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Catering to Muslim travellers: a review on the value of Muslim-friendly tour guides services

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Abstract

The tourism industry is experiencing rapid growth and is expected to continue expanding. One of the most prominent developments within this sector is the emergence of tour guides in Muslim-friendly tourism, which involves catering to the specific needs of Muslim travellers. Through a literature review, this study aimed to delve deeper into this topic, focusing on the significance of tour guide services within the framework of Muslim-friendly tourism. The review revealed that tailored tour guide services play a crucial role in enhancing the overall satisfaction of Muslim tourists during their travels. These findings have important implications for tour operators and travel agencies, as they can use them to inform the design and marketing of tour guide services tailored to Muslim travellers' needs.

Keywords:

Halal tourism;
Muslim-friendly tour
guide; Tour guide;
Muslim population;
Islamic law

1. Introduction

Tourism fosters cultural exchange, creates connections, and enhances global understanding (Bhuiyan *et al.*, 2011; Aziz, 2018). In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of travellers' diverse needs and preferences, particularly those of the Muslim faith. As Muslim travellers embark on their journeys worldwide, they seek experiences that accommodate their religious requirements, cultural sensitivities, and halal lifestyle (Mahliza *et al.*, 2021). In this context, the role of a Muslim-friendly tour guide emerges as a vital element in ensuring an inclusive and enriching travel experience for Muslim tourists. 'Muslim-friendly tour guide' refers to a knowledgeable and culturally sensitive individual who profoundly understands Islamic customs, practices, and dietary restrictions (Nugroho *et al.*, 2019). These tour guides are equipped to offer specialised services and facilitate a seamless experience for Muslim travellers. However, the importance and impact of Muslim-friendly tour guides have yet to be extensively explored and comprehensively understood within tourism research. By examining the benefits and challenges of this specialised guiding service, the research sheds light on the critical significance of Muslim-friendly tour guides in promoting a more inclusive and welcoming tourism industry.

According to Dahles (2002), tour guiding has a critical role in how a destination place is portrayed in determining the calibre of the visitor experience, the duration of stay, and the

subsequent economic benefits for a local community. The tour guide is one of the most crucial aspects of a visitor's experience at a location (Prakash *et al.*, 2010). They assist tourists and help them design their own experiences. Tour guides are front-line employees who present travellers with the 'moment of truth', which can make or break the trip (Zhang & Chow, 2004). Even though guides have been around for more than 2,600 years, they only started playing a significant role in the travel business with the rise of mass tourism (Cetin & Oter, 2016). Today, organised tourism would be very challenging without the assistance of both tour managers and tour leaders (who accompany the group during the travel) as well as tour guides (who welcome the group to the destination) (Cetin & Oter, 2016; Prakash *et al.*, 2010).

This article examines tour guides' distinct contributions and difficulties in catering to Muslim tourists. It also aims to evaluate these guides' influence on Muslim tourists' overall travel experience and emphasise the potential economic and cultural advantages that arise from meeting the needs of this expanding market segment. The review emphasises the importance of integrating Muslim-friendly services into the wider tourism industry to encourage inclusivity and improve the quality of travel experiences for Muslim travellers. It aims to enhance the existing literature by thoroughly reviewing and analysing it. It offers significant insights for tourism workers, policymakers, and scholars interested in promoting a more inclusive and hospitable travel environment.

2. Literature review

To date, the Muslim world population is increasing intensively across the globe, totalling around 1.8 billion followers, thus making Islam the world's second-biggest religion after the Christian religion, Christianity. Due to the upsurge in the number of Muslims, various fields linked to and corresponding to those followers of Islam are expanding, such as the tourism industry. Tourism is also widely affected by religious beliefs, which triggered the emergence of halal tourism (Harahsheh, 2019). Given the Islamic knowledge and awareness instilled in many Muslims in contemporary times, halal tourism becomes necessary for Muslim travellers to fulfil their religious duties wherever they travel.

As one of the service businesses, halal tourism focuses on providing services in the tourist and hospitality industries, specifically lodging, food and drinks, and travel activities. Aziz (2018) mentioned, "All these services are Shariah based with the objectives to indulge travellers who demand halal tourism services". Halal tourism comprises more than tourism activities; it also incorporates many more things, such as the availability of halal food and beverages in the local area and prayer facilities for Muslim travellers to perform their five daily prayers on time. Islam also encourages and inspires its followers to go sightseeing to open their minds and hearts when witnessing God's awe-inspiring and breathtaking creations as a sign of the greatness of God. Thus, this study examines the obstacles and difficulties of catering to Muslim tourists.

