

# **HALAL TOURISM ATTRIBUTES AND ITS EFFECT ON TOURISTS' HOLIDAYS EXPERIENCES IN MALAYSIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper is concern with tourism industry that and Islamic religion. Halal has becoming one of the most discussed about issue recently. However it was more focusing on food industry and very few on services. Tourism is one area in service that could offer unlimited opportunities to the providers and nations. In Malaysia, demands under tourism and hospitality sector have increased annually and facts showed that there is a large amount of tourists coming from the Middle East countries especially after the September 11 incident. The purpose of this paper was to determine the experiences and satisfaction of the Middle East tourists in present days.

**Keywords:** Middle East Tourist, Islamic Tourism, Halal Hotel, Marketing

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of Study**

Tourism is the second larger contributor to the growth of Malaysian economy (Laderlah, Rahman, Awang, & Che Man, 2011, Sahida, Rahman, Awang, & Che Man, 2011, Zailani, Omar, & Kopong, 2011, Malaysian Tourism Q1 report 2011) with contribution of RM56.4 billion in revenue for the year of 2010 (Sahida et al., 2011). According to the Minister of Tourism Malaysia cited by Sahida et al. (2011), "Islamic tourism was a major product of Malaysia" and due to that the Ministry of Tourism Malaysia had appointed the Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia (JAKIM) to promote Islamic Tourism.

By definition tourism means a physical dynamic activity of people traveling away from their home (Zailani et al., 2011). According to World Tourism Organization (WTO) quoted by Medlik (2003) as cited by Teoman (2011), "Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one conservative year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited". Islamic Tourism has increased in demand in Islamic countries and Malaysia is not excluded although Islamic countries are in the third-world countries (Laderlah et al., 2011).

This event started to show its positive development after the tragedy of 11 September 2001 taken place in USA (Nor & Daud, 2012, Kamali, 2011, Laderlah et al., 2011, Salleh, Othman, M. Noor, & Hasim, 2010, Henderson, 2003). The tragedy placed a great impact to all countries' economics; however Islamic countries were less affected which it was believed it was due to their niche and specialty; tourism industry (Laderlah et al., 2011).

Being a member of Organization of the Islamic Countries (OIC), gives Malaysia a greater opportunity in expanding this industry. Having Muslims as the majority makes the country as

one of the destinations to travel. Furthermore, rich in culture and have many wonderful places to visit, puts Malaysia in the map and in the mind of tourists.

### Tourism Industry in Malaysia

Malaysia is situated in the South East Asia (Henderson, 2003) that consists of thirteen states which means it has more than enough destinations to visit. The capital of Malaysia is Kuala Lumpur while Putrajaya is the seat of the federal government (Laderlah et al., 2011). The official religion of Malaysia is Islam with the percentage of 60.4 percent (Laderlah et al., 2011).

Table 1: Malaysian Population According to Religion and Race

Races	Percentage (%)	Religion	Percentage (%)
Malay	53.5 %	Islam	60.4%
Chinese	26.0%	Hindus	6.3%
Indian	7.7%	Christian	9.1%
Indigenous	11.8%	Buddhist	19.2%
Others	1.2%	Other/None	5.0%

Source: Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (2011)

Ministry of Tourism Malaysia has launched the campaign of “Malaysia Truly Asia” early in the 2000’s. This campaign has introduced Malaysia to the world and placed Malaysia in the map where the campaign highlighted Malaysia as a one contemporary modern multiracial and cultural country that has variety attributes and activities to offer (Henderson, 2003). The campaign also promoted Islam as the main religion (Henderson, 2003) where through this campaign it attracted and encouraged tourists from the Middle East countries to visit Malaysia because of the religion similarity (Zailani et al., 2011) especially after the event of September 11. Apart from stated in the federation, Islamic architectures can be seen around the capital and especially in Putrajaya (Henderson, 2003).

According to data obtained from Tourism Malaysian website, an increase of 0.6 percent tourists from 24, 577, 196 in 2010 to 24, 714, 324 in 2011 and the digits are expecting to increase more in 2012. From the grand total amount, 251, 522 are from; Saudi Arabia, Iran and UAE with the increased of 15.6 percent compared to 2010. Although that, according to World Tourism Organization (WTO) there are seven Middle East countries that create a great significant to our tourism industry which the countries are; Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syrian, UAE and Egypt (Salleh et al., 2010).

Table 2: Malaysia Tourists Arrival from Saudi Arabia, Iran and UAE from January - May

	Saudi Arabia		Iran		UAE	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
January	4015	8956	11 009	9239	1305	954
February	3716	4921	8871	11 301	1055	771
March	3546	6708	20 315	20 826	1252	2289
April	5558	5168	6752	8158	1424	938
May	4366	6204	7244	8185	1393	624
Total	<b>21 201</b>	<b>31 957</b>	<b>54 191</b>	<b>57 709</b>	<b>6429</b>	<b>5576</b>
Growth		<b>50.7%</b>		<b>6.5%</b>		<b>(13.3%)</b>

Source: Tourism Malaysia with the cooperation of Immigration Department

Table above showed the comparison amount of tourists that had visited Malaysia from January to May for the year of 2011 and 2012. It showed a positive growth which it brings to

a great economic growth for Malaysia as most of them have shifted their summer vacation from heading west to Malaysia (Yusoff & Abdullah, 2011). With the increase of number of tourists, it increases the demand for hotels and hospitality as well where it contributes to the economic growth too (Zailani et al., 2011, Sahida et al., 2011, Yusoff & Abdullah, 2011) through the spending on accommodations, hotel services and purchasing of items from local shops (Sahida, et al., 2011).

