



Integrating Halal Certification for Food and Beverage, Emotional Incidents, and Service Innovation to Foster Destination Loyalty in Malaysia's Islamic Tourism Destination

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ABSTRACT

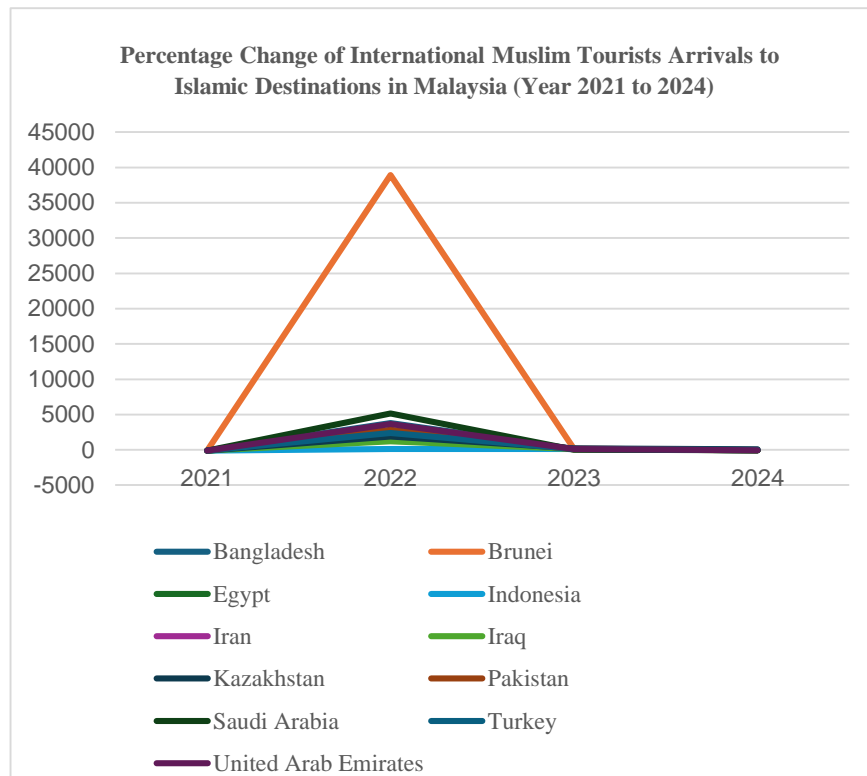
The present study intends to integrate food and beverage halal certification, emotional incidents, service innovation, and tourist satisfaction to foster international Muslim tourist loyalty toward Malaysia's Islamic tourism destinations. The study focuses on international Muslim visitors to Malaysia and self-administered questionnaires will be used to gather the data at Kuala Lumpur International Airport's departure hall. Purposive sampling is the appropriate choice for selecting the respondents. The relationship between the causes and effects of the variables in this study will be tested using PLS-SEM. The study is expected to reveal the positive effects of food and beverage halal certification, emotional incidents, and service innovation on the level of tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, new knowledge will be introduced in the Islamic marketing tourism field by demonstrating tourist satisfaction as a mediator between these variables. Several practitioners such as tourism management, JAKIM, and tour operators will grasp the benefits from the loyal international Muslim tourists visiting Malaysia.

