

Halal tourism as a civilizational encounter: Islamic values and cultural accommodation in contemporary Japan

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Abstract

The development of *halal tourism* in Japan reflects the country's increasing accommodation of the needs of Muslim travelers. However, studies that explain this phenomenon through the lens of *civilizational encounter* remain limited. This study aims to analyze how Islamic values are negotiated through the development of *halal tourism* in Japan from the perspective of *civilizational encounter*. A qualitative *library research* approach was employed using thematic analysis of scholarly articles, books, government documents, and official publications issued by the *Japan National Tourism Organization* (JNTO). The findings demonstrate that the religious needs of Muslim travelers have stimulated both institutional and cultural responses, manifested through the provision of prayer facilities, halal services, and *omotenashi*-based cultural adaptation, thereby creating a mechanism of *civilizational encounter* that gives rise to an *Inclusive Halal Tourism Ecosystem*. This study contributes by proposing the Civilizational Encounter through Halal Tourism conceptual framework as a new perspective for advancing *halal tourism* studies beyond conventional economic and marketing approaches.

Keywords: *Halal tourism; Civilizational encounter; Islamic values; Japan; Omotenashi.*

Abstrak

Perkembangan *halal tourism* di Jepang menunjukkan semakin meningkatnya akomodasi terhadap kebutuhan wisatawan Muslim. Namun, kajian yang menjelaskan fenomena tersebut sebagai proses *civilizational encounter* masih relatif terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana nilai-nilai Islam dinegosiasikan melalui perkembangan *halal tourism* di Jepang dengan menggunakan perspektif *civilizational encounter*. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kepustakaan (*library research*) melalui analisis tematik terhadap artikel ilmiah, buku, dokumen pemerintah, dan publikasi resmi *Japan National Tourism Organization* (JNTO). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebutuhan religius wisatawan Muslim mendorong terbentuknya respons institusional dan respons kultural yang diwujudkan melalui penyediaan fasilitas ibadah, layanan halal, serta adaptasi budaya berbasis *omotenashi*, sehingga menghasilkan mekanisme *civilizational encounter* yang membentuk *Inclusive Halal Tourism Ecosystem*. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dengan menawarkan kerangka konseptual *Civilizational Encounter through Halal Tourism* sebagai perspektif baru dalam kajian *halal tourism*.

Kata Kunci: *Halal tourism; Civilizational encounter; Nilai-nilai Islam; Jepang; Omotenashi.*

Introduction

The development of *halal tourism* over the past two decades has demonstrated that the needs of Muslim travelers are no longer viewed as an issue confined to Muslim-majority countries (Ruiz-Muñoz et al., 2025). An increasing number of non-Muslim countries have introduced policies and services designed to accommodate the religious needs of Muslim visitors as part of broader strategies for inclusive tourism development (Dabamona et al., 2025). Japan represents a particularly compelling example, having successfully created an increasingly Muslim-friendly tourism environment despite its relatively small Muslim population (Rahmawati et al., 2025). The availability of *prayer rooms* at Narita International Airport, Haneda Airport, and Kansai International Airport, the growing number of halal restaurants in Tokyo and Osaka, and the publication of the *Muslim Travelers Guide* by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) demonstrate that the religious needs of Muslim travelers have become an integral component of Japan's national tourism service system. These developments indicate that *halal tourism* in Japan has evolved as an adaptive response to the increasingly diverse nature of global tourism.

This phenomenon is significant because *halal tourism* extends beyond the provision of halal food and prayer facilities; it also reflects how religious values interact with culture, institutions, and public policy within societies characterized by different social and cultural contexts (Purwandani & Yusuf, 2024). In Japan, the provision of Muslim-friendly services has been implemented without altering the country's cultural identity, which is deeply rooted in the philosophy of *omotenashi* as the foundation of hospitality (Leingpibul et al., 2025). This situation illustrates that accommodation for Muslim travelers has been achieved through processes of adaptation, dialogue, and respect for diversity rather than through fundamental cultural transformation. Consequently, the development of *halal tourism* in Japan is not only relevant from the perspective of the tourism industry but also provides valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between religion, culture, and civilization within an increasingly multicultural society.

