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INCORPORATING ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES IN EVENT CONTENT: ENHANCING THE APPEAL OF ISLAMIC TOURISM

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Abstract

This research aims to increase the attractiveness of Islamic tourism by exploring the use of Islamic principles in event content following the increasing demand for Islamic tourism that encompasses a firm adherence to Islamic beliefs and values. Therefore, incorporating Islamic ideas into event planning and implementation is expected to further enhance the Muslim travel experience in Malaysia, which requires them to meet religious and cultural demands while traveling. This research aims to comprehensively evaluate and create an inclusive event design framework using core Islamic principles to enhance the broader appeal of Islamic tourism. To gain an understanding of how Islamic teachings can be incorporated into the content of an event, structured interviews were used involving industry professionals and event organizers sharing their views. The study also considered the benefits of promoting good manners and ethics that not only benefit organizers but also visitors to understand and foster a sense of community. By collectively combining a literature review and qualitative analysis, this study highlights definitive best practices for integrating Islamic principles into event content and discusses the subsequent implications for the development of sustainable Islamic tourism. The results suggest that by aligning event proposals with Islamic ethics and doctrine, events can attract additional Muslim visitors which can help with the growth of the Islamic tourism sphere.

Keywords*: Event Content; Event Management; Islamic Tourism; Muslim Travelers*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic tourism meets Muslim travellers' spiritual and cultural needs and serves as a platform for preserving cultural heritage and local traditions (Ahmad et al, 2024). This rapidly growing segment within the global tourism industry is driven by the increasing demand for travel experiences that align with the values and beliefs of Muslim travellers. Also known as Halal tourism, it emphasizes the need for products and services that comply with Islamic principles. (Battour & Ismail, 2019; Eid & El-Gohary, 2020). As destinations worldwide seek to attract Muslim tourists, there is a growing recognition of the importance of incorporating Islamic principles not only into the infrastructure and services provided but also into the content of the events as it is central to the travel experiences (Samori et al., 2020). Despite the potential of Islamic tourism, there remains a gap in understanding how event content can be structured and delivered in ways that resonate with Islamic values, especially in a multiracial country like Malaysia. Current research predominantly focuses on providing Halal food, prayer facilities, and other logistical considerations, with limited attention given to the event's content (Razzaq et al., 2021; Han et al., 2020). There is limited guidance on how to integrate Islamic teachings and values into the content of events in a way that is both engaging and meaningful for Muslim travellers (Shakiry et al., 2021; Ghani & Fathi, 2020). This gap represents a significant challenge for destinations aiming to fully engage Muslim tourists, as the content of events plays a crucial role in shaping travellers' overall experience and satisfaction.

The primary aim of this study is to analyse and develop a comprehensive event content framework incorporating Islamic principles to enhance the appeal of Islamic tourism. By doing so, the study seeks to address the following key objectives that include; (i) to explore the current practices of event organizers in incorporating Islamic values into their events and (ii) to develop a framework that guides the integration of these principles into various aspects of event content, including activities, themes and atmosphere. The study will contribute to developing a comprehensive event content framework grounded in Islamic principles that provides practical guidance for event organizers and destination managers. Finally, by encouraging the integration of Islamic values into the event content, this study is expected to support the development of sustainable Islamic tourism by fostering understanding and respect.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current practices in incorporating Islamic values into event content

Integrating Islamic values into event content has become a focal point for many countries seeking to position themselves as leaders in the Islamic tourism industry. Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar have been at the forefront of this movement, particularly in the context of large-scale international events. Saudi Arabia has significantly incorporated Islamic principles into its events, particularly as part of its Vision 2030 initiative. For example, the inclusion of Islamic arts, traditional performances, and religious lectures are central to their events (Alyami & Alzahrani, 2021). Furthermore, strict adherence to Islamic guidelines regarding gender segregation and modesty is maintained, reflecting the country's commitment to Islamic values (Almahmoud & Zubair, 2022). Qatar's FIFA World Cup 2022 hosting is another critical example of incorporating Islamic values into event content. The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy in Qatar emphasized that the World Cup would be a sports event and a platform to showcase Islamic culture and values to the world (Al-Emadi et al., 2022). This included activities and exhibitions highlighting Qatar's Islamic heritage, promoting a deeper understanding of Islamic culture among international visitors (Karim, 2022). In Malaysia, a leading destination for Islamic tourism, guidelines for entertainment and events are published by the government to ensure compliance

