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Halal Tourism and Sustainable Development in Makran

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Abstract

In recent decades, the tourism industry has emerged as one of the most significant catalysts for economic growth and social development worldwide. Given its rich cultural and natural endowments, Iran possesses the potential to become a premier destination for halal tourism. Halal tourism appeals not only to Muslim travelers but also to those seeking a healthy and ethically oriented lifestyle. This study aims to investigate the opportunities and challenges of developing halal tourism in the Makran region, employing an applied, descriptive, and analytical research design. Data were gathered through simple random sampling and analyzed using factor analysis. The findings reveal that the current framework for halal tourism in Makran lacks the requisite efficiency. Widening gaps in legal, economic, social, environmental, and institutional domains pose significant barriers. Key challenges include inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training of human resources, poor resource management, and a lack of coordination among relevant institutions. Moreover, water scarcity and non-compliance with environmental conservation principles further impede the progress of halal tourism in the region. This research proposes that sustainable development of halal tourism in Makran can be achieved by enhancing infrastructure, improving human resource training, increasing transparency and accountability, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Such an approach would not only drive economic growth in the region but also facilitate greater cultural and social exchange. Ultimately, adopting innovative tourism models and leveraging the region's unique assets could enhance the efficacy of tourism management.

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Introduction

Over the past several decades, tourism has emerged as a cornerstone of global economic and social development, playing a pivotal role in national and regional strategies for growth. As highlighted by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the industry accounts for over 10% of global GDP and employment, with over one billion international tourists in 2020 generating more than \$980 billion in revenue—a figure expected to triple by 2030. Tourism's influence extends beyond macroeconomic metrics, fostering income distribution, employment creation, poverty alleviation, and cultural exchange (UNWTO, 2023; Sari et al., 2025; Aysan & Syarif, 2025). Amidst this expansion, countries must implement strategic, adaptive policies to secure competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic market landscape (Ratnasari et al., 2021).

One notable trajectory within this global phenomenon is the rise of halal tourism—a niche yet rapidly growing segment tailored to the unique needs of Muslim travelers. Rooted in Islamic jurisprudence, halal tourism encompasses a comprehensive array of services and standards, including halal-certified food, prayer facilities, alcohol- and gambling-free environments, gender-segregated recreational facilities, and Sharia-compliant accommodations and entertainment options (Azizi, 2024; Alimusa et al., 2024). This form of tourism not only satisfies religious obligations but also appeals to a broader audience seeking ethical, healthy, and family-oriented experiences (Safaiepour & Bagh, 2017).

Countries such as Malaysia, Turkey, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates have led the development of halal tourism by integrating robust infrastructure, international branding, and strategic policy frameworks. Even non-Muslim-majority nations like the UK and Spain have recognized its economic potential, investing in relevant facilities and marketing to Muslim travelers (Sarvar & Nourani, 2012). However, a critical barrier remains the misalignment between available tourism services and Islamic ethical standards in many regions. In response, the concept of a halal tourism brand has emerged, offering standardized assurance—often under the auspices of international organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)—that tourism services comply with Islamic values (Ebrahimi et al., 2019; Basouli & Derakhsh, 2021).

This paper focuses on the application of sustainable halal tourism development within Iran's Makran region—an area with immense but underutilized potential. Makran boasts over 600 kilometers of pristine coastline along the Oman Sea, a rich Balochi cultural heritage, and strategic geopolitical positioning near the Persian Gulf. However, systemic challenges persist, including underdeveloped infrastructure, fragmented institutional coordination, and socio-political complexities such as Shia-Sunni dynamics and cultural identity tensions (Heydari et al., 2024).

To navigate these multifaceted challenges, the present study adopts a conceptual framework integrating Sustainable Tourism Development Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the principles of halal tourism (Fauzi & Battour, 2025). Sustainable tourism emphasizes ecological and cultural preservation while maximizing long-term economic benefits (Hendrik et al., 2024). Stakeholder theory underscores the necessity of coordinated engagement among governmental bodies, local communities, and private sector actors. Halal tourism principles ensure that all services are compliant with Islamic values, thereby enhancing marketability within the global Muslim demographic (Marlina et al. 2025).

Through a critical analysis of legal, socio-economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions, this research aims to propose actionable strategies for positioning Makran as a sustainable halal tourism destination. The study contributes to the theoretical discourse by addressing gaps in the application of sustainable halal tourism frameworks to underdeveloped Islamic regions and offers practical guidance for policy makers seeking to balance cultural preservation with the demands of global tourism. Ultimately, by aligning Islamic values with sustainable development principles, Iran's Makran region can transform into a competitive hub in the global halal tourism landscape.