### **Halal Tourism**

In Al – Quran, it mentioned that Muslims should travel in order to visit friends and relatives and fully appreciate the beauty of God's world and those who welcome the travelers should perform their responsibility in providing hospitality for them (Henderson, 2003, Laderlah et al., 2011). Table 3 below listed down the definitions of Islamic Tourism defined by previous researchers.

Farahani and Henderson (2010) had cited the verses and chapters of Quran gathered by Pickhall (1976) and Yusuf Ali (2005) that discussed about traveling and tourism which it endorse traveling with the view to achieving spiritual, physical and social goals. The verses are; Al – Imran (The Amramites): 137, Al – An'am (Livestock): 11, Al – Nahl (The Bee): 36, Al – Naml (The Ant): 69, Al – 'Ankaboot (The Spider): 20, Al – Room (The Romans): 42/9, Saba' (Sheeba): 18, Yousof (Joseph): 109, Al – Hajj (The Pilgrimage): 46, Faater (Initiator): 44, Ghafer (Forgiver): 82/21, Muhammad: 10, Younos (Jonah): 22 and Al – Milk (Kingship): 15.

Islamic tourism is flexible because it is not fit to only one purpose as it allows many purposes such as; shopping, medical, sports, visiting and religions as long as it is not contrary with the Islamic law such as sex tourism, doing drugs, alcoholism, prostitution and suicide (Laderlah et al., 2011). From traveling, people can enhance their health level and well being as it will reduce their stress and result from that, it enables Muslims to serve God better (Zamani-farahani & Henderson, 2010). Table below here explained definitions gathered from previous researchers.

Table 3: Previous Definitions of Islamic Tourism

Authors	Definitions
Ala – Hamarneh (2011)	The economic concept for Islamic tourism is an extension and expansion oriented concept which focuses on the importance of intra – Muslims and intra – Arab tourism in terms of inclusion of new tourist markets and tourist destinations. The cultural concept for Islamic tourism includes visions and ideas that outline the inclusion of Islamic religious – cultural sites in tourism programs “pedagogical” and self – confidence building elements. The religious conservatives concept for Islamic tourism has not yet been theoretically articulated. But various opinions and remarks in the discussions on the future of tourism in the Arab and Islam worlds as well as some practices of hotel’s management indicate that articulations and implementations are just the matter of time.
Dogan (2010)	Islamic tourism covers activities by Muslims in seaside destinations for the purposes of relaxation and entertainment in hospitality enterprises that apply Islamic principles.
Henderson (2010)	All products development and marketing efforts designed for and directed at Muslims. Motivations are not always or entirely religious. Participants could be pursuing similar leisure experiences to non – Muslims, albeit within parameters set by Islam, and destinations are not necessarily locations where Shariah or full Islamic law is enacted.
Henderson (2009)	Tourism mainly by Muslims, although it can be extend to unbelievers motivated to travel by Islam which takes place in the Muslim world.
Hassan (2007)	In its narrow sense, it may mean “Religious Tourism”, but in its wide sense, it is the type of tourism that adheres to the value of Islam. Most of these values are shared with other religious and non – religious beliefs. It calls for respect for local communities and the local environment, benefiting the local, decency and learning about their cultures.
Shakiry (2006)	The concept of Islamic tourism is not limited to religious tourism, but it extends to all forms of tourism except that those go against Islamic values.
Hassan (2004)	Islamic tourism means a new ethical dimension in tourism. It stands for values generally accepted as high standards of morally and decency. It also stands for the respect of local beliefs and traditions, as well as care for the environment. It represents the new outlook on life and society. It brings back the value to the central stage in an age where consumerism in rife and everything is available for use and abuse in the most selfish way. It also encourages understanding and dialogue between different nations and civilizations and attempts to find out about the background of different societies and heritages.

Source: Teoman (2011), “Value of Islamic Offering: Perspectives from the Turkish Experience

With things been said, clearly Islam encourages its people to travel which it creates the new business opportunity; Halal Tourism. According to Handerson (2010) as cited by Teoman (2011), Halal tourism covers all producer development and marketing efforts designed for and directed at Muslim. Halal Tourism is a new product in the tourism industry especially for Malaysia (Laderlah et al., 2011). Having the same religion and cultural gives Malaysia a better opportunity to grow in this industry (Zakariya, 2006, Zamani-farahani & Henderson, 2010, Yusoff & Abdullah, 2011).

This Halal Tourism concept is to offer a permissible hospitality and accommodation compliance with Shari’ah whereby those unacceptable matters must not be allowed which it includes things such as; physical display of affection, making love in public area, drinking alcohol, wearing scanty clothing, sun bathing naked, gambling, prostitution, handling pork and other non – Halal food by staffs (Zailani et al., 2011). According to Ibrahim, Zahari,

Sulaiman & Jusoff (2009) as cited by Yusoff & Abdullah (2011), by implementing this Halal Tourism concept in Malaysia makes the Middle East tourists feel safer in terms of shopping, food, security and religious obligation.