Keywords: Destination Loyalty, Emotional Incidents, Halal Certification for Food and Beverage, Service Innovation, Tourist Satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the industries that generate a massive income for the country, especially among developing countries like Malaysia. This country is acknowledged as a popular tourist spot, particularly in the Asia Pacific, especially among international tourists (Nasir, Rahim & Hassan, 2021). Malaysia's tourism revenue climbed from RM 28228.30 million in 2022 to RM 71308.50 million in 2023. The trend of income generation from tourism in Malaysia from 1998 to 2023 showed that it peaked in 2019 at RM 86143.50 million and fell to the lowest record of RM 238.70 million in 2021 (Tourism Malaysia, 2024a). One of the niche markets of tourism that is growing popular in Malaysia is Islamic tourism. Malaysia holds a prominent position in the Global Muslim Travel Index 2023 (GMTI) due to its strong appeal to Muslim travelers (Mastercard-Crescent Rating, 2023). Malaysia possesses all the essential components of a prime example of an Islamic tourism destination in the region which has been proven by the recent surveys of the United States Dinar Standard and Singapore's Crescent Rating in which for three consecutive years, Malaysia has been designated as the premier global Islamic destination for Muslim travelers (Tourism Malaysia, 2024b). This country is an ideal destination for Muslim travelers, offering plentiful halal food, prayer facilities, and Islamic attractions. Its rich Islamic history and heritage provide unique and captivating experiences. From halal cuisine to Islamic banking, Malaysia delivers an extensive array of halal products and services. Supported by a welcoming environment and government policies, the country stands as a global leader in the halal sector (Tourism Malaysia, 2024b). Furthermore, the establishment of Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) in 2009 became a key organization in supporting the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism, which plays a vital role through their strategic tourism research by providing market insights and offering training and capacity-building services in Islamic (halal) tourism (Hasan, Yusop, Mohd Rani, & Rahmawati, 2023). Thus, in the first nine months of 2023, Malaysia received 3.2 million Muslim tourists, generating RM 9.5 billion (Malaysia Reserve, 2024).

Despite Malaysia receiving various international recognitions in the context of Islamic tourism, several issues could harm its reputation as a leading Islamic destination. These include the availability of alcoholic beverages in hotels, lack of gambling-free zones, absence of gender-segregated salons, recreational facilities, and swimming pools, as well as the absence of separate rooms or floors for unmarried couples, non-shariah compliant entertainment, competition from other Islamic countries with stronger Islamic cultural roots, and negative word-of-mouth regarding Malaysia's relaxed implementation of Islamic laws (Hasan, Yusop, Mohd Rani, & Rahmawati, 2023). This situation could pose potential threats and risks for Malaysia to become a hub for Islamic tourism destinations around the globe. This can be seen from the unstable pattern and declining movement of Muslim travelers from several countries in Malaysia (see Figure 1).



Source: Tourism Malaysia (2024c)

Figure 1. Percentage Change of International Muslim Tourists to Islamic Tourism Destination in Malaysia from Year 2021 to 2024.

As mentioned by Zulvianti, Aimon, & Abro (2023), the reduced number of Muslim internationals to Malaysia is because they are not loyal to Islamic tourist destinations in this country, either they are not spreading positive word of mouth to the others or not returning to the destination again. Consequently, this problem must be resolved immediately by improving international Muslim tourist loyalty to Islamic tourism destinations in Malaysia. Enhancing the loyalty of visitors from these nations to Malaysia is essential because devoted travelers frequently return and recommend the place to their friends and family networks (Azis, Amin, Chan, & Aprilia, 2020); thereby, from year to year, the number of arrivals will rise. Loyalty is a key idea in the context of Islamic tourism marketing (Dean & Suhartanto, 2019; Lv et al., 2020). The concept of loyalty is essential, particularly in the travel and hospitality sector, as the success of a tourist destination depends on visitors returning and recommending it to others (Kahraman & Cifci, 2023). It was found that satisfaction is an important construct that facilitates the development of loyalty among tourists visiting the destinations (Hossain et al., 2024). Moreover, with saturated marketplaces and fierce rivalry among marketers of halal travel destinations, a thorough understanding of the components influencing visitor satisfaction and loyalty is essential. (Peristiw, 2020). Based on the literature search, three variables, namely, Halal certificate for food and beverage (Tabelessy, 2023; Salento, 2023), emotional incidents (Al-Msallam, 2020, Biswas et al., 2020a), and service innovation (Cheng et al., 2022, Liat et al., 2020) were found to be the predictors to satisfaction and loyalty among tourists. However, a limited number of studies have simultaneously examined the interrelationships between Halal certificate for food and beverage, emotional incidents, service innovation, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty in one research model in the context of Malaysia's Islamic tourism destinations (see Table 1). Therefore, to fill in the research gaps in the existing literature the present study will test simultaneously the relationships between Halal certificate for food and beverage, emotional incidents, service innovation, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty in one research model in the context of Malaysia's Islamic tourism destinations. Most importantly, the lack number of past studies focusing particularly on halal food and beverage certification (Tabelessy, 2023) and emotional incidents (Ulfiy et al., 2021), are some of the underlying reasons for Malaysia's sluggish Islamic tourist growth (Hassan, Razalli, & Musa, 2018). Hence, the key objective of the study is to provide an integrated conceptual framework of halal certificates for food and beverage, emotional incidents, service innovation, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty in the context of Islamic tourism marketing in Malaysia to bridge the gap in the literature.