Makran, a lesser-known yet highly promising region in southeastern Iran along the Oman Sea, spans parts of Sistan and Baluchestan and Hormozgan provinces. With its pristine nature, stunning coastlines, historical landmarks, and unique cultural heritage, Makran holds immense potential to become a key tourism hub in Iran. The region's unspoiled beaches, distinctive natural landscapes, rich Islamic culture, and investment opportunities make it an ideal candidate for halal tourism development, positioning it as a top destination in Iran and the Persian Gulf region. Features of halal tourism in Makran include halal restaurants and cuisine, family-friendly and Islamic recreational options, local Islamic traditions, religious facilities, and adherence to Sharia principles. However, challenges such as limited international airports, standardized hotels, and adequate sea and land transportation, coupled with low awareness of halal tourism—necessitating education and cultural promotion among local stakeholders and communities—hinder its feasibility. This study seeks to identify and analyze the potential of halal tourism in the Makran coastal region, addressing the question: What factors enhance or diminish the potential for halal tourism development in Makran?

Literature review

The concept of halal tourism requires clarification on two key points. First, contrary to common assumptions, halal tourism is not a distinct category like rural, historical, or ecotourism. While cultural-historical tourism involves visits to museums and ancient sites, halal tourism is a framework applicable to various tourism types—cultural, historical, and ecological, etc.—without being tied to specific destinations or attractions (Suhartanto et al., 2021a). Thus, its designation reflects the behavioral aspects

of tourists who adhere to specific religious and ethical practices during their journeys (Xiong & Chia, 2024). Second, halal tourism differs from religious tourism; not all halal tourism equates to religious pilgrimage, as its destinations are not exclusively sacred sites. Though rooted in historical practices, halal tourism is a relatively new concept in academic and organizational management within the tourism industry. The UNWTO views halal tourism as a unique model with untapped potential, offering significant commercial opportunities for Muslim-majority countries, destinations, and families adhering to Sharia principles. Many Muslim and non-Muslim countries have recognized its importance and taken substantial steps to capitalize on it (Sthapit et al., 2024).

Malaysia, for instance, has prioritized this sector in recent years, establishing itself as a “halal hub” with a strong presence in global rankings. In the 2013 Kraft ranking, supervised by the OIC, Malaysia scored 8.3 out of 10, excelling in criteria such as the availability and quality of halal food, certified halal restaurants, halal accommodations, and prayer facilities at tourist sites. Following Malaysia, countries like Egypt, the UAE, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Morocco, Jordan, Brunei, and Qatar rank prominently. Currently, 26% of global tourism flows are associated with religious tourism (Isa et al., 2018).

Scholars and researchers have conducted studies on halal tourism, highlighting its transformative impact on tourism development. A summary of key empirical studies is presented in Table 1.

Halal tourism, distinct from religious or cultural tourism, provides Sharia-compliant services across various tourism types, appealing to Muslim and non-Muslim travelers (Suhartanto et al., 2021b). This study is grounded in a conceptual framework integrating three theoretical perspectives: **sustainable tourism development**, **stakeholder theory**, and **halal tourism principles**. Sustainable tourism development emphasizes balancing economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection (Hall, 2019). Studies highlight its relevance to halal tourism, as seen in Malaysia’s eco-friendly halal resorts (Isa et al., 2018). However, applying sustainable tourism principles to underdeveloped regions like Makran remains underexplored. **Stakeholder theory** posits that effective tourism development requires collaboration among government, locals, and private sectors. Research on halal tourism underscores stakeholder coordination as critical, yet barriers like poor institutional support persist in emerging destinations (Alimusa et al., 2024). **Halal tourism principles**, rooted in Islamic marketing, prioritize services like halal food and prayer facilities. While countries like the UAE excel in these areas, regions with limited infrastructure, such as Makran, face unique challenges (Fauzi & Battour, 2025). The literature reveals a gap in region-specific studies integrating these theories, particularly in coastal areas with environmental constraints. This study addresses this gap by examining halal tourism feasibility in Makran, using factor analysis to identify barriers and enablers within this framework. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model guiding this research (Vargas & Moral, 2022).

Table 1. Summary of Empirical Studies

Researcher(s)	Title	Findings
Adham et al., (2025)	Halal Tourism in an Island Destination: Muslim Travelers' Experiences in the Maldives	Noted high potential for halal tourism in the Maldives but pointed to infrastructure and awareness challenges; emphasized halal food and worship facilities' impact on satisfaction.
Timur et al. (2025)	Exploring Tourists' Intention to Switch to Halal Tourism Using Push-Pull-Mooring Theory	Found that push factors (e.g., non-compliance with Sharia) and pull factors (e.g., halal facilities) influence switching intentions; experiences also play a role.
Heydari et al. (2024)	Standardizing Halal Tourism Indicators in Ecotourism Lodges with Emphasis on Iranian-Islamic Hospitality	Defined standardized halal tourism indicators encompassing service, food, hygiene, and cultural requirements; highlighted Iranian-Islamic hospitality as a competitive advantage; proposed a model for standardizing ecotourism lodges.
Azizi (2024)	Thematic Evolution of Research in Islamic and Halal Tourism: A Bibliometric Analysis	Research in halal tourism has grown over two decades, focusing on Muslim tourist behavior, halal standards, and marketing; identified emerging trends in sustainability and technology.
Ekka (2024)	Halal Tourism Beyond 2020: Concepts, Opportunities, and Future Research Directions	Highlighted halal tourism's economic and cultural opportunities; emphasized the role of digital technologies and sustainability in future research.
Fauzi & Battour, (2025).	Halal and Islamic Tourism: Mapping Current and Future Trends	Identified key research areas including halal standards, tourist needs, and emerging technologies; predicted growth in digital services and sustainability focus.
Bazin et al. (2024)	Developing Halal Tourism in Lombok with a Focus on Halal Honeymoon Tourism	Showed Lombok's success in halal tourism through Sharia-compliant services; noted positive economic and cultural impacts from honeymoon tourism development.
Abdollahi Behnemiri & Mirabi (2023)	A Marketing Model for Halal Tourism in the Middle East: A Qualitative Study (Case Study: Kish Island)	Emphasized the need for culturally and religiously sensitive marketing in Kish Island; recommended targeted advertising and improved services for Muslim tourists.
Eftekharzadeh et al. (2022)	Examining the Implementation Model of Halal Tourism Policies in Iran	Identified legal, economic, and cultural barriers to halal tourism in Iran; highlighted opportunities in religious and cultural attractions for global market growth.

