

Research Article

Factors Influencing Satisfaction among Domestic Tourists Visiting Muslim Friendly Destinations in Kelantan

Hayatul Nafisa Mohammad Hafidz, Hazirah Izzati Honorius, Hazwani Hanisah Halihul Jaman, Idzni Haziqah Mohamad Nawawi, *Muhamad Nasyat Muhamad Nasir & Aikal Liyani
Mohd Rasdi

*Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan
Corresponding email: nasyat.mn@umk.edu.my*

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ABSTRACT

One of the business opportunities in the tourism industry has recently been accelerated by an increase in the interint of Muslim-friendly tourism products and services. The objective of this study is to determine the relationships between customer engagement, religiosity, and Muslim-friendly tourism on tourists' satisfaction among domestic tourists visiting tourist destinations in Kelantan. This study used a quantitative approach with a total of 201 respondents participated in the questionnaire survey. The study found that all hypotheses are supported, indicated that customer engagement, religion, ,city and Muslim-friendly tourism have a strong and high positive correlation with satisfaction among domestic tourists when visiting Kelantan. Thus, tourism management in Kelantan should design tourism facilities and campaigns that fully meet Islamic religious needs which could cater to domestic tourists visiting Kelantan for Islamic tourism.

Keywords: Customer Engagement; Religiosity; Tourist Satisfaction; Muslim-Friendly Tourism; Kelantan

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is one of the most popular countries for tourism in Asia (Muhamad Nasir, Mohamad, & Ab Ghani, 2021a). The tourism Malaysia is consistently revising its strategic plan. Currently, the Minister of Tourism, Arts, and Culture in Malaysia announced to focus on domestic tourism promotions and emphasized their strategic plans on six pillars such as (1) enhancing domestic tourism (2) encouraging more smart partnerships (3) improving tourism promotions through offline and online (4) strengthening media engagement and strategic communication (5) execute travel bubble (6) implement strategic transformation

(Tourism Malaysia, 2023). Geographically, Malaysia consists of thirteen states and three federal territories. It is inhabited by Muslim population and it is estimated around 20.6 million population in Malaysia are Muslim. Thus, Malaysia must promote their Muslim-friendly tourism since the majority of the population practices Islamic religious and lives according to Islamic principles. Kelantan is one of Malaysia's states on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

Kelantan means "Land of Lightning" and it is considered as the origin of Malay culture. It is home to numerous architectural, social, and cultural treasures. Kelantanese people are passionately attached to their culture, and this becomes obvious, especially in their daily lives. Kelantan is also popular for its tourist attractions, which include every aspect from nature to exquisite buildings and cultural communities. Most importantly, Kelantan is also popular as an Islamic city since it was ruled by the Islamic Party, namely, Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) for more than three decades. This has a very high potential to promote Kelantan as an Islamic tourism or Muslim-friendly tourism destination. Muslim-friendly tourism is defined as a type of tourism that adheres to the values of Islam. Facilities and services provided that adhere to Islamic and Syariah principles are crucial to the development of Islamic tourism. However, the facilities, cleanliness, and safety of tourists in Kelantan still need to be improved. Evidently, tourists' dissatisfaction with the state of Kelantan is viewed since the state is considered a less safe state whereby many issues were reported related to sexual crime cases, especially on tourists (Harian Metro, 2022), seven districts in Kelantan including Tumpat, Gua Musang, Jeli, Kuala Krai, Tanah Merah, Pasir Mas and Pasir Putih are among the 28 poorest districts in Malaysia due to a lack of crucial infrastructures and do not even have water treatment facilities within these areas (New Straits Times, 2019) and many Kelantanese do not withstand with the cleanliness drives (New Straits Times, 2021). Hence, these issues contradict the Islamic teachings and values which hinder this state from promoting itself as a Muslim-friendly destination. If these issues keep on arising, the initiative of tourism management in Kelantan to resemble its state as a Muslim-friendly destination since Islam concerns on the cleanliness, safety, and welfare of the people. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the factors that influence domestic tourist's satisfaction when visiting Kelantan as a Muslim-friendly tourist destination. This could help Kelantan to maintain its quality as a Muslim-friendly tourist destination among domestic tourists since every state in Malaysia should promote its tourism products attractively to increase domestic visitor arrivals to that destination (Ab Ghani et al., 2021).