Halal tourism is basically in line with Sustainable Development Goal Eight (SDG 8) to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable tourism and target 8.9, which states that, by 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (ONU, 2020). To put it another way, halal tourism stimulates the tourism industry to become more up-to-date and aware of the current needs of people around the globe. In addition, halal tourism also increases job opportunities for the locals while promoting the traditions and cultures of non-specialists to the tourists to enhance communication between people of different cultures as a route towards making the world a better place for everyone. One of the job opportunities offered in halal tourism is that of a Muslim-friendly tour guide.

In addition, specific Islamic services and facilities must be available for Muslim tourists, such as prayer rooms that offer prayers daily and other religious purposes, as mentioned by Battour (2018). To this end, amenities such as these help to put the Muslim traveller at ease, and any place that provides these amenities is likely to be favoured by the Muslim traveller. In a similar study conducted by Battour (2018), the researcher discovered that hotels, airports, and tourist attractions offering prayer rooms and other amenities for Muslims will more often than not target this segment of Muslim tourists and will also have good user ratings.

However, religious aspects are also another very important factor, especially for Muslim tourists, and it can be the availability of Islamic or halal food. This can be especially helpful for Muslim tourists to considerably enhance the experience during a vacation in regions and companies that provide a wide range of halal food options during a vacation trip (Oktadiana *et al.*, 2016). Halal restaurants and food outlets, including hotels and food chains, cater to the needs of Muslim tourists in the form of halal food and local cuisine. This

is a good example of reciprocity and beneficial for Muslims and the exchange of culture, as the meals act as a language.

Moreover, places that consider every aspect of the halal culture will help Muslim tourists feel welcomed and comfortable during their stay (Abror *et al.*, 2019). It will also involve providing halal services and amenities, such as ensuring that beachwear is appropriate for Muslim women or having separate play areas for men and women. El-Gohary (2016) mentioned in their study that observing the fundamentals of halal culture ensures that Muslim holidaymakers enjoy their journey without experiencing cultural or ethical battles, ultimately making their travel experience extraordinary.

Conversely, many Muslim travellers actively seek environments that adhere to Islamic principles (El-Gohary, 2016). Destinations that provide such settings are more attractive to Muslim visitors who wish to spend their vacations in places that resonate with their religious beliefs. These areas offer security and comfort, allowing Muslim travellers to relax and enjoy recreational activities without encountering prohibited behaviours (Samori *et al.*, 2016). This aspect of halal tourism also appeals to families and individuals seeking a wholesome and family-friendly atmosphere. By integrating these elements, destinations can effectively cater to the needs of Muslim travellers, fostering a more inclusive and thoughtful tourism environment.

Most travel destinations do not provide complete and perfect services or facilities for Muslim visitors, such as prayer places and halal food. As mentioned above, Muslims have proliferated across the country, which is a significant problem for those who live in or visit countries where the majority of the population is non-Muslim. It may seem unnecessary for predominantly non-Muslim countries to allocate a budget specifically for Muslim travellers' services or products. However, investing in Muslim-friendly services, particularly in the tourism sector, can benefit the entire industry. This is where Muslim-friendly tour guide services play a crucial role, especially in halal tourism.

Despite the widespread presence of tour guides in many developed tourist destinations, it is surprising that the academic tourism community has paid little attention to this phenomenon. Remarkably, there is a lack of literature on the role of tour guides in facilitating cultural understanding despite the limited number of existing publications on this topic. This academic inactivity has been persistent for a long time. In 1985, the Annals of Tourism Research published a special issue on the role of tour guides, with Erik Cohen as the guest editor. However, this publication did not lead to a significant increase in knowledge on the subject. In the editor's page of the issue, Jafar Jafari (1985, p.1) stated that this Special Issue of Tourist Guides encountered an additional obstacle: several promised contributions did not come to fruition. This may be attributed to the theme itself, a topic that has been relatively neglected in tourism studies. There have been few changes since 1985, as evidenced by a thorough literature examination. The textbook *Tourism: Bridges Across Continents* (Pearce *et al.*, 1998) thoroughly examines and evaluates several aspects of the global tourism sector. However, it fails to address the significance of tour guides in developed tourism.

The role of the tour guide is likely to impact the degree of satisfaction that tourists derive from their tour experiences. On the other hand, Lopez's (1980) study proposes that an inefficient tour guide could potentially negatively affect tourists' overall satisfaction during their vacation.