Halal tourism, a framework for Sharia-compliant travel, is shaped by economic, cultural, and geopolitical forces. This study draws on Sustainable Tourism Development Theory, which emphasizes balancing economic, social, and environmental goals, and Stakeholder Theory, which highlights collaborative governance, to analyze barriers to halal tourism in Makran. Critical literature reveals three key dimensions:

Geopolitics of Halal Tourism: Iran's position as a Shia-majority country with limited international tourism due to geopolitical sanctions contrasts with Sunni-majority leaders like Malaysia and the UAE.

Makran's strategic coastal location offers potential to compete in the Islamic tourism market, but sanctions and regional rivalries limit investment in infrastructure, such as halal-certified hotels (Ebrahimi et al., 2019).

Cultural Imperialism and Tourism Branding: Global halal tourism models, such as Malaysia's standardized branding, risk cultural homogenization when applied to regions like Makran, where Balochi Sunni traditions differ from Iran's Shia framework. The "cultural potential" of Makran—its traditional crafts, music, and hospitality—requires localized branding to avoid imperialist overtones and preserve identity (Safaiepour & Bagh, 2017).

Environmental Concerns and Religious Tourism Conflicts: Coastal tourism in Makran, as in other Islamic regions, faces tensions between development and environmental sustainability. Water scarcity and weak conservation policies, as seen in Jask, threaten ecosystems critical to religious and eco-conscious tourists, aligning with sustainable tourism's environmental focus.

While prior studies address established destinations, few explore underdeveloped regions like Makran, where infrastructure deficits (e.g., limited hotels) and coordination failures (e.g., between Chabahar's Free Trade Zone and national authorities) intersect with these critical issues. This study fills this gap by analyzing stakeholder perspectives to propose a sustainable, context-driven halal tourism framework.

Method

This exploratory, descriptive-analytical study investigates the feasibility and impediments to the development of halal tourism in Iran's Makran coastal region (including Chabahar, Konarak, Jask, and Sirik), drawing theoretical guidance from Sustainable Tourism Development Theory and Stakeholder Theory. The research aims to identify the multidimensional barriers to stakeholder-oriented halal tourism within the context of environmental constraints, socio-cultural sensitivities, institutional dynamics, and legal-religious frameworks.

The target population consisted of key tourism stakeholders in Makran, including academic experts, policymakers (e.g., Chabahar Free Trade Zone officials), tourism practitioners (e.g., hotel managers), and community leaders with relevant knowledge of the region's socio-cultural and environmental landscape. A sampling frame of approximately 400 stakeholders was constructed using registries from local tourism boards, municipal records, and professional networks. A simple random sampling technique was employed to draw a representative sample of 100 respondents, based on Cochran's formula (1977), ensuring a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. Although the selected sample size is statistically acceptable for exploratory research, it presents limitations for robust factor analysis involving 66 observed variables.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising 66 items designed to measure perceived barriers to halal tourism. The instrument was grounded in theoretical constructs from the sustainable tourism and stakeholder engagement literature, complemented by empirical insights from five domain experts in Makran (two academic researchers, two policymakers, and one community leader). The item development process followed a three-stage procedure:

1. **Item Generation:** Initial items were derived from scholarly literature on halal and sustainable tourism. The barriers were categorized under four dimensions: legal (e.g., regulatory Sharia compliance), socioeconomic (e.g., limited community awareness), environmental (e.g., water scarcity), and institutional (e.g., inter-agency coordination). Contextual dimensions such as Balochi cultural conservatism and ecological degradation were incorporated based on expert input.
2. **Item Formatting:** Each item was framed as a declarative statement and evaluated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), producing ordinal data. Items were initially written in English, translated into Persian, and then back-translated to ensure semantic equivalence.
3. **Pilot Testing:** The draft instrument was pilot-tested with a group of 10 stakeholders (5 tourism practitioners and 5 community members) from the region. Feedback regarding clarity, linguistic accessibility, and contextual accuracy informed minor revisions to item wording. Table X (Appendix) details sample items, theoretical classifications, and relevance ratings.