Against this background, the present study conceptualizes *halal tourism* as a form of *civilizational encounter*, referring to the process through which Islamic values interact with Japan's culture of hospitality through institutional and cultural adaptation mechanisms (Putri & Widagdo, 2024). This perspective offers a distinct analytical lens by positioning the religious needs of Muslim travelers as the starting point for responses from government institutions, the tourism industry, and society. These interactions have generated various forms of accommodation, including the provision of prayer facilities, *Muslim-friendly* services, and the expansion of spaces for intercultural dialogue through mosques, cultural centers, and increasingly inclusive tourist destinations. Accordingly, this study not only examines the development of

halal tourism facilities but also explains how the negotiation of values contributes to the formation of a tourism ecosystem that harmoniously accommodates both religious identity and local cultural traditions.

Studies on *halal tourism* have been conducted from a wide range of perspectives. Jeaheng et al. (2020) demonstrated that the development of halal tourism is influenced by service quality, the availability of halal food, and prayer facilities, all of which contribute to enhancing Muslim travelers' satisfaction. Muhyidin et al. (2025) found that government policies and support from the tourism industry play a crucial role in strengthening the global competitiveness of halal tourism destinations. However, existing research has largely focused on marketing, tourist behavior, and destination development, leaving the relationships among Islamic values, institutional responses, and cultural adaptation insufficiently explored. Meanwhile, Adinugraha et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of cultural dialogue in the development of *halal tourism*, yet their discussion remains fragmented and has not produced a comprehensive conceptual framework capable of explaining how a *civilizational encounter* emerges within a non-Muslim context such as Japan.

Based on these research gaps, this study aims to analyze how Islamic values are negotiated through the development of *halal tourism* in Japan from the perspective of *civilizational encounter*. This study is important because it extends the discourse on *halal tourism* beyond marketing and economic concerns toward theological, cultural, and civilizational perspectives. Furthermore, it proposes a conceptual framework that explains the relationships among *Islamic Religious Values*, *Institutional Response*, and *Cultural Response* in shaping an *Inclusive Halal Tourism Ecosystem*. This framework is expected to contribute theoretically to the advancement of *halal tourism* studies while also providing a valuable reference for future research examining the intersections of religion, public policy, and cultural adaptation in tourism development within multicultural societies.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a *library research* design to examine the development of *halal tourism* in Japan from theological and civilizational perspectives (Connaway & Radford, 2021). This approach was selected because the study sought to develop a conceptual synthesis of how Islamic values are negotiated within Japan's tourism ecosystem rather than to empirically test relationships among variables. The data sources comprised scholarly articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, academic books, official reports published by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), Japanese government documents, and other relevant publications addressing *halal tourism*, *Muslim-friendly tourism*, religious accommodation, *omotenashi*, and intercivilizational dialogue. All sources were purposively selected based on their relevance to the research objectives, publication

quality, and contribution to explaining the interactions among Islamic values, institutional responses, and cultural adaptation in the development of *halal tourism* in Japan.

Data were analyzed using *thematic analysis*, following four sequential stages: data familiarization, initial coding, theme development, and interpretative synthesis (Terry et al., 2017). During the first stage, all selected literature was comprehensively reviewed to identify concepts, arguments, and findings related to *halal tourism* in Japan. The data were subsequently coded into three overarching themes—*Islamic Religious Values*, *Institutional Response*, and *Cultural Response*—which were then systematically compared to identify recurring patterns, key differences, and conceptual relationships across the existing literature. In the final stage, the findings were critically interpreted through the lens of *civilizational encounter* to explain how Islamic values interact with Japanese policies, institutions, and cultural practices. The resulting synthesis was then formulated into a conceptual framework illustrating the mechanism through which an *Inclusive Halal Tourism Ecosystem* is established in Japan.