There are several objectives of this study were established as follows:

1. To determine the relationship between customer engagement and tourist satisfaction visiting Muslim-friendly tourist destinations in Kelantan.
2. To determine the relationship between religiosity and tourist satisfaction visiting Muslim-friendly tourist destinations in Kelantan.
3. To determine the relationship between Muslim-friendly tourism and tourist's satisfaction with visiting Muslim-friendly tourist destinations in Kelantan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Satisfaction

Satisfaction occurs when a tourist's perception exceeds their initial expectation (Muhamad Nasir, Mohamad, & Ab Ghani, 2021b). Basically, the term consumer satisfaction is referred to

as an estimation that decides how delighted consumers are with an organization's items (products and services), administrations, and capacities (Ali et al., 2021). In the tourism context, it can be characterized as the degree of customer (tourists) satisfaction and joy attained from a trip experience incorporating a feature of a good or service that meets the traveler's expectations, wants, and needs (Khan et al., 2013). In short, if the performance of destination attributes is achieving its minimum standards and acceptable, it is assumed that tourists would be satisfied. Otherwise, if the performance of destination attributes is not achieving its expectations, the tourists will be dissatisfied (Biswas et al., 2021).

In the context of Muslim friendly tourism destination, satisfaction can be defined as the expectation of the tourists is fulfilled when the destination offers services and products that adhere to the values of Islam. Therefore, the destination marketers must understand that Muslim tourists have special needs (needs related to Islamic rules and obligations related to Islam) when they are traveling to certain destinations (Fajriyati, Afiff et al., 2020). Consequently, to sustain long in the Muslim-friendly tourism business, Muslim tourism destinations must offer the accommodation, services, food, entertainment, and facilities according to the rules and principles of Islam.

Customer Engagement

Pansari and Kumar (2017) argue that when consumers appreciate and build emotionally bonding relationships with companies, they become engaged. As a result, customer engagement is the process by which a company establishes a relationship with its customers to promote awareness and loyalty (Biscobing, 2017).

In tourism, customer engagement is related to a tourist's interactive brand experience (Brodie et al., 2011), which is gaining popularity in tourism literature. Thus, this study defined customer engagement in the context of Muslim friendly tourism where the tourists are actively involved in the activities, facilities and services according to the rules and principles of Islam provided by the destination. Moreover, several pieces of evidence have proven that customer engagement has a positive correlation with satisfaction. Evidently, Pansari & Kumar (2017) claimed that customer engagement is the factor that influences customer satisfaction in a long-term relationship. Similarly, Zaid and Patwayati (2021) found that customer engagement has a positive correlation with satisfaction. Based on the previous findings, the present study establishes the following hypothesis:

H1 There is a significant relationship between customer engagement and satisfaction among domestic tourists visiting Muslim-friendly tourists' destination in Kelantan.

Religiosity

"Religiosity" is people's diverse tendencies to devote their lives to beliefs, religious concepts, and acts (Ellis, Farrington, & Hoskin, 2019). In the context of Islam, religiosity refers to practice, knowledge, and a general code of conduct (Zohra and Irshad 2012), as well as a way of life (Abdel-Khalek et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, religiosity in tourism is indeed the visiting of a variety of spiritual places and related services for both secular and religious purposes. To be specific, Islamic religiosity in tourism refers to the people traveling to understand and practice the principles of Islam during their trip. Weidenfeld (2006) claimed that tourists would be more satisfied if they can find tourism products and services that are appealing to their religious demands. Sholihin et al.

(2022) claimed that their study succeeded to prove the linear and positive influence of the religiosity variable on life satisfaction in various study samples. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2 There is a significant relationship between religiosity and satisfaction among domestic tourists visiting Muslim-friendly tourists' destinations in Kelantan.

Muslim Friendly Tourism

Musa et al. (2021) claimed that the concept of Muslim-Friendly Tourism (MFT) is used interchangeably with other terms such as halal tourism, halal-friendly tourism, Islamic tourism, Muslim tourism, Islamic travel, Shariah Tourism, Ziyarah Tourism. Generally, the concept of these has been described differently by the authors since there is no universally accepted definition.