That means that special tourism packages are designed to cater the Muslims tourists especially from the Middle East countries (Zailani et al., 2011) where consumptions and utilizations of material things are not forbidden by Quran and the Hadith (Teoman, 2011). The major difference in Halal Tourism is that a complete elimination of gambling, drinking and party activities but those are replaced with visiting mosques, Islamic architectures and historical places (Zailani et al., 2011).

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

In previous years, manufacturing industry was the sole Malaysia economic contributor after agriculture sector (Salleh et al., 2010). However in present days, service industries have proved that they can contribute as much money as manufacturing especially under tourism industry. As mentioned earlier, tourism is contributing a large portion to our GDP which the industry is currently the second largest contributor to our economic growth.

With the event of September 11, the world unofficially has been divided into two; western and eastern whereby tourists from the Middle East countries have shifted (Kamali, 2011) their holiday destination from west to east (Henderson, 2003) and Malaysia is one of the favorite countries to visit due to similarity in religion, culture and also currency exchange. Result to that, Ministry of Tourism Malaysia launched a campaign of "Malaysia is Truly Asia" along with the introduction of Malaysia as a Halal Hub.

Halal has become one hit issue discussed recently and most of business operators seen it as a door of opportunity. According to Jumaathon Azmi (2005) as cited by Hanzabee & Ramezani, (2011), "Halal is no longer perceived only as religious issue but as a realm of business and trade and it is becoming a global symbol for quality assurance and lifestyle". Therefore, Halal business is being introduced where it includes; food, financing, logistics, hotels, services, tourism and others. The question is, are the Middle Eastern tourists really concern about Halal in selecting a destination and how it effects their experiences while staying in Malaysia.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To profile the Middle East tourists that visiting Malaysia
2. To identify the relationship between Halal Tourism Attributes and Holiday Experiences in Malaysia
3. To determine which Halal Tourism Attributes that gives strong effect towards Holiday Experiences in Malaysia.

## **1.4 Scope of Study**

The scope of this study was all Middle East tourists that have experiences staying in Malaysia. As mentioned earlier, there were 24, 714, 324 of tourists from Middle East in 2011 and the number is expected to increase annually. Questionnaires were distributed in the area of departure halls in Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and major shopping complexes such as Suria KLCC, Mid Valley Mega Mall and Sunway Pyramid. Reasons for the choices were; those places were the easiest place to find the tourists and the locations were pleasant and comfortable.

## **1.5 Significance of Study**

The information gathered through the conduct of this research in hope will give benefits to all business operators around Malaysia especially in Kuala Lumpur. From the findings and results, all hoteliers, shopping complexes operators, travel agencies should be able to see the patterns and expectations of those tourists and through the insights, these business

operators should grab the opportunity and develop services and businesses to tailor and deliver the needs required by the Middle East tourists.

From the academic perspective, this study will strengthen the link between academia and practitioners and it will also contribute some knowledge through the body of literature. The outcomes of this study may be used for future research where more parties can gain benefits through the concept application.

### 1.6 Limitations of Study

In preparing a good research, time and resource is the major constraints contributor. Time is very limited to the researcher especially when the researcher has different roles to play. With various commitments to perform at the same time did not really give the researcher ample time to give full 100 percent commitment in writing and also to distribute more questionnaires. Furthermore, had to travel from south region to center region of Malaysia definitely required the researcher to plan her time and schedule properly.

Apart from time, limited of recent resource had affected the literature as well. Few studies were found related to this research although Halal has become one of the most trending topic discussed in this decade. With secondary data became one of the constraint, the researcher hope that with this study produced through the gathering of primary data, it will able to give some insights for future study.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Research Framework

In this study, researcher adapted and reconstructed frameworks from previous researches and became the framework for this study. Framework initiated by Yusoff & Abdullah (2011) in their research titled; "What Really Matters When Choosing a Hotel? The Case of Middle East Tourists in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia" and combined with framework adapted from research done by Sahida et al., (2011); "The Implementation of Shariah Compliance Concept Hotel: De Palma Hotel Ampang, Malaysia". Changes have been made to tailor and to answer the objectives of this study.

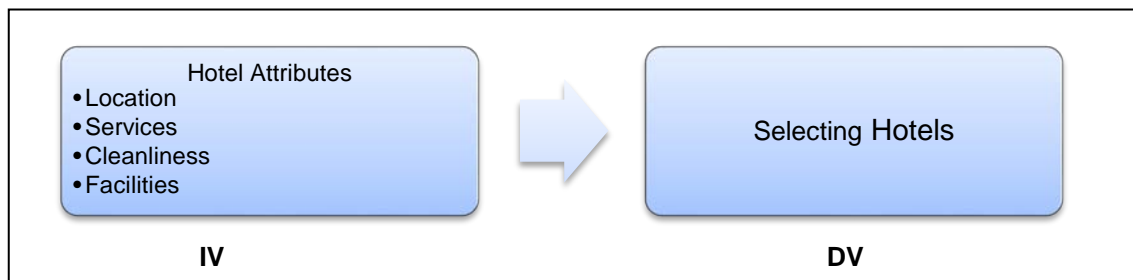


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework by Yusoff and Abdullah (2011)