Results and Discussion

Halal tourism as a form of civilizational encounter in Japan

Japan is one of the few non-Muslim countries that has successfully developed a Muslim-friendly tourism ecosystem without altering its cultural identity or social character (Suswanta et al., 2023). This development is reflected in the Japanese government's growing commitment to addressing the needs of Muslim travelers through a range of dedicated policies and services. For example, the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) has published the *Muslim Travelers Guide*, which provides information on halal restaurants, mosques, prayer rooms, Muslim-friendly hotels, and travel packages tailored to the needs of Muslim visitors (Aminah & Bhakti, 2023). The publication of this official guide demonstrates that the Japanese government no longer regards Muslim travelers merely as a promising market segment but also as members of the international community whose religious needs deserve accommodation within the national tourism service system. At the same time, these initiatives illustrate how the tourism sector has become an initial space for the encounter between Islamic values and Japan's hospitality culture, which is deeply rooted in the philosophy of *omotenashi*.

Such accommodation is evident from the moment Muslim travelers first arrive in Japan. International airports, including Narita International Airport, Haneda Airport, and Kansai International Airport, have provided *prayer rooms* where Muslim travelers can perform *ṣalāh* during their journeys (Kodir et al., 2019). Several airports also offer *qiblah* direction indicators and information about nearby mosques and halal restaurants. The provision of religious facilities within international transportation hubs indicates that religious practice is no longer regarded solely as a private activity

but has increasingly been recognized as an essential component of public services for international travelers. From a civilizational perspective, the availability of these prayer facilities represents institutional recognition of visitors' religious identities without requiring them to compromise their beliefs while participating in Japanese public life.

The encounter between Japanese culture and Islam is also reflected in the presence of the Tokyo Camii and Turkish Culture Center in Shibuya. Recognized as one of the largest mosques in Japan, this institution serves not only as a place of worship for the Muslim community but also as a center for education, interfaith dialogue, and the introduction of Islamic culture to both Japanese society and international visitors (Yamashita, 2022). Every year, Tokyo Camii welcomes numerous non-Muslim visitors interested in learning about Ottoman architecture, Islamic history, and the lives of Muslim communities in Japan (Batuman, 2023). These functions transform the mosque from a purely religious institution into a cultural space that facilitates interaction between two distinct traditions through educational engagement. Consequently, Tokyo Camii demonstrates that interactions between Islam and Japanese society are characterized by mutual understanding and dialogue rather than by conflicts of identity.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in major tourist destinations such as Asakusa, Shinjuku, Dotonbori, and Namba, where halal and *Muslim-friendly* restaurants have become increasingly accessible. In Asakusa, for instance, several ramen, wagyū, and sushi restaurants now offer halal menus to accommodate the growing number of Muslim visitors. Likewise, in Osaka—particularly in the Dotonbori and Namba districts—many restaurants have begun providing ingredient information, offering halal menu options, or collaborating with halal certification organizations (Takeshita, 2020). These adaptations indicate that tourism businesses increasingly recognize halal consumption as an important dimension of service quality in international tourism destinations. By offering food that complies with Islamic dietary requirements, Muslim travelers are able to enjoy Japan's culinary heritage without compromising their religious commitments.

The development of *halal tourism* is equally evident within the accommodation sector. According to the JNTO, an increasing number of hotels in major cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto provide prayer mats, *qiblah* direction indicators, information about nearby mosques, and recommendations for halal restaurants through concierge services (Papastathopoulos et al., 2021). Some hotels even offer guestrooms oriented toward the *qiblah* or assist guests in obtaining halal meals upon request. These practices reflect the transformation of *omotenashi*, Japan's distinctive philosophy of hospitality, which emphasizes anticipating guests' needs before they are explicitly expressed. Within the context of *halal tourism*, *omotenashi* is manifested not only through courteous

service but also through respect for the religious practices of Muslim travelers. As a result, hotel services have evolved into a more inclusive form of hospitality that is increasingly responsive to both cultural and religious diversity.