with Islamic values. The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) has issued the "Guidelines on Entertainment, Cultural Shows, Tourism, and Sports Activities According to Islamic Perspectives" (JAKIM, 2020), which outlines the types of entertainment and activities deemed acceptable under Islamic law. These guidelines emphasize the need for modesty, the prohibition of activities that promote immoral behaviour, and the inclusion of educational and spiritual elements that align with Islamic teachings. The Central Agency for the Application for Filming and Performance by Foreign Artists (PUSPAL) in Malaysia also provides guidelines for organizing events involving foreign performers to ensure they comply with local Islamic values (PUSPAL, 2021). These guidelines require event organizers to obtain approval for performances, ensuring that they do not contain elements that contradict Islamic principles, such as inappropriate dress codes, offensive lyrics, or un-Islamic behaviour.

Developing a framework for integrating Islamic principles into event content
According to Shakiry et al. (2021), many event organizers have started recognizing the importance of aligning event content with Islamic teachings, particularly in predominantly Muslim countries. However, the extent and effectiveness of these practices vary significantly across different regions and types of events. Having a clear idea of what is right and inappropriate content is one of the biggest obstacles to integrating Islamic beliefs into an event. All event elements such as activities and themes chosen must be in line with Islamic principles, which govern the actions and decisions of Muslims. Specific components including the performance, song lyrics, and music selections are just as significant as the overarching themes and activities.

Significance of lyrics
One important factor that needs to be complying with Islamic teachings is the lyrics of songs that are played on occasion. Islamic teaching sets a strong emphasis on staying away from anything that can encourage immorality and disrespect or go against Islamic principles. According to Shakiry et al. (2021), lyrics that glorify inappropriate behaviour, use vulgar language, or promote themes contrary to Islamic ethics are considered unacceptable in Islamic tourism events. Instead, the focus is on meaningful and respectful lyrics that reflect positive values such as humility, gratitude, and social responsibility. In Saudi Arabia, for example, the entertainment guidelines emphasize the need for lyrics to align with Islamic morality, with strict regulations against songs that contain explicit or suggestive content (Alyami & Alzahrani, 2021).

Decent performance
Decency in performances is another critical factor in ensuring that events align with Islamic principles. This includes not only the content of the performance, but also the performers' attitude, attire, and general appearance. Islamic guidelines typically dictate that performers behave respectfully, dress modestly, and avoid any actions that could be considered provocative or inappropriate (Almahmoud & Zubair, 2022). For instance, during the FIFA World Cup 2022, performances were closely monitored in Qatar to ensure they adhered to Islamic norms. Performers were required to dress modestly, with costumes designed to avoid revealing attire, and their performances were inspected for any gestures or actions that might be deemed inappropriate (Karim, 2022).

Proper music
Another aspect of Islamic values that is taken into account is the music used in an event. Islamic teachings dispute the permissibility of music, however, there is a consensus on avoiding extremely aggressive music which promotes illicit conduct behaviour or distracts from spiritual and moral thought (Nasr & Saleh, 2021). Music that is peaceful, instrumental, or contains positive and uplifting messages is generally preferred in Islamic values. In Turkey,

traditional Islamic music and nasheed (Islamic vocal music) are commonly featured during the International Halal Expo. These forms of music are chosen because they adhere to Islamic principles and enhance the cultural and spiritual atmosphere of the event (Erdem & Bayraktaroglu, 2020).

In sum, developing a comprehensive framework for integrating Islamic principles into event content requires a thorough understanding of both Islamic teachings and Muslim tourist preferences. The framework should guide event organizers in designing events that align with Islamic values, creating a spiritually enriching and culturally appropriate atmosphere. By carefully curating the lyrics, performances, and music, event organizers in Islamic countries ensure that their events comply with religious guidelines and resonate deeply with Muslim audiences, enhancing the overall appeal of the destination as a hub for Islamic tourism.