As known globally, the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet PBUH are the primary sources for Muslims in directing their lives from the minor little things, such as how to eat, to the biggest ones, for example, how to perform *Hajj* per both sources. Taking that into consideration, Muslim-friendly tour guide services are a need for Muslim travellers as Muslims are obligated to perform some daily obligations, including food and beverages, which need the help of a Muslim-friendly tour guide when they are travelling. Junaidi (2020) has identified some factors that may affect halal tourism, which include halal foods and general Islamic values. That is to say, the joyful moments that Muslim travellers should enjoy may be struck down by the unavailability of halal foods and difficulties in practising Islamic values during travel. To support the above sentences, "The availability of Halal food and beverages is vital for destinations that target Muslim travellers. It is now common for Muslim tourists to request Halal food and beverages when they visit non-Muslim destinations" (Battour & Ismail, 2016). So, Islam has detailed and specific laws, mainly on foods, such as the prohibition of eating halal animals that are not slaughtered by *Shari'ah* law. So, Muslim-friendly tour guide services will help Muslim travellers seek halal foods and beverages and have a great experience while travelling without worrying about what food is available to fill their stomachs.

As Malaysia is one of the countries with the most significant number of Muslim populations, Muslim-friendly tour guide services should be made compulsory in each country due to Islamic law. According to the holy book of the *Qur'an* and the hadith of the prophet Muhammad, Islamic beliefs strongly encourage believers to travel (Andespa *et al.*, 2020). As a result, there are several provisions regarding Islamic tourism, which are as follows: *mustahsan* (recommended), which is a journey aimed at preaching (*dakwah*) and contemplating the signs of nature that can represent His greatness; *mubah* (permissible), which is a journey aimed at delight and pleasure but without causing harm (sin); although it is not immoral, *makruh* is a journey that should be avoided. In other words, the trip is purely for amusement purposes and serves no religious purpose. Lastly, it is *haram* (prohibited) to travel to commit an immoral act or sin, defy God's rights, and engage in religious festivities, rituals, or beliefs of religions other than Islam. Therefore, it can no longer be denied that Islamic law is one of the reasons why Muslim-friendly tour guide services should be made necessary in each country.

Considering Islam as a comprehensive religion, the notion of halal in the context of tourism demonstrates the participation of Islamic teachings in all aspects of a Muslim's life. For instance, Islam teaches its followers to set Islam as the guideline in living their lives and the Prophet Muhammad PBUH as the role model in leading their lives. Thus, having no facilities for Muslims to practice Islamic teaching may become a hardship. Cultural, social class, reference groups, and family factors partially influence the decision-making process of tourists (Najib *et al.*, 2020). Considering that Islamic teachings have a lot to do with the daily lives of their followers, it is recommended that a Muslim-friendly tour guide exists all around the globe to prevent a negative effect on Muslim travellers' travel experiences during travel. Halal tourism can also accommodate Muslim travellers who want to practice Islamic teachings effortlessly when travelling.

On the other hand, halal refers to the capacity to utilise something to meet physical necessities, such as food, beverages, and medications. Halal also refers to the ability to eat, drink, and perform things under Islamic law and principles

(Asa & Azmi, 2017). Halal is a concept that encompasses all elements of life. The term halal is used in a wide range of contexts, including human connections, attire and demeanour, social and business activities, commerce and financial services, investment, and any other parallel using rules and guidelines put out by Islam. All the stuff individuals use in their regular lifestyle must be clean and devoid of doubt, according to Islam. Taking anything, *Subhash* does not always offer calm and tranquillity to one's thoughts and spirits; in fact, it goes against humans or nature, as mentioned (Shaary & Wan Harun, 2021). Muslims are urged to avoid uncertainty, which is referred to as *Subhash*. This is to guarantee that all actions are carried out with confidence. As a result, it is vital to underline that food is an essential topic in Islam, and one must comprehend the halal food industry.

Furthermore, sustainable tourism is considered a commendable approach to tourism from an Islamic perspective (Saffinee *et al.*, 2019). From an Islamic standpoint, sustainable tourism integrates the host and local communities' religious beliefs, practices, and dedication (Mahmood & Nurunnabi, 2019). According to the findings, the local people firmly adhered to religious ideas and dedication, which positively correlated with their welcoming behaviour. The perspective of inhabitants towards tourism development is influenced by Islamic religiosity. This demonstrates that the dedication and devotion of religious individuals may effectively mitigate any harm or damage to safeguard the environment.