The psychometric properties of the questionnaire were assessed via content validity, face validity, and internal consistency reliability:

- **Content Validity:** Expert raters assessed each item for theoretical relevance on a 4-point scale (1 = Not Relevant to 4 = Highly Relevant). All items received scores of 3 or 4, affirming comprehensive content coverage aligned with the theoretical framework.
- **Face Validity:** The pilot test confirmed item clarity and contextual intelligibility, requiring only minor linguistic modifications.
- **Internal Reliability:** Cronbach's alpha was computed for each of the four dimensions, demonstrating high internal consistency: legal ($\alpha = 0.85$), socioeconomic ($\alpha = 0.82$), environmental ($\alpha = 0.88$), and institutional ($\alpha = 0.80$), all exceeding the 0.70 threshold (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Test-retest reliability was not conducted due to time constraints, which remains a methodological limitation.

Questionnaire distribution occurred over a three-month period (March–May 2024) and employed a hybrid delivery model to maximize inclusivity and coverage. A total of 120 questionnaires were

distributed to compensate for anticipated non-response, yielding 100 valid responses (83.3% response rate):

- In-person distribution (80%): Conducted during tourism workshops and community forums in Chabahar (50%) and Konarak (30%) by trained assistants who guided participants through the questionnaire and clarified ambiguities as needed.
- Online distribution (20%): Targeted stakeholders in more remote areas (Jask and Sirik) using a secure Google Forms link shared via email. Follow-up reminders via phone and email were employed to enhance participation.

Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and conducted in Persian to ensure accessibility. Respondents received no incentives, reducing potential response bias. Nonetheless, digital access limitations in remote areas may have affected online participation, a constraint acknowledged in the study's limitations.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed to uncover latent constructs underlying the perceived barriers to halal tourism. The analysis followed a systematic six-step process:

1. Data Coding and Preparation: Responses were numerically coded (1–5) in SPSS version 26. Each item was labeled with a unique variable code (e.g., V1 = “Religious compliance requirements”).
2. Screening: No missing data were identified due to mandatory field enforcement in both digital and paper formats. Outliers were assessed using boxplots and found non-extreme. Although Likert data are ordinal, they were treated as approximately interval for EFA, consistent with common practice (Norman, 2010).
3. Suitability Testing: Sampling adequacy and factorability were confirmed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index (0.970) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2 = 169.84$, $p < 0.001$), indicating strong justification for factor analysis.
4. Factor Extraction: Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with eigenvalues >1 yielded four factors, cumulatively explaining 69.61% of total variance.
5. Factor Rotation: Varimax orthogonal rotation was applied to maximize interpretability. Items with factor loadings ≥ 0.40 were retained.
6. Factor Interpretation: Factor labels were derived through thematic synthesis of high-loading items and expert contextual interpretations. The factors identified were: (1) Legal and Operational Barriers, (2) Cultural Tensions and Environmental Degradation, (3) Oversight and Competitiveness, and (4) Development Planning and Legal Issues. Detailed variable loadings and factor descriptions are provided in Table X (Appendix).

Several limitations constrain the generalizability and analytical depth of the study. The modest sample size ($n=100$) restricts the robustness of factor analysis with 66 variables, and reliance on ordinal

data may affect precision in dimensional interpretation. The absence of qualitative methods (e.g., interviews or focus groups) limits contextual richness. Additionally, potential selection bias from unequal internet access across regions may skew representation. Future studies are encouraged to employ mixed-methods approaches, larger and stratified samples, and more rigorous validation procedures, including confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and test-retest reliability assessments.