Nevertheless, this process of accommodation has not been without challenges. Japan has yet to establish a single national halal certification authority, resulting in certification being administered by multiple organizations with varying standards (Rasam et al., 2024). Consequently, many restaurants prefer to describe themselves as *Muslim-friendly* rather than *halal-certified*. This preference is closely related to the characteristics of traditional Japanese cuisine, which frequently incorporates ingredients such as *mirin*, cooking sake, or specific broths into conventional recipes. Furthermore, not all restaurants have separate kitchens dedicated exclusively to halal food preparation. As a result, many businesses choose to provide selected halal menu options instead of restructuring their entire operational system. This situation demonstrates that accommodation is achieved through negotiation between local culinary traditions and Islamic legal principles rather than through the complete replacement of Japan's culinary culture.

These examples collectively demonstrate that the development of *halal tourism* in Japan extends far beyond the mere provision of tourism facilities. The establishment of *prayer rooms* in international airports, the emergence of Tokyo Camii as a center for intercultural dialogue, the increasing number of halal restaurants in major tourist destinations, and the transformation of *omotenashi* into a more inclusive model of hospitality all reflect an adaptive process that enables Islamic values to coexist with Japanese culture. In other words, *halal tourism* does not represent the Islamization of Japan's public sphere or the dominance of a particular culture; rather, it reflects the creation of a dialogical space in which both traditions can interact without sacrificing their respective identities. Therefore, *halal tourism* in Japan is more appropriately understood as a form of *civilizational encounter*—a process through which religious values, local culture, and public institutions continuously negotiate to foster tourism practices that are inclusive, adaptive, and respectful of diversity.

Negotiating Islamic values in Japan's tourism landscape

Although *halal tourism* is frequently understood as a strategy for enhancing the competitiveness of tourism destinations, this perspective does not fully explain why Japan, a country with a relatively small Muslim population, has successfully developed a tourism environment that is increasingly accommodating to the needs of Muslim travelers. The availability of *prayer rooms* at Narita International Airport, Haneda Airport, and Kansai International Airport, the presence of Tokyo Camii, and the publication of the *Muslim Travelers Guide* by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) suggest that this phenomenon extends beyond economic considerations. Rather, it reflects an ongoing process of value negotiation between

Islamic teachings and Japan's culture of hospitality. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes *halal tourism* as a form of *civilizational encounter*, a process through which religious needs, institutional responses, and cultural adaptation interact to shape an inclusive tourism ecosystem. The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 was developed to explain this mechanism systematically.