In Islam, the forbidden things are minimal, while the allowed things are extensive. There are only a small number of explicit texts in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* on prohibition, while anything not mentioned in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* is considered halal and permissible. In this case, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said: "What Allah has made lawful in His book is lawful and what He has forbidden is unlawful, and what He withheld is lawful as His favour." Therefore, it also includes travelling to other countries while enjoying the beauty of Allah's creation. In addition, to be a triumphant Muslim and loved by Allah, it is necessary to follow the straight path by carrying out His commands and abandoning His prohibitions. No matter where the Muslim is, whether at home or travelling, his or her responsibilities must be weighed and carried out diligently.

3. Methodology

The article addresses the growing trend of Muslim-friendly tourism and the role of tour guides in catering to the needs of Muslim tourists. The methodology involves conducting a literature review to provide insights into this niche within the tourism industry. By critically assessing the significance of tour guide services within the framework of Muslim-friendly tourism, the review aims to establish the importance of tailored services in enhancing the overall satisfaction of Muslim travellers. Data collection involves gathering detailed and contextually rich information through a literature review. Researchers actively take notes to capture nuances and critical themes. This review was presented through a narrative framework, incorporating detailed descriptions to illustrate key findings.

4. Findings and discussion

The findings are categorised into various subsections: the expansion of the Muslim population, potential economic and cultural advantages, the role of tour guides, and the Importance of Muslim-friendly tour guide services.

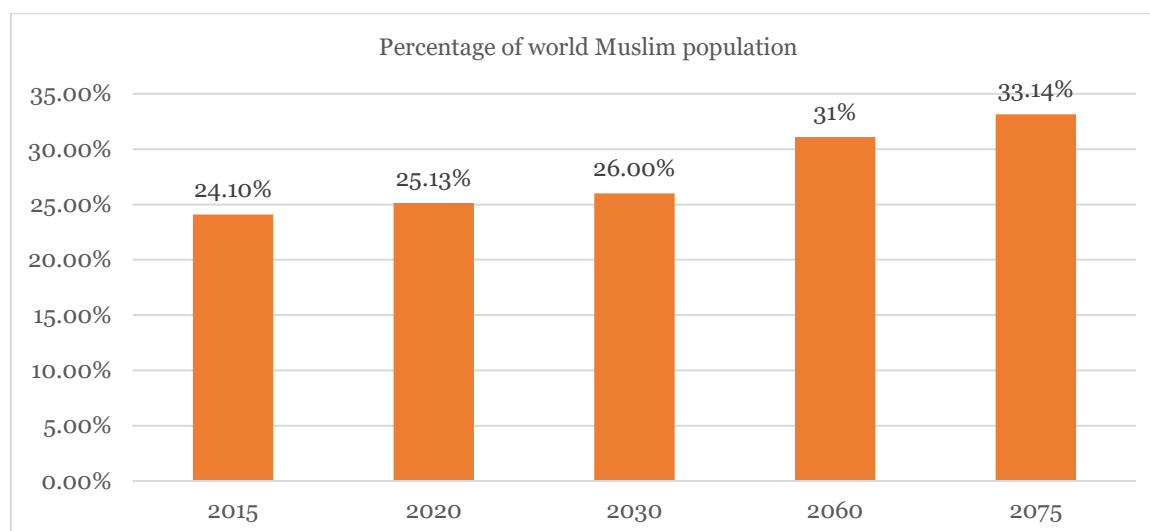


Figure 1: The growth rate of world muslim population (Yan *et al.*, 2017; Hackett & Lipka, 2018).

4.1 Expansion of Muslim population around the globe

Muslim-friendly tour guides are vital as the growing Muslim population worldwide has had a favourable impact on the demand for supply in the Islamic tourist business. Tourism is becoming a popular and profitable global leisure activity for many countries. As Muslims hold the title of the fastest-growing religion in the world, it is indisputable that they hold a significant share of the economic and financial gain for many countries, particularly Muslim-majority countries. The value of Muslim travellers currently represents 10% of the travel market, and spending was USD 126 billion in 2011 and is estimated to reach USD 192 billion by 2020 (Liu *et al.*, 2018). Halal tourism is also required in each country as it benefits Muslim travellers and increases profit in the travel market. Demand for halal tourism services is expected to rise at an astounding rate in the subsequent years, in line with the world's developing population of Muslims, which is expected to reach 2.2 billion in the following ten years (Aziz, 2018). As a result, the Muslim travel industry is predicted to rise rapidly, reaching USD220 billion and increasing to USD300 billion by 2036. Thus, the report makes it irrefutable that halal tourism significantly increases the country's revenue while providing the best facilities for Muslim travellers.