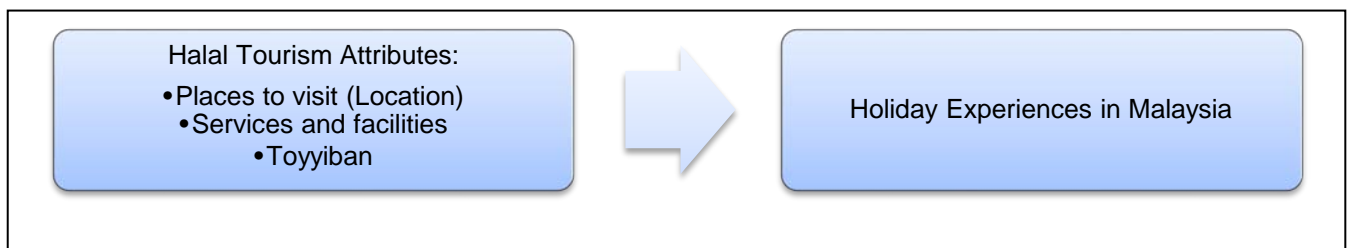
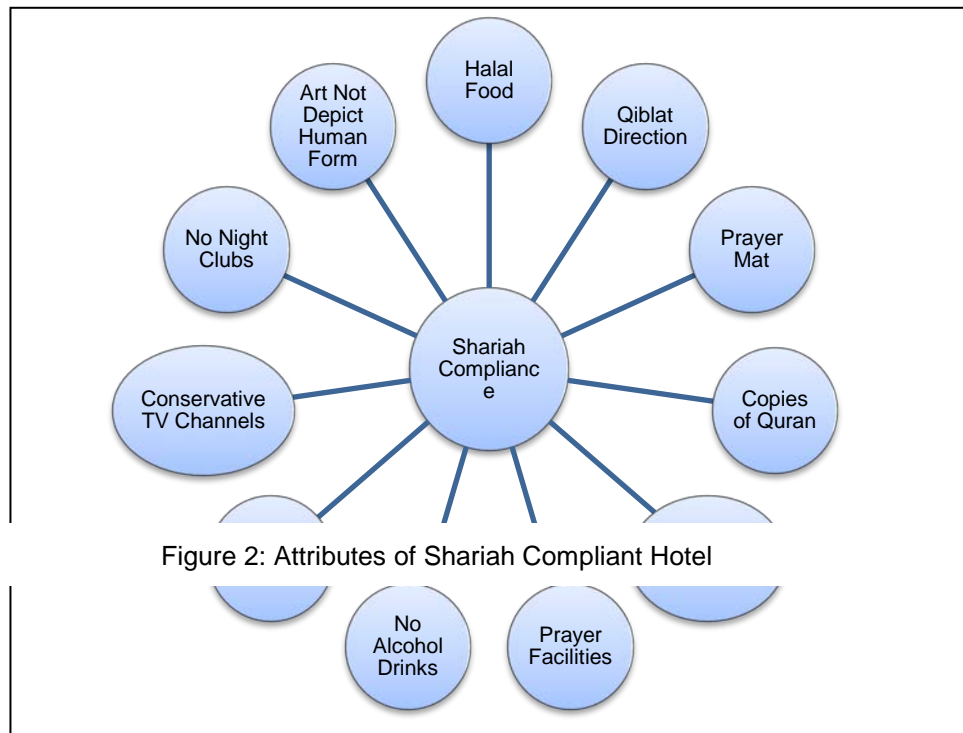


Figure 3: Halal Tourism Attributes and its Effects towards on Tourists' Holiday Experiences in Malaysia

## 2.2 Halal Tourism Attributes

### Places to Visit

When there are thirteen different states in a country, it makes Malaysia have more than enough places and destinations to visit. It has been said that most Islamic countries are underdeveloped (Laderlah et al., 2011) and Malaysia is one of them. Although that, there are categorized as underdeveloped countries, these countries are usually are blessed with wonderful and magnificent nature and environment such as mountains, islands, beaches, lakes and parks (Laderlah et al., 2011). Table below are the interesting locations in Malaysia that can be visited by tourists as cited by Laderlah et al. (2011) from My Malaysia Information (2011)