Table 1: Summary of Studies on Destination Loyalty (DL), Halal Certificate on Food and Beverage (HCFB), Emotional Incidents (EI), Service Innovation (SI) and Tourist Satisfaction (TS).

No.	Researchers	Hypotheses Proposed									
		H1a	H1b	H2a	H2b	H3a	H3b	H4	H5	H6	H7
		HCFB → DL	HCFB → TS	EI → DL	EI → TS	SI → DL	SI → TS	TS → DL	EI → TS → DL	HCFB → TS → DL	SI → TS → DL
1	Kayumov et al. (2024)	x	x	x	x	x	x	/	x	x	x
2	Suban (2024)	x	x	x	/	x	x	/	x	x	x
3	Tagmanov (2024)	x	x	x	x	x	x	/	x	x	x
4	Dabral et al. (2024)	x	x	x	x	x	x	/	x	x	x
5	Permana, & Adam (2024)	x	x	x	x	x	x	/	x	x	x
6	Cheng, et al. (2021)	x	x	x	x	/	/	/	x	x	/
7	Mohamad, Muhamad Nasir, Ab Ghani, and Afthanorhan, (2019)	x	x	x	x	x	x	/	x	x	/
8	Nasir, Mohamad, Ghani, & Afthanorhan, (2020)	x	x	x	x	x	x	/	x	x	x
9	Ulfy et al. (2021)	/	/	/	/	x	x	x	x	x	x
10	Tabelessy (2023)	x	/	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
11	Current Study	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

Note: (/) = test the relationship, (X) = do not test the relationship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Destination Loyalty

The loyalty concept in tourism is related to the behavior of tourists such as enjoying certain products or services and intending to repurchase or revisit them repeatedly (Azis, Amin, Chan, & Aprilia, 2020). Similarly, returning tourists and favorable word-of-mouth recommendations to their friends and family demonstrate tourists' loyalty to a destination (Nasir et al., 2022). According to the current study, loyalty in the context of Islamic tourism is referred to as the desire of Muslim travelers to return and recommend Islamic travel destinations to others.

Destination loyalty is measured by utilizing the intention of returning and recommending the destination to other tourists (Azis, Amin, Chan, & Aprilia, 2020). According to Shahijan et al. (2018), revisit intention is associated with travelers' desire to return to a specific destination. Meanwhile, tourist intentions to recommend significantly affect tourist's choices and decision-making (Chen et al., 2020). Therefore, a higher number of Muslim tourists who repeat their visit to the destination and recommend it to their families and friends will increase the arrivals of international Muslim travelers to certain destinations; thereby, generating enormous income for the destination. It may also provide more direct and indirect jobs related to tourism to the local community. Consequently, when the local community has stable jobs and income, it will stimulate the growth of the economy.