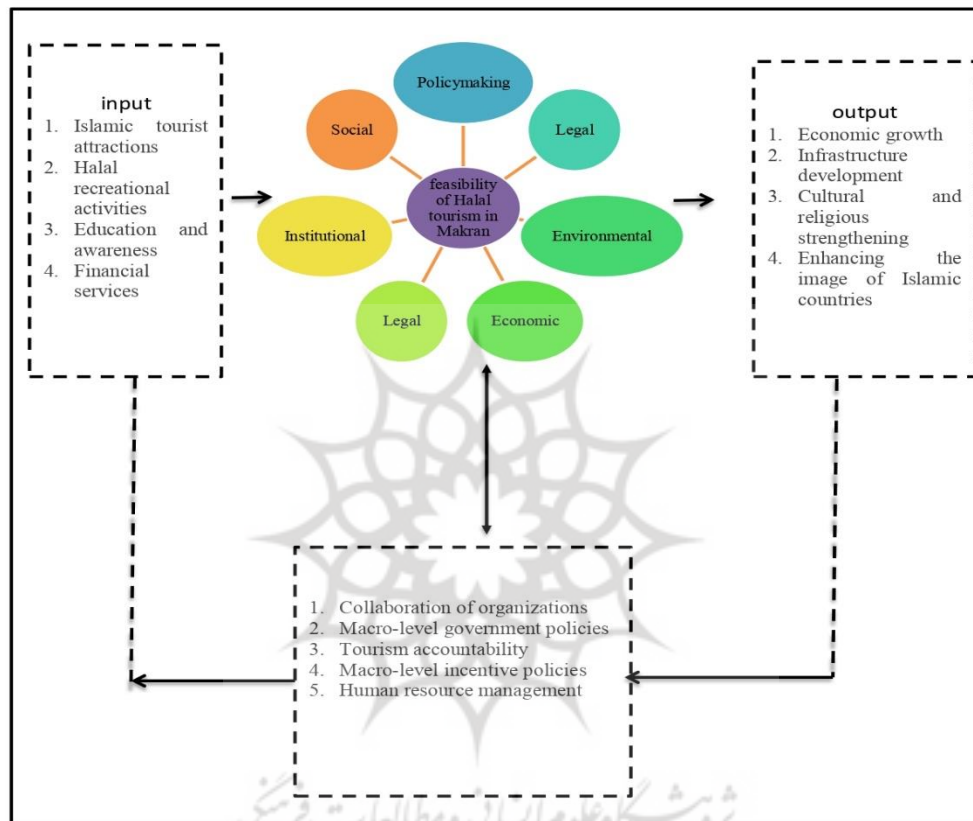


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Model

Result and Discussion

This study employed factor analysis to assess the feasibility of halal tourism in Makran, with data processed using SPSS software. Factor analysis establishes relationships among seemingly unrelated variables under a hypothetical model, addressing multi-criteria decision-making challenges.

Steps in Factor Analysis

Selection of variables for analysis

1. Selection of variables for analysis
2. Calculation of the correlation matrix
3. Extraction of initial factors

4. Rotation to derive final factors
5. Naming of factors
6. Calculation of factor scores and ranking of regions

After selecting indicators, a data matrix was constructed and inputted into SPSS, yielding a descriptive statistics table (mean, standard deviation, and number of indicators).