Table 4: Places to Visit in Malaysia

State	Tourism Attractions
Johor	Sultan Abu Bakar Royal Museum, Sultan Abu Bakar Mosque, Sultan Ibrahim Building, Ledang Mountain, Endau-Rompin, Desaru, Kota Tinggi Waterfall, Danga Bay, Tanjung Piai, Mersing, Sibul Island, Rawa Island and Aur Island
Melaka	A Famosa Fortress, The Stadthuys of Malacca, St. John's Fort, Hang Li Poh's Well, Hang Tuah Mausoleum, The Baba Nyonya Heritage Museum, Maritime Museum, Virtual Museum Melaka, Portuguese Square, Melaka Traditional House, Mini Asean, Zoo Melaka, Cheng Ho Cultural Museum and Cape Rachado Lighthouse
Negeri Sembilan	Old Palace at Sri Menanti, Port Dickson, Kijang Waterfall, Ulu Bendul Recreational Park, Cultural Handicraft Complex, State Museum, State Mosque, Wet World Pedas Hot Spring, Pengkalan Kempas Historical Complex, Eagle Ranch Resort, PD Ostrich Show Farm
Selangor	Sepang International Circuit, Shah Alam Blue House, Batu Caves, Royal Selangor Visitor Centre, Zoo Negara, Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, The Kanching Falls, Kota Darul Ehsan Arch, Pulau Ketam, Bukit Melawati, Morib Beach, Commonwealth Forest Park Gombak, Mine Wonderland Seri Kembangan, Paya Indah Wetland, Istana Bandar Kuala Langat, Carey Island, Shah Alam Lake Garden, Jugra Historical Town, Sunway Lagoon Theme Park, Kuala Selangor Nature Park, Shah Alam Gallery
Wilayah Persekutuan	Petronas Twin Towers KLCC, National Museum, KL Tower, Lake Garden, National Monument, King Palace, Merdeka Square, National Mosque, Craft Cultural Complex KL, Malaysia Tourism Centre, KL Railway Station, Jamek Mosque, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putera Memorial, Tun Abdul Razak Memorial, Aquaria KLCC, Petrosains, Cosmo's World ThemePark, Petaling Street, Central Market, National Islamic Museum
Perak	Pangkor Island, Royal Museum, Pasir Salak Historical Complex, Kellie's Castle, Ipoh Town Hall Building, Ipoh Railway Station, Bukit Chandan Mosque Kuala Kangsar, Leaning Tower of Teluk Intan, Royal Belum Nature Park, Taiping Lake Town, Zoo Taiping & Night Safari Malaysia, Maxwell Hill, Kuala Gula Bird Sanctuary, Gua Tempurung, Sungai Klah Hot Spring, Perak Tong & Sam Poh Tong, Lost World of Tambun Water Park, Bukit Merah Resort Park
Penang	Khoo Kongsi, Kek Lok Si the Monastery on Crane Hill, Snake Temple, Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, Fort Cornwallis, The Penang War Museum, Penang Museum, Kapitan Keling Mosque, Acheen Street Mosque, Chinatown, Little India Penang, Penang Peranakan Mansion, P. Ramlee House, Penang Hill, Penang National Park, Tropical Spice Garden, Tropical Fruit Farm, Penang Butterfly Farm, Penang Bird Park
Kedah	Payar Island, Kulim Wild side of Langkawi, Lake of the Pregnant Maiden, Langkawi Bird Paradise, Galeria Perdana, Balai Besar, Royal Museum, Pantai Cenang, Kok Beach, Pekan Rabu, The Paddy Museum, Alor Star Tower, Zahir Mosque, The Tree Top Walk, Bukit Kayu Hitam, Bujang Valley, Jerai Mountain, Kota Mahsuri, Langkawi Island, Craft Cultural Complex, Langkawi Cable Car and Underwater World Langkawi
Perlis	Perlis State Park, Kelam cave, Wang Burma Cave, Wang Kelian State Park, Herb Garden, Padang Besar, Chuping, Snake and Reptile Farm, Tasik Timah, Arau, Syed Alwi mosque, Kota Kayang Museum
Pahang	Taman Negara, Kenong Rimba Park, Jeram Besu, Kuala Gandah Elephant Sanctuary, Tioman Island, Cherating Beach, Teluk Cempedak Beach, Cameron Highlands, Fraser's Hill, Bukit Tinggi, Endau-Rompin State Park, Sungai Lembing Tin Mines, Balok Beach, Kota Gelanggi Caves
Terengganu	Redang Island, Perhentian Island, Lang Tengah Island, Kapas and Tenggol, Tanjung Jara Beach, Cemerung Waterfall & Nature Park, Kenyir Lake, Sekayu Waterfall and Nature Park, Tanjung Mentong, Bewah & Taat Caves, Duyung Island, Mount Tebu, Pasar Payang, Terengganu State Museum, Tengku Tengah Zaharah Mosque, Chinese Village, Batu Bersurat, Islamic Civilization Park and Istana Maziah
Kelantan	Cultural Centre, Handicraft Village and Craft Museum, Siti Khadijah Market, Cahaya



	Bulan Beach, Taman Negara Kuala Koh, Mt. Stong State Park, Kelantan State Museum, Islamic Museum, Jahar Palace, War Museum, Royal Museum, Nenggiri River, Buluh Kubu Bazaar
Sarawak	Loagan Bunut National Park, Lambir Hills National Park, Similajau National Park, Niah National Park, Kuching Waterfront, Kuching Main Bazaar, Sarawak Museum, Sarawak Cultural Village, Semengoh Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, Cat Museum, Damai Beach, Jalan Satok Sunday Market, Bako National Park, Kubah National Park, Gunung Gading National Park, Gunung Mulu National Park, Tanjung Datu National Park
Sabah	Sabah Museum, Mount Kinabalu, Sipadan Island, Mabul Island, Tunku Abdul Rahman Park, Monsopiad Cultural Village, Gaya Streer Sunday Market, Kapalai Island, Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre, Saukau Rainforest, Danum Valley, Tabin Wildlife Reserve Sabah and Kudat Longhouse

As mentioned in previous chapter, Islam is the official religion of Malaysia. Having Islam as the official religion, it does play role in promotion effort (Henderson, 2003) in promoting Malaysia as a Halal destination. There are many buildings and architecture that represents the religion and Putrajaya itself has the theme of “Islamic and local themes” where it was built according to “Islamic principles that emphasize the link between God, man and environment” (Henderson, 2003). There is a mosque with the illusion of floating on water in Terengganu that has become one of the main attractions in Kuala Terengganu (Henderson, 2003).

