already offer halal dining and prayer spaces.	Limited destination recognition: East Africa remains relatively unknown as a Muslim-friendly tourism destination in international markets.	Unique offerings: The region can promote halal-compatible experiences, such as Ethiopia's Islamic heritage sites and Zanzibar's cultural tourism, to differentiate itself.	Social and political resistance: Misconceptions or limited policy support in some countries may hinder the implementation of halal tourism initiatives.
3	Muslim demographic base: Significant Muslim populations ensure local demand and cultural affinity.	Operational/service gaps: Tourism staff often lack training on Muslim travelers' needs; small or remote operators may struggle to implement halal standards without support.	Investment push: Recent halal tourism exhibitions and incentives are drawing investment into halal-ready facilities; regional cooperatives (EAC) and airlines can help market East Africa to Muslim travelers.	
4	Strong Islamic History and Culture.		Capacity building: Universities and training programs in Kenya/Uganda are introducing halal tourism modules, building future human-capital readiness.	

Overall, the SWOT analysis shows that East Africa has considerable strengths and opportunities; however, realizing these benefits requires addressing critical supply-side weaknesses and mitigating external threats.

Comparative country-level SWOT analysis of halal tourism in East Africa

Table 2 presents a comparative SWOT analysis of halal tourism development across five East African countries. This framework integrates secondary data and recent scholarly research to identify the internal and external factors that shape each destination's preparedness and potential for halal tourism.

Table 2: Country-level SWOT analysis

Country	Strength	Weakness	Opportunity	Threat
Kenya	Coastal Islamic heritage (Lamu, Mombasa), the TRA-led halal certification initiative, and expanding tourism opportunities in the Gulf market through increasing visitor interest and targeted tourism promotion initiatives (Momanyi, Obonyo, Odhiambo, & Wadongo, 2023; Ruiz-Muñoz et al., 2025).	Limited halal-certified hotels/restaurants and low awareness among tourism providers (BA, 2022).	Potential for Gulf market expansion and Nairobi as a hub for Islamic economy summits (Fredrick & Authority, 2019)	Security concerns in coastal regions and fragmented certification systems (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2023)

Tanzania	Zanzibar's predominantly Muslim population (approximately 99%), strong Islamic heritage, established halal tourism branding, active halal tourism exhibitions, and government support for Muslim-friendly tourism.	Mainland Tanzania lacks halal infrastructure, and there are few certified safari lodges (Daniel, 2023).	Promotion of heritage tours and halal beach packages and presidential endorsement of halal tourism (Brennan, 2024).	Resistance to religious branding in mainland areas and limited training for service providers.
Uganda	National Halal Bureau for food certification and cultural diversity and accessible parks.	No formal halal tourism strategy and low visibility of halal services (Bolatito & Wahab, 2024).	Integration of halal standards into safari tourism and emerging academic interest in halal tourism (Anwar, Kumar, & Talukder, 2025).	Uganda has experienced incidents of terrorism and crime targeting tourist areas. (Ayorekire, Obua, Mugizi, & Byaruhanga, 2020).
Ethiopia	Rich Islamic heritage (Harar, Al Nejash) and large Muslim population (34.7M) (Mohammed Jemal, 2025)	No formal halal tourism label and infrastructure gaps, especially in the Somali Region (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2018).	(Akbaba & Ahmed, 2021) have developed Islamic heritage trails and participated in OIC trade fairs.	Political resistance to overt religious branding and lack of tourism staff training (Gebremeskel, 2023).
Rwanda	High-end ecotourism infrastructure and Kigali Airport include a prayer room (Erlebach & Rempel, 2023).	Very small Muslim population (4.8%) and no halal certification system.	Niche branding for inclusive tourism and potential for digital marketing to Muslim millennials (Azam et al., 2024).	Limited stakeholder interest and absence of halal-specific policy (Hariani, Hanafiah, Anuar, & Ahmad, 2024).

Muslim market size and demand indicators

East Africa has a substantial Muslim population (Becker, 2018). These sizable domestic markets have the potential to generate intra-regional halal tourism and demonstrate cultural readiness to accommodate Muslim visitors. Additionally, international demand is increasing; for example, tourism from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is rising in Kenya, facilitated by improved air connectivity and growing interest in Muslim-friendly tourism (Momanyi et al., 2023; Ruiz-Muñoz et al., 2025).