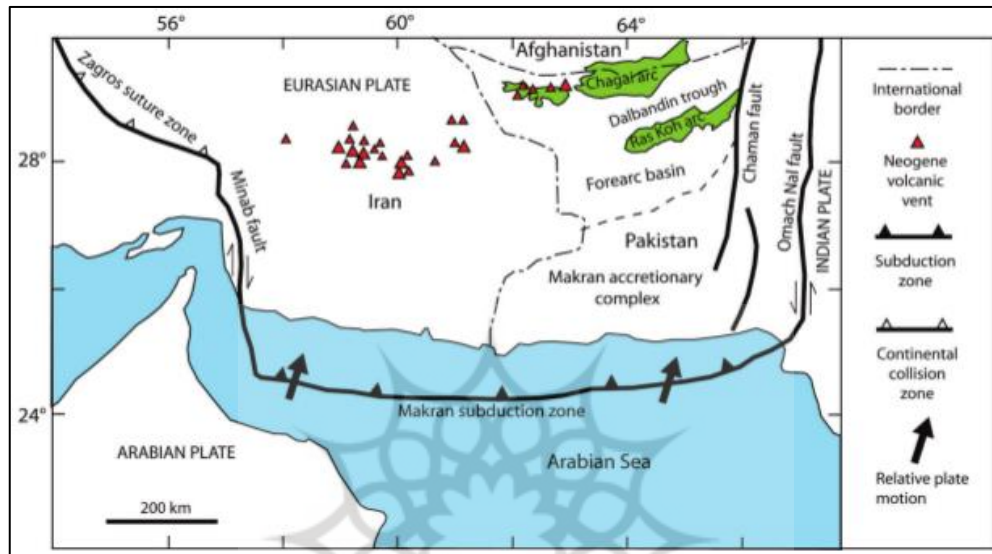


Figure 2. Location of Makran

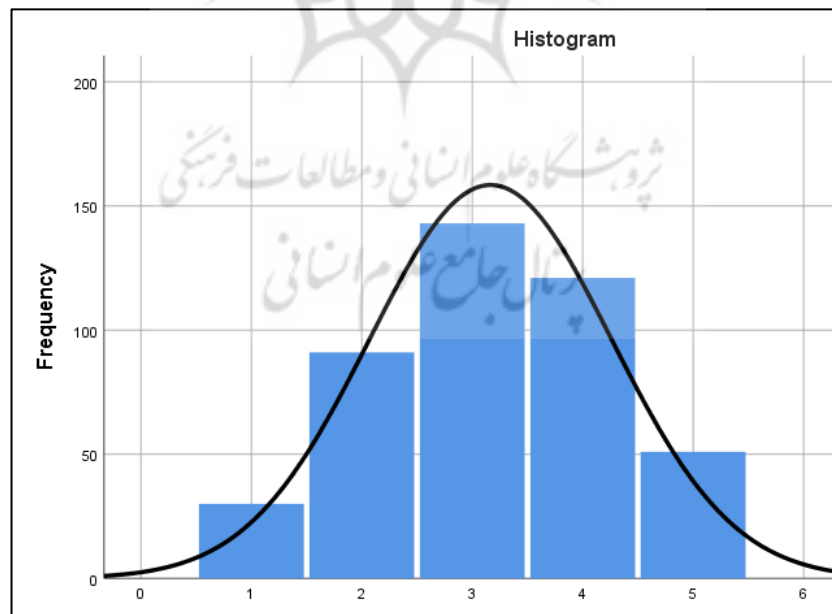


Figure 3. Normal Distribution Chart

Table 2. Components of Halal Tourism Feasibility in Makran

Component	Variables
Legal	Lack of alignment with international halal tourism standards; absence of comprehensive laws; complex permit processes; inter-agency coordination failures; challenges in enforcing religious compliance in hospitality; need for transport law reforms; unclear service quality oversight; restrictive advertising regulations; land ownership disputes.
Economic & Investment	High infrastructure investment needs; limited financial resources; shortage of skilled labor; inadequate economic knowledge for marketing; economic volatility; regional competition; high global marketing costs; insufficient government support; lack of service diversity; currency fluctuation impacts.
Social & Cultural	Limited social acceptance; cultural mismatches with local norms; low public awareness; fears of social change; religious and cultural biases; misalignment with tourist needs; negative perceptions; lack of cultural-religious facilities; intercultural tensions; local unawareness of halal standards; misconceptions about Muslim tourists.
Environmental	Negative ecological impacts; pollution and resource depletion; water scarcity; non-compliance with conservation principles; waste management issues; coastal degradation risks; need for clean energy systems; climate change threats; biodiversity preservation challenges; environmental constraints on large projects.
Judicial	Legal barriers to foreign investment; lack of clear halal tourism frameworks; limited legal support; religious-cultural regulatory constraints; food service standardization issues; land ownership and leasing obstacles; inadequate environmental protection laws; poor local community support laws; family-oriented tourism legal challenges; conflicts with other tourism sectors; weak oversight.
Institutional	Lack of dedicated institutions; poor inter-organizational coordination; reduced government motivation; overemphasis on general tourism; limited international collaboration; stronger regional competitors; administrative and technological deficiencies.
Policy-Making	Absence of comprehensive strategies; conflicting policies; cultural acceptance challenges; insufficient marketing programs; political barriers to international tourists; underutilized legislative potential; long-term planning deficiencies.

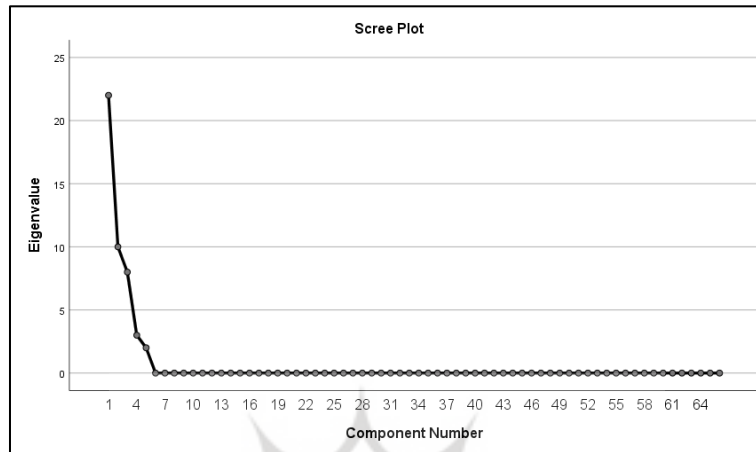
A correlation matrix was used to assess internal relationships among indicators. Positive correlations indicate that higher values in one indicator correspond to increases in others. From 66 initial components, four factors were extracted, explaining 34.799% of the variance—a moderately satisfactory result.

To identify the most critical factors, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were applied. The KMO value was 0.970, and Bartlett's statistic was 169.84 ($p = 0.000$), confirming the data's suitability for factor analysis.

A scree plot (Figure 4) determined four factors, collectively explaining 69.606% of the total variance.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

Analysis	KMO	Bartlett's Test	Significance
Halal Tourism Feasibility Factors	0.970	169.84	0.000

**Figure 4. Scree Plot for Factor Determination**

Factor Rotation and Naming

Varimax rotation simplified factor interpretation. Table 4 presents the extracted factors, their eigenvalues, and variance percentages post-rotation. Factor 1 accounts for the largest share (27.663%), while Factor 4 contributes the least (6.836%).

Table 4. Extracted Factors with Eigenvalues and Variance Post-Rotation

Component	Initial Eigenvalues	% Variance	Cumulative %	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings	% Variance	Cumulative %
1	22.968	34.799	34.799	18.258	27.663	27.663
2	10.710	16.227	51.026	15.399	23.332	50.995
3	8.719	13.211	64.237	7.771	11.774	62.770
4	3.544	5.369	69.606	4.512	6.836	69.606

Exploratory factor analysis, based on responses from 100 Makran stakeholders, identified four key barriers to halal tourism in Makran, a coastal region along Iran's Oman Sea known for its pristine beaches, Balochi heritage, and environmental challenges. The 66 variables, measured on a 5-point Likert scale, were analyzed using principal component analysis with varimax rotation, yielding four factors that explain 69.606% of the variance ($KMO = 0.970$, Bartlett's $\chi^2 = 169.84$, $p = 0.000$). Table X (Appendix) provides detailed variable descriptions and factor loadings. Below, each factor is described with its implications and contextual realities in Makran.