### **Services and Facilities**

Shifting holiday destination from western to eastern (Kamali, 2011) is a major opportunity for the Asia countries to gain business under tourism and hospitality industry. Therefore preparations to cater demands from Middle East tourists must be done (Kamali, 2011) especially knowing that the tourists are mostly Muslims. The whole efforts in attracting these Middle East tourists has begun since 2002 with the intention of making them feel more comfortable where some of the effort are such as, provide Arab entertainment, Middle Eastern food and Arab speaking staffs (Zakariya, 2006) and good hotel attributes according to Shariah (Sahida et al., 2011).

According to Mackenzie (1986), Knutson (1988) and Chu, Choi (2000) as cited by Yusoff & Abdullah (2011), availability of services and attributes are vital, understanding what the travelers want is very important as these factors will to their behavior and holiday satisfactory. Study done by M. Ariffin, Hasim in 2009 as cited by Yusoff & Abdullah (2011) mentioned that Middle East tourists demanded a very high level of service quality and because of that in providing services, it must be prepared in manners that will able to satisfy them.

It has also been found in study conducted by Che Mat et al. (2009) as mentioned by Yusoff & Abdullah (2011) where it highlighted that Arabic languages and translation (Zailani et al., 2011) is needed and has been commercialized in certain areas which this indicates that we are welcoming the Middle East tourists and they are important to us. All these sign boards written in Arabic can be seen in Arab Street in Kuala Lumpur (Zakariya, 2006) and also in Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) where there also Arab – speaking staffs available at the airport if they are needed (Salleh et al., 2010, Zailani et al., 2011). It has become our responsibility to make them feel happy and comfortable staying in Malaysia.

To be far away from home, tourists are highly depending on public transportation. The transportation services offered in Malaysia has to be good, efficient and prompt. Travelers have all their schedules planned and they would not want to be affected due to inefficiency service of Malaysia public transportation. In study conducted by Friman & Felleson (2009), they have gathered statements by previous researcher about public transportation where the

attributes are as follow; reliability, frequency, travel time and fare level (Hensher et al. 2003, Tyrinopoulos, Aifadopoulou, 2008), comfort and cleanliness (Swanson et al. 1997, Eboli, Mazzulla, 2007), network coverage/distance to stop (Tyrinopoulos, Aifadopoulou, 2008, Erikson et al. 2009), and safety issues (Smith, Clarke, 2000, Fellesoson, Friman, 2008).

Halal dining is one important element in Halal tourism. Middle East tourists would want to acquire food and service that is Halal according to Islam (Zailani et al., 2011) and therefore to offer various Middle East restaurants in Malaysia is one of the ways to fulfill the demands. Apart from the Middle East food restaurants, there are numerous other Halal food restaurants available everywhere which searching for Halal food will not be a major problem in Malaysia.

Apart from visiting tourists attractions places, shopping malls also have become a must – go places for the Middle East tourists when they come to Malaysia. At the shopping malls, facilities to cater Muslims needed are provided as such as toilets with hoses, prayer rooms and Halal food restaurants (Zailani et al., 2011). Muslim tourists will not face difficulties as every services needed is well provided along with Arabic signage. Not only shopping complexes, Middle East tourists may go to Ain Arabia (an Arab Street), a place where they can feel very much at home. The street is like a mini Arab where tourists may find their favorite food and enjoy their back home entertainment cultures (Zailani et al., 2011) as to be surrounded by their own familiar cultures will able to make them feel even more comfortable (Zamani-farahani & Henderson, 2010).

A major element under services and facilities would definitely be hotels. Muslims travelers would prefer to stay in hotels that are complied with Shariah laws. According to Medlik, Ingram (2000) as cited by Sahida et al. (2011), they defined hotel as an establishment that provides various services ranges from accommodation, food and beverages and other services for guests who intend to stay there. A great increase in tourism industry has increased in demand for hotels especially where there are special events taken place such as during Commonwealth Games in 1998 (Sahida et al., 2011) which this leads to a positive growth in income (Zailani et al., 2011).

After the event of September 11, more tourists from Middle East countries have chose Malaysia as holiday destination during their summer holiday. Result to that, demands for hotel rooms increases. Since the tourists are mostly Muslims, to have hotels that complied with Shariah law are most welcome. According to Shanim (2009) as cited by Sahida et al. (2011), Shariah compliant hotel is defined as a hotel that provides services in accordance to the Shariah principles. Apart from serving Halal food and beverages, Halal hotels should ensure that its operation, designs, financial activities are also fulfilled the requirements of Shariah rules and laws (Sahida et al., 2011).

As suggested by Choufany (2009) and Henderson (2010) as cited by Sahida et al. (2011), the attributes of Shariah compliant hotel are as follow; Halal food, qiblat direction, prayer mat, copies of Quran, separate facilities, prayer facilities, no alcohol drinks, Muslims staffs, conservatives TV channels, no night clubs and art that are not depict human forms.

Separate facilities at the hotel is very important where here separate means gents and ladies would enjoy the facilities provided separately such as gym, spas, swimming pools and others explained by Resenberg, Choufany (2009) as cited by Sahida et al. (2011). This separate facilities arguments also been mentioned in literature in research done by Zailani et al. (2011). Apart from that, serving alcoholic drinks, operating night clubs or karaoke lounges are not allowed at all (Henderson, 2003, Sahida et al., 2011, Zailani et al., 2011). By following all the rules guided by Shariah, hotels in Malaysia would able to operate in a greater environment, safer, healthier (Sahida et al., 2011) and with God's willing and permit, more business might be coming in.