East African countries performed relatively well on global Muslim travel indices. For example, the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2022 included Ethiopia among 138 destinations, while the 2021 index ranked Tanzania first and Uganda second within the East African Community (Pranika et al., 2023). These indicators imply that, as global Muslim travel recovers following the pandemic, East Africa is positioned to attract a greater number of halal-conscious tourists.

Economic contributions of tourism

Tourism plays a significant economic role in the region (Calero & Turner, 2020). In Kenya, the tourism sector accounts for approximately 11% of GDP and has been recovering from previous security challenges (Muragu, Nyadera, & Mbugua, 2023). These trends reflect robust tourism infrastructure and sustained interest in East Africa. However, the halal tourism segment remains underdeveloped in these countries (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2023). In Kenya, halal services are limited; for example, Mombasa, a major coastal destination, offers some halal restaurants, but most hotels lack certification (Merab, 2023). Tanzania, particularly Zanzibar, has been recognized as a Muslim-friendly destination, yet formal promotion of halal tourism has only recently commenced. In Rwanda and Uganda, faith-based

tourism services have received less emphasis compared to wildlife and adventure tourism (Ankunda, 2018).

Current halal tourism product offerings

Halal tourism products in East Africa remain in the early stages of development (Ruiz-Muñoz et al., 2025). In Kenya, the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) introduced a national halal tourism certification in 2017, and several major hotel chains have begun offering halal menus and prayer facilities (Mohamed et al., 2022). The Tanzanian government, including Zanzibar's Ministry of Tourism, has launched awareness campaigns, established task forces for halal standards, and engaged in targeted marketing of halal tourism. Although Ethiopia's Ministry of Tourism has not formally adopted a halal label, a five-route plan indicates interest in developing Islamic heritage tourism products (Akbaba & Ahmed, 2021). Uganda has established the Uganda Halal Bureau for food certification, but has yet to launch dedicated halal tourism campaigns (Wahab & Bolatito, 2023). Overall, these countries have implemented only isolated initiatives, such as conferences or pilot projects, rather than comprehensive nationwide halal tourism product lines.

Supply gaps and development needs

Accommodation providers must offer Halal-certified food and ensure no cross-contamination (Saffinee & Jamaludin, 2024). Hotels, airports, and tourist destinations should provide prayer rooms and clean water for ablution (Mokhtar, 2020). Tourist attractions (parks, museums) should provide spaces for Muslim prayer. Providers should enforce alcohol-free policies in Halal-branded venues (Aysan & Syarif, 2025). Signage and informational materials should be tailored to Halal requirements, including indicating prayer directions and the locations of nearby mosques (Wijayanti, Widyaningsih, Hakim, & Fiyan, 2019). Transportation providers and tour guides should adhere to appropriate dress codes and gender norms, including offering women-only tour groups upon request. Furthermore, increased entrepreneurship and collaboration are essential. Industry experts emphasize the need for expanded public–private partnerships to develop and market halal tourism products, enhance human resource capacity, and establish necessary infrastructure (Rachman & Sangare, 2023). Without these measures, the supply of halal tourism services will remain insufficient to meet demand.

Infrastructure, facilities, and services for halal tourism

East Africa's tourism infrastructure provides a foundation for halal offerings, although few facilities are specifically designed for this purpose (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2023). All five countries have major international airports (Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Addis Ababa, Kigali, and Entebbe) connected by flag carriers and foreign airlines to global hubs. The region features well-developed airports, resorts, and tourist sites, particularly in Kenya and Tanzania, and some properties have begun adapting to Muslim needs (Gedecho & Nyikana, 2023). Kenya's Tourism Regulatory Authority launched a halal certification program for hotels in 2017, and several major hotel chains now offer halal food options and prayer areas (Bin Noor Azalie, 2025). Tanzania and Zanzibar have similarly initiated halal tourism promotion through task forces and marketing campaigns (Karubi, 2024). Ethiopia's tourism ministry has expressed interest in developing Islamic heritage routes, although it has not adopted a formal halal label (Akbaba & Ahmed, 2021). In Uganda, a national halal food bureau exists, but no specific halal tourism strategy has been launched (Bolatito & Wahab, 2024). Overall, these initiatives are typically isolated pilots or events rather than comprehensive product lines.

Many Muslim-friendly amenities remain in short supply. Most hotels and attractions in the region lack dedicated prayer rooms, wash facilities for ablution, or clearly designated alcohol-free zones (Abdrakhmanova & Moghavvemi, 2022). Halal certification of kitchen processes is uncommon, raising concerns about cross-contamination (Saeed, 2023). Tourist sites generally do not provide prayer spaces or signage indicating the direction of Mecca (Peters, 2021).