Factor 1: Legal and Operational Barriers (27.663%) includes strict Sharia-based regulations and poor inter-agency coordination. In Chabahar, the main hub of Makran, hotel operators face lengthy certification processes due to bureaucratic overlaps between local and national authorities, delaying investments critical for halal tourism. This barrier limits Makran's ability to attract Muslim travelers seeking Sharia-compliant accommodations, hindering economic growth.

Factor 2: Cultural Tensions to Environmental Degradation (23.332%) encompasses water scarcity and religious biases. Konarak's coastal resorts struggle with unreliable water supplies, a critical issue in Makran's arid climate, deterring tourists who expect sustainable facilities. Additionally, some Balochi communities perceive halal tourism as a commercial threat to their traditional Sunni practices, creating cultural resistance. This tension, rooted in Makran's Sunni-Shia dynamics, underscores the need for culturally sensitive engagement.

Factor 3: Oversight and Competitiveness (11.774%) reflects fragmented governance, such as the lack of coordination between Chabahar's Free Trade Zone and provincial tourism boards. This weakens Makran's competitiveness compared to established Iranian destinations like Kish Island, limiting its appeal to international Muslim tourists.

Factor 4: Development Planning and Legal Issues (6.836%) involves weak environmental conservation policies. In Jask, unchecked coastal development risks ecological damage, repelling eco-conscious travelers and threatening sustainable tourism.

These findings highlight systemic challenges to halal tourism in Makran, with implications for infrastructure development, cultural integration, and policy reform, grounded in the region's unique coastal and Balochi context.

Table 5. Factor Loadings for Halal Tourism Feasibility

Component	1	2	3	4
1	0/785	0/861	-0/026	-0/17
2	-0/617	0/785	0/026	0/035
3	0/048	-0/011	0/902	0/429
4	0/016	-0/014	-0/430	0/902

The factor analysis, based on responses from 100 Makran stakeholders, identifies four barriers to halal tourism, interpreted through Sustainable Tourism Development Theory and Stakeholder Theory. These findings, contextualized in Makran's coastal geography, Balochi culture, and Shia-Sunni dynamics, engage with critical issues of geopolitics, cultural imperialism, and environmental sustainability, offering a nuanced understanding of sustainable halal tourism. Legal and Operational Barriers stem from Iran's centralized, Shia-driven governance, where strict Sharia regulations delay hotel certifications in

Chabahar, Makran's economic hub. Geopolitically, international sanctions exacerbate infrastructure deficits by limiting foreign investment in halal-certified facilities, unlike the UAE's open market. Streamlining certifications through stakeholder collaboration, as advocated by Freeman could enhance Makran's competitiveness.

Cultural Tensions to Environmental Degradation reflects water scarcity and cultural resistance. Konarak's arid coastal areas face severe water shortages, restricting resort development and threatening sustainable tourism's environmental pillar. Culturally, some Balochi Sunni communities view global halal tourism branding as a form of cultural imperialism, clashing with their traditional practices. For example, Balochi crafts and music, a cultural asset, are underutilized in tourism promotion. Localized branding and community engagement can leverage this potential while preserving identity.

Oversight and Competitiveness highlights fragmented governance, such as the disconnection between Chabahar's Free Trade Zone and national tourism boards. This weakens Makran's position compared to Malaysia's coordinated halal tourism strategy (Isa et al., 2018). Stakeholder-driven governance models could address this, aligning with Freeman.

Development Planning and Legal Issues involves weak environmental policies, as seen in Jask, where coastal development risks ecological damage. This conflict between religious tourism and environmental sustainability, noted in Islamic regions, threatens Makran's pristine beaches, a draw for Muslim tourists. Robust conservation policies are essential.

These findings contribute to sustainable tourism scholarship by illustrating how geopolitical constraints, cultural dynamics, and environmental tensions shape halal tourism in underdeveloped regions. Recommendations include geopolitically informed investment strategies, localized branding to counter cultural imperialism and water infrastructure to ensure sustainability, tailored to Makran's unique context.

The factor analysis, informed by Makran stakeholders, reveals four barriers to halal tourism in Makran, a region defined by its 600 km of pristine Oman Sea coastline, vibrant Balochi culture, and environmental constraints like water scarcity. Interpreted through **Sustainable Tourism Development Theory** and **Stakeholder Theory**, these findings illuminate the interplay of legal, cultural, and environmental factors in an underdeveloped Islamic region, offering implications for sustainable tourism development.

Legal and Operational Barriers reflect Iran's centralized, Shia-driven governance, where strict Sharia regulations delay hotel certifications in Chabahar, Makran's economic hub. Unlike Malaysia's streamlined halal certification system (Isa et al., 2018), Iran's bureaucratic processes deter investors, limiting Makran's ability to compete as a halal tourism destination. Policymakers should simplify

permitting through public-private partnerships, aligning with stakeholder theory's emphasis on collaboration.