Muslim-friendly tourism is the term that is used to describe a service, a facility, or a place, that indicates the faith-based needs some of the Muslim travellers' needs to be taken into consideration (Fazal Bahardeen, Rasheed, & Noor, 2016). Moreover, Muslim-friendly tourism also includes halal restaurants and hotels halal transportation, halal trip packages, and halal financing. Consequently, Muslim-friendly tourism is made up of a variety of associated industries. Weidenfeld & Ron (2008) states that meeting the religious needs of visitors would cause a high degree of satisfaction among tourists. Therefore, the following hypothesis is established:

H3 There is a significant relationship between Muslim-friendly tourism and satisfaction among domestic tourists visiting Muslim friendly tourist destinations in Kelantan.

Research Framework

Figure 1 below depicts the research model of the study consisting of independent variables: customer engagement, religiosity, and Muslim-friendly tourism while satisfaction acts as the dependent variable.

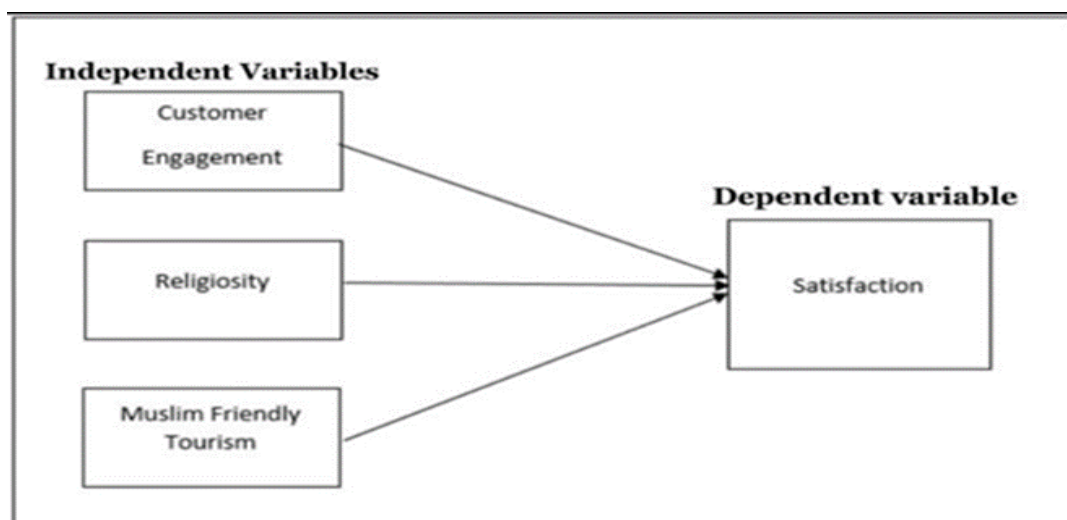


Figure 1. Research Model

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The quantitative method is used in this investigation. The research design categorizes studies as descriptive, exploratory, or causal. The effects of religiosity, customer engagement, and Muslim friendly, on satisfaction have been investigated using causal research design. A cross-sectional design is used in this study. A cross-sectional design is about collecting data at a single point in time. Self-administered questionnaires are a low-cost technique that can quickly and efficiently gather a lot of information from multiple individuals. As a result, this study collected data through a self-administered questionnaire using Google form. The unit analysis of the study is domestic tourists visiting the Islamic tourism destination in Kelantan.

Data Collection and Research Instrument

This study conducted a survey using the questionnaire in order to gather information from the respondents. Moreover, questionnaires are a useful tool for data collection. Data for this study was gathered via self-administered questionnaires. This research focuses on respondents who visited Kelantan and have used any Muslim-friendly facilities during the visit. To determine how tourists are satisfied with the services, products, and facilities of Muslim-friendly tourism in Kelantan, questionnaires were distributed to the respondents using Google Forms. The study collected around 201 responses from the survey. A purposive sampling method was used in this study. Several criteria were included in the filter questions before the individuals were selected as the respondents such as (1) they must be at the age of 18 and above (2) they must stay in Kelantan for more than 24 hours and less than 365 days (3) they engaged in any tourism activities in Kelantan (4) the individuals have used the tourism facilities in Kelantan.

The questionnaires have been designed into six parts including the screening questions section and utilized a 5-point Likert's scale from (1) strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4) to strongly agree (5). The first part is about the screening questions (to make sure the respondents are qualified to answer the questionnaires). The second part relates to customer engagement comprising four items. The third part contains questions related to religiosity consisting of six items. The fourth part of the questionnaire contains statements about Muslim-friendly tourism consisting of nine items. The fifth part of the questionnaire contains a statement related to satisfaction comprising three items. All items were adapted from the study by Abror et al. (2020). The final part of the questionnaire covers the respondent's traveling information such as gender, age, race, occupation, travel frequency, travel period, and their last visit to Kelantan.