Challenges and opportunities for halal tourism development

Several challenges constrain the growth of halal tourism in East Africa. A pervasive issue is the lack of formal halal certification and awareness. Few accommodations and restaurants are certified, and many lack the facilities that Muslim travelers expect, such as prayer areas, ablution taps, and gender-segregated leisure spaces (Singgalen, 2024b). Research also identifies a general awareness gap among policymakers and service providers, who often lack training in Muslim guest needs (Harun, Ahmad, Shafie, Choirisa, & Rizkalla, 2024). Security concerns, including past terrorist incidents targeting tourists, and occasional social or political resistance to overtly religious tourism are additional threats noted in the literature (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2023). Data limitations further hinder development; basic statistics on Muslim arrivals and preferences in East Africa are almost non-existent. These factors, including certification gaps, knowledge shortfalls, security risks, and limited market data, collectively impede the creation of fully halal-compliant tourism products in the region.

Despite these challenges, there are clear opportunities to expand halal tourism in East Africa. The region's abundant attractions and Islamic heritage can be leveraged to create unique Muslim-friendly experiences (Bamiro et al., 2025b). A strong local market is also an asset; national Muslim populations range from 31.3% in Ethiopia to nearly 99% in Zanzibar, providing inherent cultural affinity and a substantial consumer base for halal tourism. Globally, market forecasts are favourable. Industry analysts anticipate sustained growth in the global halal tourism market over the coming decade, as more Muslim travelers seek destinations that cater to their religious and cultural needs (Kusuma & Muttaqin, 2025). Emerging initiatives, such as recent halal travel exhibitions, regional partnerships including East African Community cooperation and Muslim-friendly airline promotions, and university tourism curricula, are beginning to build capacity (Bamiro et al., 2025a).

Country comparisons

Country-specific contexts reveal both divergence and commonality. Kenya has a well-developed mainstream tourism sector. Mombasa and coastal resorts have begun adopting halal amenities, and national authorities have introduced halal standards (Maranga, 2015). However, uptake remains slow, and most hotels lack certification (Mohamed et al., 2022). Tanzania/Zanzibar benefit from a predominantly Muslim local population in Zanzibar and a strong cultural brand (Kweyamba, 2017). Zanzibar's Islamic heritage attracts Middle Eastern visitors (Wortmann, 2024), and recent government-led halal marketing, including task forces and expos, builds on this foundation. Mainland Tanzania's parks, such as Serengeti and Ngorongoro, are globally renowned but currently offer few formal halal facilities (Daniel, 2023). Uganda has a Muslim minority (14%) (Mursid et al., 2025) and well-maintained national parks (Ninsiima & Michael, 2025), but lacks a dedicated halal tourism campaign. However, it has a national halal food bureau, which could be leveraged for tourism if integrated (Bolatito & Wahab, 2024). Rwanda has a very small Muslim population (4.8%) (Arafat, Lester, Kar, & Rezaeian, 2025) and focuses on premium eco-tourism, such as gorilla tracking and Kigali city tours (Erlebach & Rempel, 2023). Ethiopia stands out for its large market size and heritage sites, including Al Nejash mosques and the Harar walled city (Akbaba & Ahmed, 2021). The government has developed an "Islamic heritage trail" but has not adopted a formal halal label (M. J. Ahmed & Akbaba, 2023). Across all countries, the common pattern is partial initiatives, such as national plans or pilot projects, without coherent implementation.

Table 3. Comparative analysis of Halal Tourism in East Africa

Indicators	Ethiopia	Kenya	Rwanda	Tanzania	Uganda
Muslim population (% of total)	31.3% (34.7M) (largest Muslim population in the region).	11.2% (5.5M)	4.8% (576.1K)	35.2% (19.4M)	14% (5.4M)