2. Halal Certificate and Tourist Perception

The Arabic word "halal" refers to what is acceptable, lawful, and compliant with Islamic or Sharia principles (Aniqoh, & Hanastiana, 2020). In other words, the term "halal," which refers to a product, service, institution, or method that is acceptable in Islam, is typically used by both Muslims and non-Muslims. When it comes to food and drink, the term "halal" can be understood as food or beverages that the Muslim community is allowed to consume by Islamic principles (Rohman, 2012). In detail, Halal food must not include ingredients that are forbidden or 'haram' in Islam such as alcohol and pork. According to Islamic teaching, to

ensure the meat is halal to be consumed, it must come from animals that are slaughtered in specific ways, known as *zabiha*, which involves invoking the name of Allah during the slaughtering process. Moreover, certain criteria need to be fulfilled by the animals before they can be slaughtered which include; (1) The animal must be permitted for consumption under Islamic law (pigs and carnivorous animals are prohibited; cows, goats, chickens, and sheep are acceptable); (2) The animal must be alive and healthy at the time of slaughter; (3) an individual is aware of the proper Islamic protocol and who is either a Muslim or a follower of the People of the Book (Ahlul Kitab); (4) the name of Allah (Bismillah or Bismillah Allahu Akbar) must be recited before the animal is killed; and (5) the animal's trachea, esophagus, and major blood vessels must be severed during the killing process by an immediate cut to the throat with a sharp knife. Therefore, in the context of Islamic tourism, any Muslim country such as Malaysia has an upper hand compared to the other non-Muslim countries since all the procedures and ingredients for Halal food and beverage are known by food handlers, restaurants, cafes, hoteliers, etc. Moreover, Muslims are not like non-Muslims as they have to search for and consume Halal food and beverages even during their traveling. Supported by the study (Yakub & Zein, 2022), claimed that international Muslim tourists who come to this country search for halal food and beverage in restaurants, shops, and imported products. Thus, Islamic tourist destination will become their main preference when they want to travel since Halal foods and drinks are easily available.

To gain trust among Muslim travelers regarding the halal status of food and beverages, the government has come up with the halal certification. Halal certification enables customers to make an informed decision about their purchase, which could boost consumer confidence (Wan Hassan & Hall, 2003). Up to 90% of the meat and poultry sold as halal in the United Kingdom are illegally sold and not slaughtered by Shariah law, according to the Muslim Council of Britain (Ahmed, 2008). Additionally, restaurants may gain from halal certification as a branding and marketing strategy (Al-Nahdi et al., 2009; Mohd Yusoff, 2004). That is the reason halal food and beverage certification is crucial to gaining consumer's trust, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Ulfy et al. (2021) found that a halal certificate for food and beverage is a crucial element that might attract visitors. Similarly, a current study by Tabelessy (2023) claimed that there is a noteworthy correlation between halal certificates for food and beverage and satisfaction. In contrast, halal certificates for food and beverages are also found as a significant factor in loyalty (Salento, 2023; Tabelessy, 2023). Thus, the current study puts up two hypotheses in light of the previous findings:

H1a: The positive effect of halal certificates for food and beverages on destination loyalty.

H1b: The positive effect of halal certificates for food and beverages on tourist satisfaction.

Emotional Incidents

Psychologists describe emotion as a human reaction toward environmental changes, leading them to pressing issues and driving them to take action (Scherer & Moors, 2019). Emotion can exert influence to react immediately and develop subsequent behavior (Talebzadeh, Yorganci, Nosrati, & Kilic, 2024). Various studies in the context of travel and tourism have investigated an individual's emotion that affects his tourist destination selections (Nokman et al., 2023). For instance, research on travel perceptions indicates that Muslim tourists can be categorized based on their characteristics and the extent to which their Islamic faith influences their choice of travel destinations (Ulfy et al., 2021). Based on the present study by Al-Msallam (2020), emotional incident is measured based on positive and negative emotions. Positive emotion consists of joy and positive surprise while negative emotions comprise anger, sadness, and fear.

