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HALAL TOURISM

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Halal tourism is “any tourism object or action which is permissible according to Islamic teachings to be used or engaged by Muslims in the tourism industry” (Battour & Ismail, 2016). According to Mohsin, Noriah Ramli and Alkhulayfi, (2016), halal tourism refers to the provision of tourism products and services that meet the needs of Muslim travellers to facilitate their worship and dietary requirements that conform to Islamic teachings. Recently, Muslim travel market continues to grow and evolve. As reported by Global Muslim Travel Index (2019), there are nine factors influencing the consumption behaviour of Muslim travellers which are halal food, prayer facilities, water-friendly washrooms, absence of Islamophobia, social reasons, Ramadhan services, and local Muslim experiences, recreational spaces with privacy and no non-halal services.

According to Nik Ramli, Yong Azrina, Jamilah and Wan Shahrul Aziah (2019), factors that are considered important to Muslim travellers and its impact on their travel satisfaction to non-Islamic countries are the availability of halal food, destination sociocultural characteristics and the perceived safety and security. In addition, a study conducted by Al-Ansi and Han (2019) on Muslims travelling to South Korea found that food and meals, social environment and ambiance, facilities and amenities, local residences and staffs, information and services, and uniforms and attires, were important elements in forming the destination’s perceived value for the Muslim travellers. Muslims must fulfil and comply to Islamic teachings requirements in every aspect of their lives, which includes their daily life activities and decisions such as food selection and consumption, social interactions, business activities, education, and travel. This is the reason why halal concept is an influential issue for a Muslim traveler (Al-Ansi, Olya & Han, 2019).

Battour, Rahman & Rana (2019) stated that non-Muslim travellers are also willingly trying the halal tourism experience and are visiting destinations such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and United Arab Emirates. They also accept halal tourism products and services. However, as hoteliers and restaurants do not offer pork and alcoholic beverages for non-Muslim travellers, they reported a lower trip quality, trip value, and lower word of mouth (WOM) sharing, which results in avoidance of travels to Muslim-friendly destinations. Furthermore, most of the non-Muslim travellers are not keen to book rooms at hotels and resorts if the management practices gender segregation.

Reported by Global Muslim Travel Index (2019), below are the ranking of destinations that are becoming more and more friendly for Muslim travellers.

Table 1
Top 10 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Destinations

Rank	Destinations
1	Malaysia
1	Indonesia
3	Turkey
4	Saudi Arabia
5	United Arab Emirates
6	Qatar
7	Morocco
8	Bahrain
8	Oman
10	Brunei

Table 2
Top 10 Non - OIC Destinations

Rank	Destinations
1	Singapore
2	Thailand
3	United Kingdom
3	Japan
3	Taiwan
6	South Africa
7	Hong Kong
8	South Korea
9	France
9	Spain
9	Philippines

There are a lot of study conducted on Muslim travellers because Muslims' spending on travel was valued at \$189 billion in 2018, and is forecasted to grow to \$274 billion by 2024 (Dinar Standard, 2019). This phenomenon has enhanced the interest of researchers in this field in recent years. A lot of scope can be explored by future researchers regarding halal tourism industry. The focus of the research might not only restricted to Muslims but might also cover non-Muslims. In fact, Battour, (2018, 2019) suggests that halal tourism industry shall not only be promoted to Muslims. Halal tourism industry should also be promoted to non-Muslim travellers since they are also potential contributors to get this industry sector to flourish. Additionally, not only OIC countries are serving halal tourism services but non-OIC countries have also started providing halal tourism services to attract Muslim travellers in order to increase economic growth of their countries.

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