Halal certification (hotels/food)	The Ethiopian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs issues halal food certificates (mainly for products). No dedicated halal tourism label is established.	The government (TRA) is developing halal tourism standards (with the Kenya Bureau of Standards and the Kenya Bureau of Halal Certification).	No known halal-tourism certification for accommodations; a few restaurants cater to Muslim dietary requirements.	No unified national halal-tourism certification. Zanzibar authorities encourage halal-certified restaurants and prayer facilities.	No formal halal-tourism certification scheme was reported (halal food certification exists via Islamic councils).
Prayer facilities	Many hotels (especially in Muslim-majority areas and Addis Ababa) offer prayer rooms or mats; Addis Ababa Airport has a multi-faith prayer room. Ablution water is generally available in washrooms.	Prayer mats/Qibla direction are commonly provided in hotels; ablution water is available in washrooms.	Few dedicated prayer rooms in tourist hotels (one Islamic center in Kigali); ablution facilities typically just regular bathrooms.	Zanzibar hotels increasingly provide on-site prayer rooms with ablution facilities as standard (policy revised to include prayer facilities).	Prayer mats/areas are often available upon request; major mosques are accessible. Ablution via standard washrooms.
Government involvement (policy)	No explicit halal-tourism policy from tourism authorities. Ethiopia's tourism marketing highlights heritage sites; Muslim-friendly aspects are not separately branded.	TRA/KBHC is active in promoting halal tourism standards and national certification for hotels targeted by 2018, Cabinet Sec. Balala has proposed Muslim-travel ambassadors and OIC observer status.	No specific government halal-tourism initiatives noted; tourism marketing emphasizes nature/conferences without a halal focus.	Zanzibar's Tourism Ministry is revising policy for halal-friendly services (alcohol-free hotels, prayer rooms, and gender-segregated pools/spas); President Mwinyi publicly endorses halal tourism; and no specific mainland government initiative is found.	No dedicated halal tourism policy identified; general tourism promotion focuses on safaris and natural attractions.

Product offerings (halal food, segregation)	Halal Ethiopian cuisine and halal-certified outlets are readily found in cities and Muslim areas. Hotels note prayer times and often announce them. Alcohol is legal, but consumption is culturally moderated. Gender-segregated services are not common.	Halal food is widely available (hotels serve halal meat, no pork). Alcohol is not banned. Separate gender-only facilities are rare (some high-end resorts may offer women-only beach/pool areas, but generally facilities are mixed).	Very limited halal food (a few Muslim-owned eateries). No segregated pools or spas. Tourism is centred on gorilla trekking and culture, with no special Muslim-friendly services.	Halal food and drink are standard in Zanzibar (most restaurants are halal-certified). Some resorts now offer women-only pool/spa hours. Mainland safari lodges will serve halal meals on request, though alcohol is still offered.	Very limited halal dining options (few restaurants serve fully halal menus). Safari tours can accommodate prayer breaks. No segregated spa/pool facilities.
Marketing/branding	No official halal-tourism branding. Ethiopia is primarily marketed on cultural and historical attractions. Scholars note Ethiopia's "First Hijra" heritage as a unique draw for Muslim visitors, but government campaigns do not emphasize it.	No unified halal tourism brand. Some operators (e.g., Muslim-friendly travel agencies) target this market. Discussions have included Muslim-travel ambassadors and OIC participation. Nairobi has hosted Islamic economy summits and planned a halal tourism conference.	Zanzibar actively brands as halal-friendly. The 2024 Zanzibar Tourism & Investment Show and Halal Tourism Exhibitions have emphasized halal credentials. Media (e.g., Mufti Menk's endorsement) promote Zanzibar's halal-friendly image. Mainland Tanzania has no distinct halal-focused campaign.	No halal-specific marketing was identified; Rwanda is marketed for safety and nature. (Kigali Airport added a prayer room in 2016 to serve all travelers.)	No targeted Muslim-tourism campaigns were found. Uganda is promoted generally as the "Pearl of Africa" with no special focus on halal amenities.

Known initiatives/events	No regular halal-specific tourism fairs. Ethiopia has participated in OIC trade fairs and conferences highlighting Islamic heritage. Researchers cite Ethiopia's potential as a halal destination due to its Muslim heritage.	TRA–KBHC halal certification initiative; East African Islamic Economy Summit (Nairobi); plans for international halal tourism conferences	None reported (small Muslim community, no dedicated halal tourism events).	Zanzibar: Halal Tourism Exhibition (2024) and annual Zanzibar Tourism & Investment Shows. Some local tour packages are explicitly branded as halal-friendly (e.g., family-focused beach tours).	No major halal tourism events were reported. A few tour operators offer Muslim-friendly safari packages.

Source: Population figures are adapted from *Muslim Population by Country 2026* (World Population Review, 2026), available at https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/muslim-population-by-country.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that East Africa has significant latent demand for halal tourism, while the supply of Muslim-friendly products and services remains underdeveloped. This misalignment between demand and supply mirrors broader global patterns identified in halal tourism research, in which destinations often struggle to convert demographic potential into structured offerings (Jabeen, Khan, Bhatti, Falahat, & Qureshi, 2025). By systematically synthesizing secondary sources, this study addresses the comparative evidence gap for East Africa and advances the discourse on halal tourism in under-researched regions.