As mentioned by Zailani et al., (2011) in their study, it would be an added value if copies of Quran are provided in flight as to support Halal tourism. It would be even better if hotels in Malaysia could provide copies of Quran in the rooms rather than Bibles. Qiblat pointing signage should be made available as well where it can be either on the ceiling or in drawers and not to forget; prayer mats should be provided as well so that Muslim travelers can perform the obligations as they are supposed to (Zamani-farahani & Henderson, 2010, Zailani et al., 2011).

By offering all these services and facilities, we hope that the tourists would be satisfied and will not face any difficulty in staying in Malaysia.

### **Toyyiban**

Halal is an Arabic word which is defined as; allowed or permitted according to Shariah law and Toyyiban means good quality, safety, cleanliness, nutritious and authentic and it covers all spectrums of Muslim life and not only limited to only food and beverages (Siew, 2007, Talib, Ali, & Jamaludin, 2008, Yunus, Wan Chik, & Mohamed, 2010, Marzuki, Hall, & Ballantine, 2012).

Generally, consumers refer Halal only to items that related to food, when Halal actually covers a wide range of areas which includes purchasing intention, logistics activities, attitudes, religiosity, purity, cleanliness and others (Shaari & Ariffin, 2007, Siew, 2007, Yunus, Wan Chik & Mohamed, 2010). In conclusion, to be considered as Halal tourism, the whole elements that contribute to Halal tourism must be hygiene and clean according to Shariah.

According to Pang and Toh (2008) as cited by Marzuki, Hall & Ballantine (2012), they discovered that hygiene is very important in Islam where some part is need to be cleaned before prayer and that just shows how important being clean in Islam. In research done by Marzuki, Hall & Ballantine (2012), restaurant managers perceived that hygiene is an essential element as far as Halal certification is discussed. Safety is another issue in food consumption where every consumer would only want to consume food products that are safe to be eaten. Safety related closely with hygiene where safe food indicates that the food prepared is clean and hygiene (Marzuuki, Hall & Ballantine, 2012).

When it talks about tourism, tourists' attraction destinations and all public areas should be toyyiban as well. Hotel rooms must be tidy and well arranged in manners it should be. Not to forget, all staffs that have a direct interaction with the tourists should be well groomed. Public toilets are cleaned and hoses are provided. Islands and beaches should be cleaned and attractive where garbage bins are always available and in good conditions. However, unfortunately journals on these matters are yet to be found.

### **2.3 Holiday Experiences in Malaysia**

Oxford Dictionary (2012) defined experience as what an individual has encounter or undergo an event (or occurrence) or how an individual feel (emotion) about something. For this study, holiday experience in Malaysia is to identify whether the tourists satisfied with what Malaysia has to offer in terms of products and services.

Base on study done by Hasim & Ariffin (2008), out of 520 respondents, 69.8 percent of Middle East tourists came to Malaysia for the purpose of holiday and relaxation, 13.5 percent of them came to Malaysia for shopping and only about 5.4 percent were here for business purposes. From the research as well, it showed the main activities the Middle East tourists do in Malaysia are sightseeing in the city (which that explains the existence of Ain Arabia), visit beaches and visit islands around Malaysia.

About 37.2 percent from the 520 respondents are strongly agreed that visiting Malaysia is valuable monetary which that indicates they are satisfied staying in Malaysia and only 5 percent were strongly disagreed (Hasim & Ariffin, 2008). According to the research done by Hassim & Arrifin (2008), they found that 50.3 percent out of 520 respondents agreed that their visits here exceeded their prior expectations; which this indicates that they are happy and satisfied with their visits.

From the study as well, we found that Middle East tourists felt that Malaysian people are nice, they also felt comfortable and safe while holidaying in Malaysia and agreed that Malaysia has long ranges of products to offer (Hasim & Ariffin, 2008).

## **2.4 Hypothesis Statements**

### **Hypothesis 1**

Places to visit has a strong relationship with Middle East tourists' holiday experiences in Malaysia

### **Hypothesis 2**

Services and facilities offered in Malaysia has a strong relationship towards tourists' holiday experiences in Malaysia

### **Hypothesis 3**

Cleanliness or toyyiban of Malaysia as a whole has a strong relationship with Middle East tourists' holiday experiences in Malaysia

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

This study is a Descriptive Research where it seeks to describe and to determine relationship between the variables. This study employed the survey method to elicit response from the population. Population of this study as highlighted in the study scope is all Middle East Tourists that have experiences staying in Malaysia

As mentioned earlier in the first chapter, number of tourists from the Middle East countries that came to Malaysia in 2011 was 24, 714, 324 and that was the population for this study. Since this study adapted the frameworks from previous studies conducted by Yusoff & Abdullah (2010) and Sahida et al., (2011), researcher followed the number of questionnaires distributed. In the the previous study done by Yusoff & Abdullah (2011), they gathered 289 sets of questionnaires and therefore 300 sets of questionnaires were distributed for this study to gain better results.