Data Analysis

Four types of analysis were used in this study, namely reliability analysis, frequency analysis, descriptive analysis, and Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis. In addition, Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis was used to examine the effect of a linear correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Item
1. Customer Engagement	0.739	4
2. Religiosity	0.953	6
3. Muslim Friendly	0.915	9
4. Satisfaction	0.888	3

Table 1 describes the reliability analysis of the items in measuring the intended variable. Basically, all items are consistent in measuring the variables since the magnitude of Cronbach's Alpha exceeds 0.7.

Table 2. Profile of the Respondents

Respondents Profile	Categories	Frequency	Percentage(%)
1. Gender	Male	137	68.7
	Female	63	31.3
2. Age	18 – 20 years old	18	9
	21 – 30 years old	138	68.7
	31 – 40 years old	27	13.4
	41 – 50 years old	13	6.5
	51 years and above	5	2.5
3. Race	Malay	181	90
	Chinese	4	2
	Indian	2	1
	Others	14	7
4. Occupation	Government Servant	31	15.4
	Private Sector	139	69.2
	Self-employed	26	12.9
	Others	5	2.5
5. Travel Frequency	1-2 times	97	48.3
	3-5 times	72	35.8
	More than 5 times	32	15.9
6. Travel Period	Public Holiday	51	25.4
	Weekend	67	33.3
	Anytime	79	39.3
	Others	4	2
7. When was your last visit to Kelantan	A few months ago	81	40.3
	A year ago	60	29.9
	2 years ago	26	12.9
	3 years ago	34	16.9

Table 2 depicts the profile of the respondents in the present study. The majority of them are male (69%) at the age of 21- 30 years old (69%). Most of them are Malays (90%) and work in private sector (69.2%). They used to travel to Kelantan 1- 5 times (84.1%) and at any time (39.3%). The majority of them visited Kelantan in the past few months to a year ago (70.2%).

Table 3. Item Mean and Standard Deviation

Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Customer Engagement (CE)			
When interacting with this tourism site, it is difficult to detach myself (CE 1)	201	3.62	0.909
I am immersed completely in my interaction with this tourism site (CE 2)	201	3.74	0.933
I am someone who enjoys interacting with like-minded others that fly with this tourism site (CE 3)	201	3.65	0.910
In general, I thoroughly enjoy exchanging ideas with other people that visit this tourism site (CE 4)	201	3.75	0.855
2. Religiosity (RE)			
Religion is very important for my life (RE1)	201	4.60	0.878
Islam helps me to have a better life (RE2)	201	4.65	0.793
I have been supported by the Dua' (supplication) (RE 3)	201	4.63	0.797
I recognize the Prophet Muhammad (peace-be-upon-him) as the role model (RE 3)	201	4.68	0.748
One of my main priorities is performing Hajj (RE 4)	201	4.58	0.803
I believe that Allah (God) helps Me (RE 5)	201	4.67	0.796
3. Muslim Friendly Tourism (MF)			
Qibla direction for pray is available in the hotel (MF1)	201	4.28	0.838
Halal food is available at tourism sites, malls, hotels, etc (MF 2)	201	4.34	0.866
Hotel and restaurant provide segregated halal kitchen (MF 3)	201	4.15	0.895
The authority has banned the prostitution (MF4)	201	4.40	0.917
The authority has banned / indecent display of affection between sexes at public places (MF 5)	201	4.47	0.831
The authority has censored adult scenes in movies shown on TV (MF 6)	201	4.37	0.966
Free alcoholic drinks have been banned by the authority at public places (MF 7)	201	4.48	0.819
The gambling activities have been banned by the authority at public places	201	4.47	0.831
4. Satisfaction			
I am satisfied with the Islamic facilities in the	201	4.30	0.862

tourism sites (S1)			
I am satisfied with the halalness of tourism sites (S2)	201	4.34	0.864
I am satisfied with the general Islamic morality in the tourism sites (S3)	201	4.27	0.866