The evidence indicates that East Africa's large Muslim populations provide a strong domestic and regional base for halal tourism (Malecela, 2023; Mohammed Jemal, 2025). In addition, increasing arrivals from Gulf countries and the presence of Islamic heritage sites further strengthen demand-side fundamentals. However, the lack of precise halal-specific arrival data complicates market forecasting. This challenge (Saeed, 2023) underscores the importance of understanding Muslim travel behavior for accurate demand projections. The synthesis suggests that East Africa should invest in demand intelligence systems to capture halal-specific travel flows and enable evidence-based planning.

On the supply side, the study identifies significant gaps in certification, facilities, and human resource capacity. Few hotels and restaurants are formally halal-certified, prayer and ablution facilities are inconsistent, and service providers often lack training on the needs of Muslim travelers. These weaknesses are consistent with findings from (Ali Shah et al., 2023), which highlight insufficient awareness and training as barriers in African contexts. Zanzibar is relatively advanced, leveraging its predominantly Muslim population and cultural branding, while Rwanda and Uganda remain at an early stage with minimal halal infrastructure. This uneven readiness highlights the need for country-specific strategies. For example, Zanzibar could consolidate its strengths through formalized certification and branding, whereas Rwanda may need to begin with targeted investments such as prayer facilities in airports and digital marketing campaigns.

The SWOT analysis identifies both opportunities and threats. Opportunities include leveraging Islamic heritage sites, such as Harar in Ethiopia and Lamu in Kenya, integrating halal standards into safari tourism, and utilizing digital marketing to engage millennial Muslim travelers (Azam et al., 2024). Conversely, threats such as political resistance to overt religious branding and security concerns in

coastal Kenya may impede progress. These findings are consistent with (Fauzi & Battour, 2025), who argue that governance and branding inconsistencies are recurring obstacles to halal tourism development. For East Africa, regional collaboration through the East African Community (EAC) could reduce fragmentation by harmonizing certification frameworks and jointly promoting halal tourism at international expos.

The results are consistent with global benchmarks, as successful halal destinations such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey combine government-led branding, infrastructure investment, and certification systems (Johan & Abd Rahman, 2025; Musthofa et al., 2023). East Africa's lack of coordinated governance and branding contrasts with these examples, indicating that policy intervention is essential. Furthermore, sustainability linkages remain underexplored in East Africa. (Jabeen et al., 2025) argue that integrating halal tourism with sustainability goals is highly relevant to the region's wildlife conservancies and ecotourism assets. Positioning these as ethical tourism experiences aligned with Islamic stewardship values could provide global differentiation. Digital innovation is also lacking; while Malaysia has pioneered halal tourism apps and Turkey offers online halal-friendly guides, East Africa falls behind in digital reassurance mechanisms. Incorporating digital tools could improve transparency and trust among Muslim travelers.

The findings support the proposed conceptual framework, confirming that successful halal tourism development depends on the interplay among market demand, destination supply, institutional support, and stakeholder collaboration. Although East Africa shows significant demand potential due to its sizable Muslim population, Islamic cultural heritage, and expanding international market opportunities, the results indicate that supply-side deficiencies, fragmented governance, limited halal certification systems, and inadequate infrastructure constrain destination competitiveness. These findings refine the conceptual framework by showing that institutional coordination is a central mechanism linking market demand to effective destination development. The framework thus offers a valuable foundation for understanding halal tourism development and highlights governance and stakeholder collaboration as critical priorities for future policy and practice. For RQ1, the results confirm that East Africa has substantial and growing demand for halal tourism, driven by its large Muslim population, rich Islamic cultural heritage, and increasing interest among Muslim travelers, particularly from Gulf countries. However, the scarcity of halal-specific tourism statistics underscores the need for improved market intelligence and data collection. Regarding RQ2, the results indicate that while several East African countries have begun developing Muslim-friendly tourism facilities and services, the overall supply remains fragmented, with notable gaps in halal certification, accommodation, prayer facilities, trained staff, and destination branding. Zanzibar is more advanced than other countries in the region. For RQ3, the study identifies significant opportunities, including Islamic heritage tourism, halal safari experiences, digital marketing, and regional cooperation through the East African Community. Nevertheless, challenges such as institutional fragmentation, inconsistent certification standards, governance issues, security concerns, and infrastructure deficits must be addressed to achieve sustainable halal tourism growth in East Africa.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the potential for halal tourism and destination readiness across East African countries through qualitative document synthesis and comparative analysis. The findings indicate that East Africa has substantial potential for halal tourism but remains an emerging rather than an established regional market. The study contributes to the literature by extending halal tourism research to an underexplored African context and by integrating demand indicators with destination-readiness perspectives across multiple countries. The findings also show that demographic potential alone does not determine destination development; its realization depends on destinations' broader capacity to translate market potential into coherent tourism offerings. Future empirical research should validate these