300 sets were distributed at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), and major shopping complexes in Klang Valley which were; Suria KLCC, Mid Valley Mega Mall and Sunway Pyramid and also Ain Arabia (Arab Street) in Bukit Bintang equally. This research undergone a random sampling and SPSS version 16 was used to run and analyze the data gathered. The analyses used were Reliability Test, Frequency Descriptive, Correlation Analysis and Regression Analysis. Out of 300 sets were distributed, 296 sets were fully answered.

## **4.0 FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Reliability Test**

Table 5: Strength of Variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>N. of Items</b>
Places	0.915	10
Service & Facilities	0.959	20
Cleanliness	0.901	10
Experiences	0.943	10

Suggested by Nunnally (1978) and Malhotra (2007), items are reliable and strong if the index figure is more than 0.60. Base on the table above, the Cronbach's Alpha for each variable is strong as the figure was more than 0.60; figures were between 0.90 to 0.96. It showed that the questions used were strong enough and can be used for further analyses.

## 4.2 Frequency Distribution

Table 6: Summary of Middle East Tourists Demographic Data

Items	Elements	Percentage
Gender	Male	45.3%
	Female	54.7%
Age	15 – 20	5.1%
	21 – 25	12.5%
	26 – 30	46.6%
	31 – 35	20.6%
	35 – 40	12.2%
	Above 40 years old	3.0%
Marital Status	Married	29.7%
	Single	70.3%
Education Background	Diploma (A Level)	18.2%
	Bachelor Degree	30.1%
	Master Degree	22.0%
	PhD	3.7%
	Others	25.0%
Occupation	Government	12.2%
	Private Sector	25.0%
	Students	25.7%
	Others	32.7%
Times of Travel	Every month	2.4%
	Every 3 months	1.4%
	Every 6 months	16.2%
	Once a year	39.9%
	Others	40.2%
First time visit Malaysia	Yes	62.8%
	No	37.2%
Staying Duration	One week	37.5%
	Two weeks	45.9%
	Three weeks	4.4%
	Others	12.2%
How much they like Malaysia	Very Much	26.0%
	Happy	17.2%
	Fine	47.0%
	OK	9.8%
Travel with whom	Family	19.6%
	Friends	48.3%
	Alone	32.1%
Is Islamic package important	Yes	35.8%
	No	64.2%
How do they manage their trip	By themselves	66.9%
	Travel agency	33.1%

As of until August 2012, most of Middle East tourists that were in Malaysia are age between 26 – 30 years old (46.5%) and single (70.3%). 62.8% out 296 respondents had been here in Malaysia before which base on this, it indicates that these tourists had a good experience in their previous visits. 48.3% of the tourists came over to Malaysia with their friends and base

on the survey, 45.9% (approximately 136 respondents) stayed here for two weeks. Since Malaysia is a Muslim country, 64.2% said that they do not need Islamic holiday package to travel in Malaysia and 66.9% said that in their current visit, they traveled to Malaysia by themselves with no assistance from any travel agency.

### 4.3 Regression Analysis

Table 7: Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Squared	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.825*	0.680	0.677	0.38600

a. Predictors: (Constant), Cleanliness, Places, ServicesFacilities

Table 8: Halal Tourism Attributes and its Effect towards Torists Holiday Experiences in Malaysia

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1. (Constant)	-0.30	0.181		-0.164	0.870
Places	0.475	0.081	0.417	5.846	0.000
Services & Facilities	-0.281	0.088	-0.266	-3.191	0.002
Cleanliness	0.889	0.074	0.707	12.003	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Experiences

Table 7 showed that 68% of the changes in dependent variable can be explained in the changes of all three independent variables. All independent variables are significant; however in table 8, the calculated beta figure showed that Cleanliness with 0.707 is the most influence attribute that contributed to satisfaction and holiday experience in Malaysia.

### 4.4 Correlation Analysis

Table 9: Relationships between Places, Services & Facilities and Cleanliness with Tourists Experiences

		Places	Services & Facilities	Cleanliness	Experiences
Experiences	Pearson Correlations	0.713**	0.687**	0.801**	1
	Sig. (2 Tailed)	0.000	0.00	0.000	
	N	296	296	296	296

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the result above, it showed that all three independent variables are significant and have positive relationship with Tourists Holiday Experiences. Similarly with result under regression analysis, Cleanliness or toyyiban is reported to have the strongest relationship with the dependent variable; 0.801.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Halal is a hit issue and most talked about business opportunity and Malaysia has done a tremendous job by grabbing the opportunity. Making Middle East people as target market for tourism was a great step. A decade ago these tourists shifted to Malaysia because of the September 11 issue. However now they still choose Malaysia as destination even after 10 years proved that Malaysia has everything they needed. Not only away from the west, acting as a Muslim country definitely helps Malaysia to highlight herself in the world map. Data analyzed showed a positive result where tourists had a great experience in Malaysia and satisfied. They liked all the places and destinations offered in Malaysia and results also showed that the Middle East tourists are satisfied with services and facilities prepared. As a Muslim country, Cleanliness is very important and results showed that tourists are satisfied with our level of cleanliness which that includes public places and food.

To ensure this satisfaction maintain or grow, improvements are needed and involvement from all parties are required; both government and private sectors, should monitor all public and tourists attraction areas to make sure those places are well maintained, services are well delivered and everything is in well order and toyiban according to Shariah.

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