Most importantly, it was found by previous studies that the emotional incident of tourists is an important factor in the development of tourist satisfaction (Biswas et al., 2020a; Ulfy et al., 2021) and destination loyalty (Al-Msallam, 2020; Hamid & Mohamad, 2020). Based on these findings, the present study suggests another two hypotheses as follows:

H2a: The positive effect of emotional incidents on destination loyalty.

H2b: The positive effect of emotional incidents on tourist satisfaction.

Service Innovation

Early in the 1990s, the idea of service innovation was formulated and debated (Fegerberg, 2005). Recently, in the tourism sector, the discussion of the concept of service innovation has attracted attention from both researchers and policymakers (Can, Kiliçalp, & Akyürek, 2024). The concept of service innovation is a combination of the competencies and functions to create core values for the customers which is focusing on the market opportunities and developing major competitive advantages (Cheng, 2022). In the context of the tourism and hospitality industry, it has continually innovated due to its convenience and rapidity with which close competitors may execute successful ideas (Giotis & Papadionysiou, 2022). Thus, service innovation can be described as anything "new" that has never been seen before or it can be something novel for certain companies, industries, and destinations (Giotis & Papadionysiou, 2022).

Service innovation refers to a system that utilizes the abilities and input of different stakeholders to develop core values, enabling constructive changes, seizing new market possibilities, and building a solid competitive advantage (Selen & Agarwal, 2005). Therefore, in a highly competitive market especially in the tourism and hospitality industry, innovative service is a must to cater to customer's needs and wants and become a market leader in the industry. Previous studies have shown that service innovation improves a company's financial performance by increasing productivity and efficiency (Chen et al., 2009; Aas & Pedersen, 2011). According to Liat et al. (2020), service innovation can be manifested through product innovation, process innovation, organizational innovation, and marketing innovation. Product innovation refers to the release of brand-new or enhanced versions of already-existing products onto the market (Liat et al., 2020). Meanwhile, process innovation is related to the introduction

of new or modified items and services in terms of its support activities or distribution process (Tether, 2005). Organizational innovation refers to the construction of new organizational structures as well as improved business and management practices that come from the development and application of innovative ideas or behaviors within an organization (Bharadwaj, & Menon, 2000). Lastly, Mortensen and Bloch (2005) described marketing innovation as the unveiling of a new marketing strategy that includes major changes to product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion, and even pricing. Combining these elements increases the Islamic tourist destination's flexibility, customer satisfaction, and competitive edge.

The Islamic tourism industry in Malaysia should innovate its services from time to time to compete with other Islamic tourist destinations such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Indonesia, Qatar, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Oman, etc. Most importantly, service innovation is linked with tourist satisfaction (Chen, Fan & Miao, 2018; Cheng et al., 2022) and destination loyalty (Liat et al., 2020). This is because service innovation improves visitor satisfaction by catering to religious and cultural needs, particularly in the context of Islamic tourist destinations. Consequently, it could lead to enhancing tourist loyalty to the destination. Thus, the present study intends to propose two more hypotheses as follows:

H3a: The positive effect of service innovation on destination loyalty.

H3b: The positive effect of service innovation on tourist satisfaction.

Tourist Satisfaction

The idea of tourist satisfaction has been extensively researched, particularly in the travel and hospitality sector, which includes Islamic travel. Tourists will form an expectation of products and amenities before they travel to a specific destination. Whether they are satisfied or not with the tourism offerings depends on whether their expectations are met or otherwise (Nasir et al., 2024). Specifically, the state of a person's psychological preferences and enjoyment of tourism products is referred to as tourist satisfaction (Biswas et al., 2020b). Retaining a high level of tourist satisfaction is crucial since it determines an individual repurchase intention and word-of-mouth to others (Hossain et al., 2024).