findings with primary evidence from Muslim travelers, tourism businesses, policymakers, and certification bodies.

IMPLICATIONS

The study's findings have significant practical and policy implications for governments, tourism authorities, industry stakeholders, and researchers seeking to advance halal tourism development in East Africa. At the policy level, governments are encouraged to integrate halal tourism into national and regional tourism strategies and to establish standardized halal certification systems aligned with internationally recognized standards. Collaborative efforts through the East African Community (EAC) can support harmonized certification frameworks, joint destination marketing, and the development of cross-border Muslim-friendly tourism products. Within the tourism industry, increased investment in capacity building is needed to strengthen hospitality staff competencies in halal service delivery, Islamic hospitality principles, and cultural sensitivity. Hotels, restaurants, airports, and major tourist attractions are advised to enhance Muslim-friendly infrastructure by providing certified halal food services, prayer rooms, and ablution facilities. To improve destination management, East Africa should strengthen regional branding by highlighting its unique blend of Islamic heritage, wildlife tourism, coastal attractions, and cultural authenticity. Leveraging digital marketing, halal tourism platforms, and social media campaigns can increase the region's visibility and build trust among Muslim travelers.

This study contributes to the academic literature by offering one of the first regional syntheses of halal tourism development in East Africa. Future research is recommended to use mixed-methods approaches to investigate Muslim travel behavior, customer satisfaction, economic impacts, governance mechanisms, and sustainable halal tourism models across East African destinations.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis relied solely on secondary data, which may contain inconsistencies, outdated information, or gaps, particularly given the scarcity and lack of systematic recording of halal tourism statistics in East Africa. The absence of uniform data across countries reduced the precision of cross-country comparisons and limited the ability to quantify actual halal tourism demand. Second, the study focused on document synthesis rather than empirical fieldwork, so stakeholder perspectives, including those of policymakers, hotel managers, Muslim travelers, and certification bodies, were not directly captured. Third, the diversity of institutional and cultural contexts across East African countries suggests that findings may not fully represent localized realities, especially in countries with limited published research, such as Rwanda and Uganda. Finally, the study did not assess economic impacts, traveler satisfaction, or readiness levels using primary quantitative tools, which could enhance evidence-based conclusions.

Future research should address these limitations by employing mixed-methods designs that integrate surveys, interviews, and field observations. Country-specific case studies could provide deeper insights into destination readiness, service quality, and operational challenges. Empirical studies measuring Muslim travelers' preferences, spending behavior, and satisfaction with East African destinations are needed to quantify demand. Comparative research on certification systems and policy frameworks across African regions would support the development of harmonized halal standards. Additionally, future studies should examine how

digital innovation, sustainability frameworks, and community participation foster inclusive and competitive halal tourism development in East Africa.

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Authors' contributions
Wondemsew Mesafint Kebadie: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, supervision, visualization, and writing—original draft preparation. Ihtisham Ullah: Validation, and writing—review and editing. Woretaw Tigab Alemu: Literature review, and writing—review and editing. Anwar Kassaw Ali: Literature review, validation, and writing—review and editing. Vianney Eymard E: Validation, supervision, and writing—review and editing
All author(s) read and approved the final manuscript.

Competing Interest
The author(s) declare that they have no competing interests.

Ethics Approval
Ethics approval was not required for this study because it was based exclusively on the analysis and synthesis of publicly available secondary sources and did not involve human participants, animals, or identifiable personal data.

Use of Artificial Intelligence
All content, analysis, interpretations, arguments, and conclusions were reviewed, verified, and approved by the author(s), who remain fully responsible for the final manuscript.

Data Availability
The data supporting the findings of this study consist of publicly available secondary sources cited in the manuscript. All sources used for the analysis are appropriately referenced, and the underlying information can be accessed through the original publications, reports, and policy documents cited in this article.

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