According to Table 3 above, the most notable results from customer engagement are the tourists interact with other people to exchange ideas ($m=3.75$) and immersed completely in the tourism site ($m=3.74$). This is true since the facilities and people make the tourists engage in the tourism destination. Meanwhile, for religiosity, domestic tourists strongly believe that the Prophet Muhammad (peace-be-upon-him) is the role model ($m=4.68$) and they believe Allah will help them ($m=4.67$). This is true because the principle of Islam is to put our trust that Allah will help us in any circumstance and follow the foot step of Prophet Muhammad (peace-be-upon-him) as a role model. Subsequently, as for Muslim-friendly tourism, the respondents believe that the authority in Kelantan has banned alcoholic drinks ($m=4.48$) and gambling activities ($m=4.47$). This is true since Kelantan is one of the states in Malaysia that prohibits alcoholic drinks for Muslims as well as gambling activities. Moreover, most the tourists are satisfied with halalness of tourist sites ($m=4.34$).

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variable	Analysis	Satisfaction
1. Customer Engagement	Pearson Correlation	0.569
	Sig. (2 tailed)	<0.001
	N	201
2. Religiosity	Pearson Correlation	0.730
	Sig. (2 tailed)	<0.001
	N	201
3. Muslim Friendly Tourism	Pearson Correlation	0.725
	Sig. (2 tailed)	<0.001
	N	201

Table 4 indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between customer engagement and satisfaction among domestic tourists visiting Muslim-friendly tourism destinations in Kelantan (0.569). Next, there is a moderate positive correlation between religiosity and satisfaction (0.730). Meanwhile, there is a strong positive correlation between Muslim-friendly tourism and satisfaction (0.725). Most importantly, all three variables have a positive significant correlation with satisfaction since the p-value is less than 0.05 ($p<0.05$). Therefore, all hypotheses are supported.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Theoretically, the present study examined the factors that determine the satisfaction among domestic tourists visiting Muslim-friendly tourism destinations in Kelantan. Based on the findings of the study, all hypotheses are supported. It was found that customer engagement has a positive significant correlation with tourist satisfaction. This is supported by the previous study by Pansari & Kumar (2021) whereby customer engagement is the factor that influences customer satisfaction in a long-term relationship. This means that, when domestic tourists can get involved in tourism activities in the tourism sites and interact with the local people by exchanging ideas in Kelantan, it would initiate their satisfaction with their trip to Kelantan. Hence, H1 is supported.

Further to this, religiosity was found to have a positive correlation with satisfaction. This finding is aligned with the finding by (Sholihin et al., 2022) whereby claimed that their study succeeded to prove the linear and positive influence of the religiosity variable on life satisfaction. This means that tourist destination in Kelantan has practiced Islamic teachings and principles, which would propel towards satisfaction among the domestic tourists visiting Kelantan. Thus, H2 is supported. Moreover, Muslim-friendly tourism has a positive correlation with satisfaction. It is consistent with the finding by (Weidenfeld & Ron, 2008) whereby meeting the religious needs of visitors would cause a high degree of satisfaction among tourists. This finding implies that the tourists require a Muslim friendly destination which is offering Islamic-based products and services such as qibla directions for pray, halal food available in the malls, hotels, etc, and the authority should ban acholic drinks and gambling activities. Thus, H3 is supported.

Practically, marketers should explore more about "Islamic tourism" and develop marketing strategies to attract Muslim tourists. The destination marketers and management in Kelantan should be able to design resorts/hotels that fully meet Islamic religious needs, such as segregated beaches and swimming pools, increase safety and protection towards domestic tourists, keep the tourism sites clean, and ban alcoholic drinks, non-halal foods as well as gambling activities to satisfy the tourists. These are among the values required for a destination to appear as a Muslim-friendly destination.

As for future research since the current study focuses on one state in Malaysia which may restrict the generalization of results when compared to other nations. Focusing on a country other than Malaysia will improve our comprehension of the destination's Islamic principles and practices in different contexts, emphasizing the concept's universality and global significance. Furthermore, future research could delve into the destination's distinctive Islamic standards and practices by comparing it to certain countries. This is important because there are considerable cultural differences in how Muslims move between countries, and these may provide important insights into understanding the research findings. This study also has some limitations whereby the study is not being funded by any institutions. Thus, the budget is limited especially for data collection and to subscribe to an advance analysis tool like PLS-SEM which incurs more costs. Then, the time constraint to collect the data.

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