A study by Al-Msallam (2020) investigated the link between emotional incidents and destination loyalty through the mediation role of tourist satisfaction. In addition, several studies have investigated the direct effect of halal certificate for food and beverage and service innovation on tourist satisfaction (Tabelessy, 2023) and destination loyalty (Salento, 2023; Cheng et al., 2022; Liat et al., 2020). Meanwhile, in the context of tourism, including Islamic tourism, past research works found that tourist satisfaction is an important predictor of the development of destination loyalty (Azis & Amin, 2020; Liat et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2022). Only a small number of research, nevertheless, have examined how tourist satisfaction influences the relationships between halal certification for food and drink, service innovation, and destination loyalty. Therefore, to fill in the research gaps, the current study puts forth the following hypotheses:

H4: The positive effect of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty.

H5: The mediating effect of tourist satisfaction on the relationship between emotional incidents and destination loyalty.

H6: The mediating effect of tourist satisfaction on the relationship between halal certificate for food and beverage and destination loyalty.

H7: The mediating effect of tourist satisfaction on the relationship between service innovation and destination loyalty.

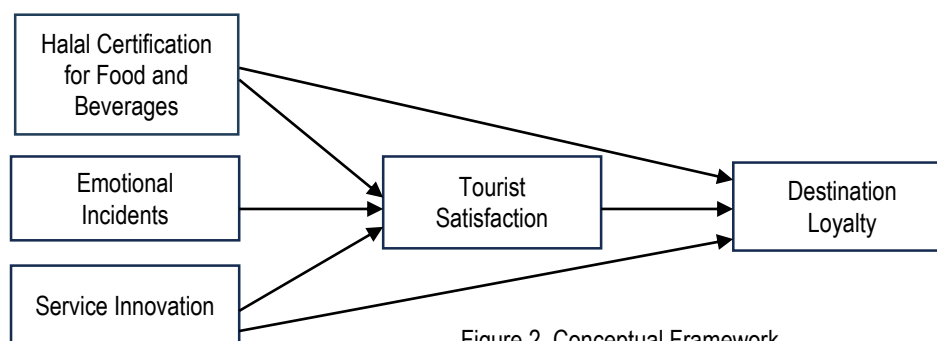


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study will utilize a quantitative research design (Ab Ghani et al., 2021; Muhamad Nasir & Wongchestha, 2022) since it intends to determine the causes and effects of halal certificate for food and beverage, service innovation, emotional incidents, and tourist satisfaction towards destination loyalty among international Muslim travelers to Islamic tourism destinations in Malaysia. Moreover, the present study is a cross-sectional study whereby the data are collected at once. The unit analysis of the study is an individual tourist. The study will use a questionnaire survey to collect the data. The questionnaire survey will be structured using a 7-point Likert scale. The questionnaire is designed using six parts (see Table 2). Part one is related to the demographic profile of the respondents. Part two is related to the Halal certificate for food and beverage which will be adapted from the study of Preko et al. (2020). Meanwhile, parts three and four are related to emotional incidents and service innovation which will be adapted from Al-Msallam (2020) and Liat et al. (2020), respectively. Moreover, part five consists of a questionnaire related to tourist satisfaction

adapted from previous studies (Azis et al., 2020; Al-Msallam, 2020; Biswas et al., 2020) while part six is related to destination loyalty (Azis et al., 2020; Al-Msallam, 2020; Cheng et al., 2022).