Cultural Tensions to Environmental Degradation underscores Makran's environmental and cultural challenges. Water scarcity, a pressing issue in Konarak's arid coastal areas, restricts resort development, threatening sustainable tourism's environmental pillar. Culturally, religious biases among some Balochi Sunni communities, who view halal tourism as commercialized, create resistance, exacerbated by Iran's Shia-dominated policies (Basouli & Derakhsh, 2021). Community-based training programs, rooted in Balochi traditions, could bridge these tensions, fostering local buy-in.

Oversight and Competitiveness highlights fragmented governance, as seen in the disconnection between Chabahar's Free Trade Zone and provincial authorities. This contrasts with Malaysia's coordinated halal tourism strategy, reducing Makran's appeal compared to established destinations. Strengthening institutional coordination, as advocated by stakeholder theory, is critical to enhance competitiveness.

Development Planning and Legal Issues points to weak conservation policies, such as in Jask, where coastal development risks ecological damage. This threatens Makran's pristine beaches, a key draw for eco-conscious Muslim tourists, and underscores the need for robust environmental regulations.

These findings advance sustainable tourism theory by illustrating how Islamic principles, regional cultural dynamics, and environmental constraints shape tourism in underdeveloped regions. Unlike Malaysia's globalized model, Makran requires a localized approach that leverages its coastal assets and Balochi heritage while addressing Shia-Sunni tensions and water scarcity. Recommendations include investing in water infrastructure, streamlining regulations, and engaging Balochi stakeholders to ensure sustainable, inclusive halal tourism.

Conclusion

This study examines the structural inefficiencies and multidimensional constraints undermining the development of halal tourism in Makran, a geopolitically sensitive coastal region in southeastern Iran. Anchored in Sustainable Tourism Development Theory and Stakeholder Theory, the research identifies legal, socioeconomic, environmental, institutional, and policy-related barriers that inhibit the realization of sustainable and inclusive halal tourism. A factor analysis of 66 indicators reveals four core impediments—legal and operational barriers (27.663% variance), cultural tensions and environmental degradation (23.332%), oversight and competitiveness (11.774%), and developmental planning and legal gaps (6.836%)—which collectively account for 69.606% of the observed variance. The findings suggest that the current tourism model in Makran, constrained by weak infrastructure, insufficient

financial mechanisms, fragmented governance, and limited stakeholder engagement, fails to attract tourists or generate durable revenue streams.

Empirical evidence points to key localized challenges: Iran's sanction-induced economic isolation restricts infrastructure investment, including the establishment of halal-certified hotels in Chabahar; water scarcity and cultural sensitivities in Konarak hinder tourism acceptance and development; and weak environmental governance in Jask jeopardizes coastal biodiversity. The region's centralized decision-making, lack of transparency, and underrepresentation of local economic actors further exacerbate these challenges. Nevertheless, Makran holds latent potential: its unspoiled Oman Sea coastline, Balochi cultural richness, and strategic geopolitical location parallel the natural and cultural assets of globally recognized halal destinations such as Malaysia, Turkey, and Indonesia.

Yet, unlike these nations, Makran faces sanctions, religious-ethnic tensions (notably Shia-Sunni dynamics), and fragile infrastructure, necessitating a tailored approach.

To address these challenges, the study proposes a multi-scalar, localized policy framework. This includes establishing a halal tourism task force within the Chabahar Free Trade Zone to accelerate certification and facilitate sanction-resilient financing via local banks for Sharia-compliant hotel development. In Konarak, a government-funded desalination pilot and the creation of a Balochi women's embroidery cooperative are proposed to advance water security and gender-inclusive economic development. In Jask, the enforcement of coastal conservation policies—such as construction bans near turtle nesting sites and the deployment of solar-powered tourist infrastructure—is recommended to align environmental sustainability with tourism growth. Additionally, a regional tourism board, integrating provincial authorities and Balochi leaders, should coordinate a five-year strategy prioritizing agritourism (e.g., date farming) and local cuisine to increase competitiveness.

This research contributes to the scholarly discourse on halal tourism in Islamic peripheries by demonstrating how geopolitical constraints, environmental stressors, and cultural complexities intersect to shape tourism viability. It also extends theoretical understanding by contextualizing Stakeholder and Sustainable Tourism Development Theories within an Iranian framework, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive, community-embedded, and environmentally conscious models. While the study is limited by its exploratory sample size ($n=100$) and a lack of qualitative triangulation on clean energy feasibility, it offers a robust foundation for future research employing mixed-methods approaches to validate and refine its recommendations.

In conclusion, halal tourism in Makran remains underdeveloped due to institutional inertia, legal and environmental constraints, and inadequate stakeholder integration. However, with strategic adaptation of international best practices and localized innovations, Makran can be repositioned as a sustainable and inclusive halal tourism destination. This research provides a comprehensive roadmap

for policymakers, emphasizing the critical role of decentralized planning, public-private partnerships, and culturally adaptive interventions in achieving long-term regional development goals.

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