METHODOLOGY

The study applies qualitative research methods to gather extensive insights as recommended by Wade and Spearing (2023). Structured interviews took place with ten participants who were purposely selected to make sure the research design matched the study goals. The study utilized purposive sampling according to Etikan (2016) to select experts who actively participate in Islamic tourism and event management. Government officials, religious scholars and event organisers who held direct experience and knowledge in the field comprised the study participants. The research approach followed Hennink et al. (2017), who established code saturation as achievable via at least nine interviews. The selected participants demonstrated active participation in Islamic events alongside expertise in Malaysia's tourism sector and possessed a strong grasp of Islamic event management principles to ensure the representation of diverse perspectives. The selected participants possessed the necessary experience, which allowed them to deliver important insights through their participation. The researchers employed thematic analysis following Nowell et al. (2017) method to process the collected data. The analysis process started with familiarisation through repeated readings of the transcripts. Manual coding was conducted to determine core concepts which later grouped the codes into major themes in line with the research objectives. The themes underwent analysis and modification to ensure an accurate representation of the participants' perspectives. The research findings were organized according to the established themes with relevant interview excerpts included to showcase key insights.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings are derived from structured interviews with JAKIM, Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC), Perlis Islamic Religious Council (MAIPS), Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC), Tourism Malaysia, Astro Media, and event organizers. The findings were further supported by the Entertainment Guideline published by JAKIM and distinctive state Islamic councils and case studies from Islamic tourism and events. The discussion is organized around three core components of the event content framework: decent performance, proper music, and significant lyrics. Each component is analysed including its role in ensuring that events align with Islamic values while also appealing to a global Muslim audience.

Decent performance

During the interview, participants were asked about their views on the importance of decent performance in event content and do they agree that every show should not involve anything that stimulates desire or leads to negativity. All participants agreed on the importance of ensuring performances comply with Islamic principles. Three participants highlighted that to prevent inappropriate things from happening, the authorities and event organizers must first develop a rigorous screening process before they enter the country or are invited to perform in any events. Another participant emphasized Malaysia's cultural diversity, stressing that performance should also be sensitive to the various ethnic groups of Malaysia. The interview led to a highlight of one of the most critical components of the event content framework for Islamic tourism is ensuring that all performances are deemed "decent" according to Islamic values. This includes considerations of modesty in attire, appropriateness of behaviour, and the overall presentation of performances. Table 1 shows the decent performance based on the evaluation of event content.

Table 1: Evaluation of Event Content – Decent Performance

Question	Positive			Negative		
	Code	Theme	Unit	Code	Theme	Unit
Q1-A	+Y	Yes	10	-N	No	0
					Total	10 (100%)

Source: Primary Data: Structured Interview (2023)

Table 1 shows that 100% of participants agree that this component is important in the planning and execution of events to give understanding to foreign tourists especially since the culture in Malaysia emphasizes religious principles and decency in every matter. This can give a good counterpart to the country in maintaining the status of the world's best Islamic tourism destination. Three participants from the religious authorities recommend preventing inappropriate individuals from entering the country beforehand since they may be harmful. Organizers must conduct thorough background checks on performers to identify any possible red flags related to criminal activities, extremist ideologies, or behaviors that may pose a risk to public safety. While the rest of the participants added that Islam allows enjoyment and entertainment, as long as it adheres to Islamic religious law. This includes modesty in attire avoiding overly dramatic or suggestive content and focusing instead on cultural or religious themes that uplift and educate the audience. The emphasis on decency in performances reflects the need to align event content with Muslim audiences' religious and cultural expectations. This requirement ensures compliance with Islamic laws and enhances the event's appeal by creating a comfortable and respectful environment for all attendees. By maintaining these standards, event organizers can avoid alienating conservative participants and can foster a sense of communal respect and shared values.

Proper music
On proper music, the participants were asked if they agreed that good music could touch the human heart and soul, offering inspiration and a sense of calm, hence should be applied in the event. All participants agreed with this notion and one participant emphasized the necessity of ensuring that such music adheres to Islamic teachings, urging organizers to double-check the guidelines provided by JAKIM. This participant emphasized that following the guidelines is critical to maintaining the ethical integrity of the music within an Islamic context. From the interview, the selection and use of music in Islamic tourism events seems to be another crucial component of the content framework. The interview highlights the importance of choosing music that is appropriate according to Islamic principles and avoiding forms that might contradict the spiritual and moral values of the audience. This

aligns with the broader Islamic prohibition on music that leads to morally questionable actions (Nasr & Saleh, 2021). Music selections also consider the cultural preferences and sensitivities of the audience. For instance, during the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, the music played in public spaces was carefully chosen to respect the local Islamic culture while also catering to international visitors (Karim, 2022). The following Table 2 demonstrates the evaluation of event content and design for the proper music.