Table 2: Sample survey questions

Part 1: Halal Certificate for Food and Beverage
1. I think that Halal certification in restaurants signifies food quality
2. I think that Halal certification in restaurants signifies healthy food
3. I think that Halal certification in restaurants signifies trust
4. I think that Halal certification in restaurants signifies being hygienic
5. I think that Halal certification in restaurants signifies all food sources are Halal-certified
6. I think that Halal certification in restaurants signifies conformance to Halal standard
7. I think that Halal certification in restaurants increases demand from Muslim customers
8. I think that Halal certification in restaurants increases confidence levels among Muslim customers
Part 2: Emotional Incidents
1. I feel pleasure during my travel to Malaysia
2. I feel cheerful during my travel to Malaysia
3. I feel delighted during my travel to Malaysia
4. I feel fascinated during my travel to Malaysia
5. I feel inspired during my travel to Malaysia
6. I feel surprised during my travel to Malaysia
7. I feel frustrated during my travel to Malaysia
8. I feel irritated during my travel to Malaysia
9. I feel depressed during my travel to Malaysia
10. I feel miserable during my travel to Malaysia
11. I feel scared during my travel to Malaysia
12. I feel panicked during my travel to Malaysia
Part 3: Service Innovation
1. Malaysia offers innovative Islamic tourism products (For example: Apps showing the nearest mosques, prayer time, etc)
2. Malaysia offers new travel experience while using innovative Islamic products
3. Malaysia offers innovative Islamic tourism products at a reasonable price
4. Staff in the Islamic tourism industry are well-trained
5. Islamic travel information in Malaysia is easily accessible
6. Tourism arrangements in Malaysia are user-friendly (For example: availability of prayer spaces, halal food, guided tours of historic mosques, etc)
7. Islamic tourism marketing strategies in Malaysia are well-planned
8. Islamic tourism marketing strategy activities in Malaysia are attractive
Part 4: Tourist Satisfaction
1. My overall experience with Malaysia was higher than my expectations
2. Visiting Malaysia was a wonderful experience
3. I am satisfied with this travel experience
4. I am sure it was the right to be a tourist in Malaysia
Part 5: Destination Loyalty
1. I would spread positive words of mouth about Malaysia's Islamic Tourism destination to other people
2. I would recommend others to visit Malaysia Islamic Tourism destination
3. I will revisit Malaysia Islamic Tourism destination in the future
4. I will consider Malaysia Islamic Tourism destination as my choice to visit in the future

The questionnaire instrument will be verified during the pre-testing stage whereby three experts will be involved: (1) an academican who has a background in Islamic tourism marketing; (2) a statistician; and (3) an English expert. Subsequently, the study will continue with the pilot test whereby a minimum of 30 respondents will participate in this stage. The collected questionnaire from the pilot test will test the consistency of each item in measuring the intended construct using SPSS. For a variable to have a high level of internal consistency over several measurements, Cronbach's alpha must be greater than 0.70. The pilot test and actual data collection will be held at the departure hall of Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) since it is the main exit gate for most international tourists who visit Malaysia compared to the other international airports. Thus, the number of respondents that can be collected will be numerous and sufficient. Moreover, at this survey site, the tourists have experience visiting Malaysia's Islamic tourism destinations before they return to their home country.

The study will employ purposive sampling since the questionnaire will be distributed to the respondents which consist of tourists that need to fulfill the following criteria; (1) International Muslim travelers (see Figure 1) because the number of tourist

arrivals to Islamic tourist destinations in Malaysia shows an unstable pattern and in a declining condition; (2) they have to stay in Malaysia for more than a day but less than a year; (3) their age must be more than 18 years old; (4) have experience in consuming Malaysia's Islamic tourism products and services; and (5) must be able to understand and able to speak in English. Thus, to ensure the respondents fulfill these criteria, the data collector will ask them before the questionnaire survey is distributed. If they are not able to fulfill these criteria, they will not be eligible to become the respondents of the study. It is expected that the researcher will be able to collect the data from 250 respondents which is within the range of 96 to 384 as proposed by Burn et al. (2017). To confirm the causes and effects relationships between the exogenous variables and endogenous variables, the present study will utilize the PLS-SEM to measure the measurement and structural models. Most importantly, the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is the preferred option compared to Covariance Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) and the other regression models because it can manage complex models with non-normal data, small samples, and reflective constructs with high accuracy of prediction. As an exploratory and theory development research, it is highly appropriate to use this analysis, especially within the Islamic tourism marketing and social sciences research field.

The PLS-SEM is capable of examining indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability such as Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability, convergent reliability as well as discriminant validity, and examining path coefficients and their significance using bootstrapping analysis.