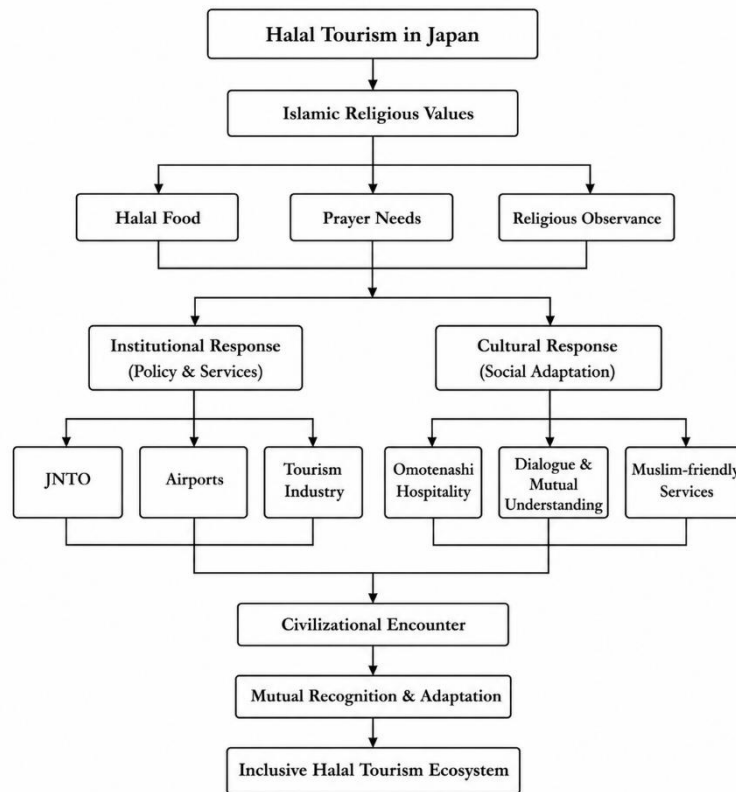


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of civilizational encounter through halal tourism in Japan

Source: Developed by the authors (2026).

Figure 1 was developed as a conceptual synthesis illustrating that *halal tourism* in Japan has not emerged from a single determining factor but rather from the layered interaction among Islamic values, institutional responses, and cultural adaptation. Most previous studies have examined *halal tourism* from the perspectives of marketing, service quality, or tourist satisfaction, often treating these dimensions independently. The framework proposed in this study integrates these three dimensions into a unified analytical model demonstrating how the religious needs of Muslim travelers stimulate public policies, tourism services, and cultural adaptation, ultimately giving rise to a *civilizational encounter*. Therefore, Figure 1 serves not merely as a visual illustration but also as a theoretical synthesis that underpins the subsequent discussion.

The first component of Figure 1 is *Islamic Religious Values*, comprising *halal food*, *prayer needs*, and *religious observance*. These three dimensions represent the fundamental needs of Muslim travelers that remain essential regardless of whether they are visiting Muslim-majority or non-Muslim countries. Said et al. (2022) argued that the needs of

Muslim travelers extend beyond access to halal food to include the availability of prayer facilities and respect for religious practices throughout their journeys. Building upon this argument, the present study positions these three dimensions as the primary drivers of the entire adaptation mechanism within Japan's tourism system. In other words, institutional and cultural responses are not the initial objectives but rather logical consequences of efforts to comprehensively accommodate the religious needs of Muslim travelers within a multicultural public sphere.

These needs are subsequently addressed through *Institutional Response*, referring to the involvement of government agencies and the tourism industry in providing more inclusive services. The publication of the *Muslim Travelers Guide* by the JNTO, the provision of *prayer rooms* at Narita, Haneda, and Kansai International Airport, and the expansion of halal services in hotels and restaurants demonstrate that both public institutions and tourism stakeholders actively contribute to creating a Muslim-friendly environment. Unlike Amalia and Gunawan (2023), who primarily viewed such policies as strategies for strengthening destination competitiveness, this study argues that institutional responses also function as expressions of recognition of Muslim travelers' religious identities. This finding reinforces the work of Adham et al. (2026), who emphasized the importance of institutional support in the development of *halal tourism*, while extending their argument by demonstrating that institutions become key actors in creating public spaces where intercivilizational dialogue can take place.

Beyond institutional responses, Figure 1 demonstrates that the success of *halal tourism* in Japan is also shaped by *Cultural Response*, namely the processes of social and cultural adaptation that enable Islamic values to be accommodated without diminishing Japan's cultural identity. One prominent example is the emergence of *Muslim-friendly services* integrated with the philosophy of *omotenashi*, Japan's traditional hospitality ethic that emphasizes sincere attentiveness to guests' needs. In many hotels across Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto, this philosophy is expressed through the provision of prayer mats, *qiblah* direction indicators, recommendations for halal restaurants, and concierge assistance in meeting the needs of Muslim guests. Kuboyama (2020) identified *omotenashi* as the cornerstone of Japanese hospitality. However, the present study reveals a broader dimension by demonstrating that *omotenashi* has evolved into a medium for cultural negotiation, allowing Muslim religious practices to be accommodated as part of contemporary hospitality standards without compromising Japan's cultural identity.