Table 2: Evaluation of Event Content and Design – Proper Music

Question	Positive			Negative		
	Code	Theme	Unit	Code	Theme	Unit
Q1-A	+Y	Yes	10	-N	No	0
					Total	10 (100%)

Source: Primary Data: Structured Interview (2023)

In Islam, any type of music is permitted as long as it does not violate Islamic Sharia (JAKIM, 2023). The careful selection of music is essential in creating an event atmosphere that is both enjoyable and compliant with Islamic values. By choosing music that is reflective of Islamic teachings, event organizers can ensure that all participants feel comfortable and spiritually uplifted. This approach not only enhances the religious integrity of the event but also strengthens the cultural identity of the host country, making the event more appealing to Muslim tourists.

Significant lyrics

The interview on significant lyrics focused on how participants perceive the role of song lyrics in influencing people's lives and their uses in events. Participants agreed that lyrics with meaningful content can tremendously impact a person's emotions and behaviours. Four participants highlighted that lyrics should positively influence the audience. One participant elaborated that uplifting the audience through meaningful lyrics reflects a righteous intention, in line with Islamic principles of honesty in actions. The rest of the participants agreed with the importance of significant lyrics in an event but did not provide additional detail. The interview resulted in the importance of carefully selecting lyrics to ensure it is corresponding with Islamic principles. The lyrics should not contain any offensive word that encourages immorality, violence, or anything that contradicts Islamic teaching. It is recommended that the lyrics encourage virtues such as love for Allah, compassion, unity, and peace. They should instil positive values in attendance and encourage them to be attentive to their religion and behaviour. Table 3 below validates the evaluation of event content and design for the significant lyrics.

Table 3: Evaluation of Event Content and Design – Significant Lyrics

Question	Positive			Negative		
	Code	Theme	Unit	Code	Theme	Unit
Q1-A	+Y	Yes	10	-N	No	0
					Total	10 (100%)

Source: Primary Data: Structured Interview (2023)

The study found that lyrics at events often aim to promote positive messages that align with Islamic ethics, such as peace, compassion, and justice. This is evident in events like the Jeddah Season in Saudi Arabia,

where songs with inspirational and religiously grounded lyrics are preferred (Almahmoud & Zubair, 2022). In Malaysia, songs that feature lyrics promoting family values, community support, and spiritual reflection are commonly chosen (Shakiry et al., 2021). Thus, event organizers must ensure that lyrics do not promote themes contrary to Islamic teachings, such as materialism, sensuality, or rebellion. This is particularly important in countries like Saudi Arabia, where any lyrical content that could be seen as contradicting Islamic values is strictly prohibited (Alyami & Alzahrani, 2021). In sum, significant lyrics play a crucial role in reinforcing the spiritual and moral themes of an event. By carefully selecting songs with lyrics that reflect Islamic values, event organizers can enhance the religious atmosphere and provide participants with content that is both entertaining and spiritually enriching. This focus on meaningful lyrics helps to distinguish events that promote Islamic tourism from other global events, thereby enhancing their appeal to Muslim audiences.

Figure 1 represents a framework developed from interviews focusing on integrating Islamic principles into event content. Each component plays a crucial role in creating a balanced and effective framework for developing event content that aligns with Islamic principles, ensuring both adherence to core values and the ability to appeal to a wider audience.
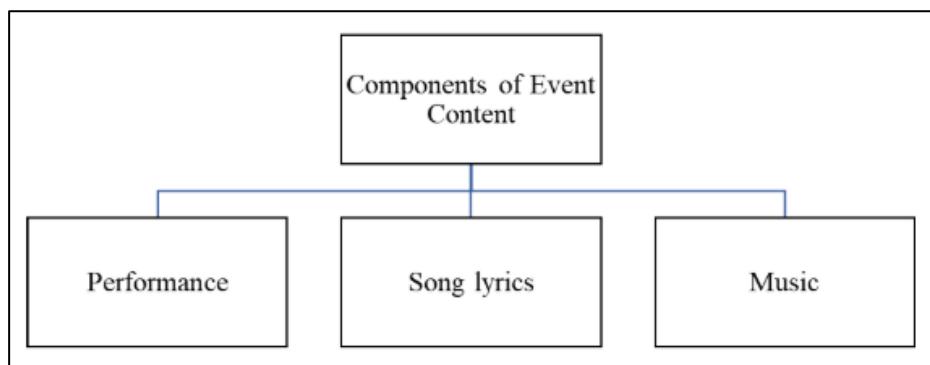