DISCUSSION

It is expected that the findings of the present study to provide seven direct effects and three indirect effects. Halal certification for food and beverage will gain confidence and trust among tourists especially related to food quality, hygiene, halal food sources, and conformance to Halal standards that could lead to satisfaction with to travel experience and they will consider Malaysia as an Islamic tourism destination choice to visit in future as proposed in hypotheses H1a and H1b. The establishment of these links is supported and consistent with the studies by (Ulfy et al., 2021; Tabelesy, 2023). It is anticipated that offering innovative Islamic tourism products such as travel Apps showing the nearest mosques, prayer time, etc, and the feelings of surprise, fascination, and inspiration could develop satisfaction in to travel experience and considering Malaysia as an Islamic travel destination is an emotional incident and service innovation as proposed in H2a, H2b, H2a and H3b. These expected findings are consistent with the studies by Ulfy et al. (2021); Cheng et al., (2021); Suban (2024).

Moreover, by offering a novel research approach that incorporates many variables such as halal certification for food and beverages, emotional incidents, service innovation, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty into a single model, this study adds new insight to the body of current literature. Most significantly, this study presents three mediating effects that have not been investigated in prior research, particularly in the context of Islamic tourism marketing in Malaysia: (1) the mediating effect of tourist satisfaction on the relationship between halal certificate for food and beverage and destination loyalty; (2) the mediating effect of tourist satisfaction on the relationship between service innovation and destination loyalty and (3) the mediating effect of tourist satisfaction on the relationship between emotional incidents and destination loyalty. It is expected that these findings challenge the existing studies whereby it is considered as new pathways that have not been investigated in previous research (Kayumov et al., 2024; Suban, 2024; Tagmanov, 2024; Dabral et al., 2024 and Permana, & Adam, 2024). However, these mediating effects will not be able to be proven until the data are collected and analyses are completed.

Practically, a study on halal certification for food and beverage, emotional incidents, service innovation, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty will help Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), Malaysian Islamic tourist destinations, and Malaysia's tour operators to enhance Malaysia's position as a global center for halal tourism. As for JAKIM, it advances uniformity, fosters innovation like digital verification for travelers, and strengthens its standing as a reliable halal certifying organization. By adhering to Islamic principles in utilizing emotional connections, updating services like halal-friendly technology and prayer facilities, and continuously surpassing visitor expectations to encourage repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth, Islamic tourist destinations in Malaysia can draw in more international Muslim tourists around the world. Tour operators can obtain a competitive edge by providing distinctive halal-certified experiences, catering the travelers' emotional needs, launching cutting-edge itineraries like halal gastronomy tours, and guaranteeing smooth travel. In addition, to boost Malaysia's Islamic tourism business and entrepreneurship within the Islamic tourism industry, the policymakers must propose strict zoning laws that prohibit alcohol availability in tourism spots and impose stricter policies related to Islamic tourism, promoting Islamic religion and culturally based alternatives. Malaysia's national Tourism Certification Policy has to be introduced to align and standardize halal compliance across hotel chains, restaurants, and tourism facilities. Each state in Malaysia can impose tax holidays and grants to firms adopting Islamic friendly tourism culture to support the development of infrastructure and marketing expenses.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study enlightens the need to propose a framework consisting of halal certification for food and beverage, emotional incidents, and service innovation to foster tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in Malaysia's Islamic tourism sector. This is because the study found problems related to loyalty among international Muslim tourists to Islamic tourist destinations in Malaysia. Developing this framework could help to solve the problem. It is expected to collect the data using a questionnaire survey at the departure hall of Kuala Lumpur International Airport. The questionnaire survey will be pre-tested by the panel experts. The pilot study will also be executed and the data collected from the actual survey will be analyzed using SPSS and PLS-SEM. However, this study is merely a proposal, and after the data are gathered and examined, the relationship between the variables in the research model will be confirmed.

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