This cultural dimension is also reflected in the widespread preference for the term *Muslim-friendly* over *halal-certified* across restaurants and tourist destinations. Many Japanese restaurants continue to preserve traditional culinary practices that incorporate ingredients such as *mirin* or cooking sake, while choosing to offer dedicated menu options for Muslim travelers instead of modifying their entire

operational systems. This approach demonstrates that accommodation does not necessarily require complete adherence to halal certification standards but instead proceeds through negotiation that balances local culinary identity with the religious needs of Muslim visitors.

The interaction between *Institutional Response* and *Cultural Response* ultimately gives rise to what this study defines as a *Civilizational Encounter*. This encounter does not occur through the dominance of one culture over another but through gradual processes of mutual adaptation embedded in everyday tourism practices. The presence of Tokyo Camii as both a place of worship and a center for intercultural dialogue, the expansion of halal restaurants in Asakusa, Shinjuku, and Dotonbori, and the provision of *prayer rooms* at international airports collectively demonstrate how Japanese institutions and society have jointly created increasingly inclusive public spaces for Muslim travelers. Consistent with the work of Ranasinghe and Cheng (2018) on intercultural dialogue, this study suggests that interactions between civilizations are not always realized through formal policies but often emerge through social practices shaped by the practical needs of society and the tourism industry.

These findings lead to the central proposition of this study: the ultimate objective of *halal tourism* is not merely to increase tourist arrivals or expand the tourism market but to establish an *Inclusive Halal Tourism Ecosystem* in which religious diversity can coexist within the same tourism environment. Accordingly, this study considers the development of mechanisms of recognition, adaptation, and respect for religious identity to be a more fundamental outcome than economic growth alone. Therefore, Figure 1 not only explains the relationships among the proposed variables but also offers a new perspective by conceptualizing *halal tourism* as a social process through which Islamic values and local culture interact simultaneously through institutional responses and cultural adaptation. This conceptual model extends the discussion of *halal tourism* beyond marketing perspectives toward theological and civilizational approaches, providing an analytical foundation for future studies on the intersections of religion, culture, and tourism in increasingly multicultural societies.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the development of *halal tourism* in Japan should not be understood merely as an economic strategy or an effort to expand the tourism market but rather as a process of *civilizational encounter* that brings Islamic values into dialogue with Japan's culture of hospitality. The findings reveal that the religious needs of Muslim travelers—including access to halal food, prayer facilities, and opportunities to observe religious practices—have stimulated institutional responses through JNTO policies, the provision of *prayer rooms* at international airports, and the expansion of halal services within the tourism industry, as well as cultural responses through the transformation of the *omotenashi* philosophy and the growing adoption of *Muslim-*

friendly services. The interaction between these institutional and cultural responses has generated an adaptive mechanism that accommodates Islamic values without compromising Japan's cultural identity. Accordingly, this study argues that the successful development of *halal tourism* in Japan depends not only on the availability of tourism facilities but also on the capacity of institutions and society to create spaces for dialogue that foster recognition, adaptation, and respect for religious diversity within contemporary tourism practices.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes by proposing the Civilizational Encounter through Halal Tourism conceptual framework, which integrates *Islamic Religious Values*, *Institutional Response*, and *Cultural Response* as the underlying mechanisms shaping an *Inclusive Halal Tourism Ecosystem*. This framework broadens the discourse on *halal tourism* beyond its traditional emphasis on marketing, tourist satisfaction, and destination competitiveness by introducing theological, civilizational, and cultural negotiation perspectives. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on a library research approach and therefore does not capture the lived experiences of Muslim travelers, tourism practitioners, or policymakers in Japan. Future research is therefore encouraged to combine this conceptual perspective with empirical approaches, such as interviews, field observations, or cross-national comparative studies, in order to validate and refine the proposed conceptual model while further advancing our understanding of the dynamic relationships among religion, culture, and tourism in increasingly multicultural societies.

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