Figure 1: Components of Event Content

Developing a comprehensive event content framework that integrates Islamic principles is crucial for enhancing the appeal of Islamic tourism. The findings from the experts centred around the core components of decent performance, proper music, and significant lyrics, align closely with the existing literature on Islamic event management and tourism. The experts highlighted that ensuring decency in performance is essential for aligning event content with Islamic values. This idea includes maintaining modest attire, appropriate behaviour, and respectful overall presentation during performances. The emphasis on modesty in attire and behaviour aligns with the guidelines set by the Islamic authorities of Malaysia, where dress codes and performance regulations are enforced to ensure compliance with Islamic morals (Alyami & Alzahrani, 2021; JAKIM, 2020). Moreover, the selection of proper music—aligned with Islamic principles—is critical for creating an appropriate atmosphere at Islamic tourism events. The study's findings on music align with the guidelines issued by Islamic authorities like JAKIM, which promote the use of music that reflects Islamic teachings (JAKIM, 2020). Similarly, Nasr & Saleh (2021) noted the importance of avoiding music that could lead to morally questionable behaviour, a principle that is consistently applied in Islamic tourism events. Event organizers, particularly in countries like Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, follow these guidelines to the letter. In many instances, organizers work closely with religious authorities to ensure that all aspects of the event,

including music, meet the required standards. Last but not least, significant lyrics, were found to be a key component in the event content framework. The findings reflect the respondents' recognition of the importance of significant lyrics, which aligns with existing literature emphasizing the role of lyrics in maintaining the moral and spiritual integrity of Islamic events. Shakiry et al. (2021) noted that lyrics in Islamic tourism events should avoid themes such as materialism and sensuality, instead promoting social values, gratitude, and worship. This approach is consistent with the views expressed by the participants, who understand that adhering to Islamic laws is not just a religious obligation but also a cultural necessity in Malaysia. The reluctance of some participants to delve deeper into the topic, despite their agreement, likely stems from a pragmatic understanding of the industry's landscape.

As industry players, they are aware that the enforcement of Islamic guidelines on lyrics is a sensitive issue, tightly regulated by authorities like JAKIM. This regulatory environment may lead to a cautious approach when discussing the nuances of lyrical content, as these professionals must balance creative expression with legal and cultural constraints (JAKIM, 2020). The insistence on positive and uplifting lyrics is not just about religious compliance; it also reflects Malaysia's broader Eastern cultural values, where content that promotes harmony, respect, and community is highly valued. The inclusion of significant lyrics helps to reinforce these cultural values, making the events more relatable and impactful for local audiences. Additionally, Almahmoud & Zubair (2022) emphasized the importance of gender segregation and cultural integration in performance standards within Saudi Arabia, highlighting that maintaining these standards helps to foster a respectful environment for both performers and attendees. However, this has not been fully enforced in Malaysia except for Islamic-related events such as Al-Quran recitation. Entertainment events, for instance, still do not apply gender segregation despite the guidelines provided. In Malaysia, performers especially women are expected to adhere to dress codes such as avoiding revealing clothing. They are also required to exhibit cultural and religious sensitivity in their acts such as avoiding any form of mockery or disrespect. It happens when one event gets cancelled due to failure to comply with the conditions set where the performer has done inappropriate things on stage. Because of that, this framework is very important to be brought up to give understanding to every stakeholder that this is the element that needs to be applied in every event considering Malaysia is a Muslim-majority country and this can further enhance to position of Malaysia as the top Muslim destination. As Erdem & Bayraktaroglu (2020) discussed, the integration of culturally appropriate and meaningful content is vital in maintaining the authenticity and appeal of Islamic tourism destinations.

CONCLUSION

The interview findings emphasize that adherence to Islamic principles is a religious obligation and a strategic approach to strengthening Malaysia's position as a top Muslim destination. By embedding these principles into event content, Malaysia can offer a unique and authentic tourism experience that appeals to both local and international Muslim travellers. As a recommendation, this framework should be widely disseminated and adopted by event organizers, ensuring consistency in presenting Islamic values across all tourism-related events. Additionally, training programs should be developed for event organizers, focusing on implementing the event content framework. These programs should cover the nuances of Islamic guidelines, cultural sensitivities, and the creative integration of Islamic principles into event content. Event organizers should also collaborate closely with Islamic authorities such as JAKIM to ensure that all aspects of event content comply

with Islamic laws. This collaboration can help prevent any missteps that could damage Malaysia's reputation as a Muslim-friendly destination.

This study has a limitation where it is primarily focused on the perspectives of industry players and stakeholders within Malaysia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other Islamic tourism contexts. Therefore, future research could adapt the framework developed into non- Muslim countries presenting an interesting opportunity to explore how Islamic principles can be integrated into event content in diverse cultural and religious contexts.

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