Between 2015 and 2075, Muslims will increase at a rate greater than double as fast as the rest of the world's population. Islam is expected to replace Christianity as the most prominent global religious group in the second half of this century. Hackett and Lipka (2018) stated that the global population is forecast to grow by 32% over the next decade. Muslims are expected to expand by 70%, from 1.8 billion in 2015 to approximately 3 billion in 2060. Muslims accounted for 24.1% of the global population in 2015. They are predicted to make up more than three out of ten of the world's population in 2060 by 31.1%. The Muslim population is proliferating and is expected to reach 26% of the world's population by 2030, as stated in Figure 1. Since Islam is the second largest religion with a steady increase of followers, the growth of this population is estimated to reach 25.13% in 2020 and 33.14% by 2075 (Yan *et al.*, 2017).

Muslim-friendly tour guide services are essential since there is a considerable Muslim population in these rising markets,

which is the halal tourism industry. Muslim tourists are increasing faster than worldwide tourists (Liu *et al.*, 2018). COMCEC (2016) reported that the growth of Muslim travellers is a new emerging segment within the travel sector, which will affect the global tourism industry. The fact that Muslims had the youngest median age of 24 among all major religious groups in 2015, over seven years younger than the non-Muslim median age of 32, contributes to the Muslim population's inclination (Research, 2011). Most Muslims will reach the age when they can start having children. This, paired with a high reproductive rate, will hasten the Muslim population's rise. According to a survey by Pew Research (2011), Muslims have even more children than followers of seven other prominent religious groups. The Muslim population's growth and increasing disposable income have resulted in many Muslims travelling for leisure, business, healthcare, and religious reasons. This increase has resulted in Muslim travellers becoming one of the fastest-growing travel segments in the tourism industry, and this number of Muslims across the globe has been the main factor in the need for Muslim-friendly tour guide services. However, it is because tourism is becoming a popular and profitable global leisure activity, and most of the travellers are Muslim, as they are the second largest population and religion in the world.

4.2 The potential economic and cultural advantages

Malaysia is far behind the other countries listed in the Global Muslim Travel Index. Malaysia has been a leader in MFT because the Tourism Ministry for Malaysia has been focusing on the importance of the Muslim Market since 2009. The Islamic Tourism Center (ITC) was also established for the same reason. Many travel service companies have concurred with this, and there are many reasons why this is possible. The country has put much effort into making the place suitable for Muslim tourists worldwide who wish to tour (COMCEC, 2016). Muslim tourism did not imply inventing new or different commodities and services. However, instead of completely changing places and making them suitable for everyone, places would need to add and tweak a few things to suit Muslims. Malaysia originally coined the idea of MFT as the first country to introduce it.

Due to this commitment, the business receives much education, and guidelines and standards have been developed for the most significant services. Because of this, the authorities introduced standard services such as halal food, a place for prayers, and well-equipped washrooms in all the buildings. They have also been well-maintained, especially regarding their physical appearance (COMCEC, 2016).

A value that Malaysia has is its visa-friendly policy, which allows people from the Arab and Gulf States to come into the country without obtaining a visa, and they are allowed to stay within the country for up to three months (COMCEC, 2016). Many Arab and Asian Muslim tourists also enjoy shopping for imported items at Malaysia's new, air-conditioned shopping complexes, particularly for luxury goods.

According to the author, the most significant possibility of economic accumulation is to undertake Islamic tourism. Many member countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) are already well-equipped to serve the needs of Muslim travellers, and they may also benefit more from further capitalising on the Islamic tourism industry. Therefore, the diversification of Islamic tourism can be classified as a factor that will contribute to these countries' economic growth and development.

OIC countries can also tap into religious travel by aligning religious travel with cultural and heritage visits to offer innovative and divergent tourist products. Countries that offer Islamic or historical sites will benefit enormously from the chance to enlarge and market the potential of destinations to accommodate Muslim tourists' needs by creating appropriate and specific touristic packages.

4.3 The role of tour guides

Tour guides offer various services, with specific duties varying by speciality. As cited by Prakash *et al.* (2010), these include tourist guides, step-on guides, city guides, interpreters, escorts, tour escorts, and sometimes tour leaders and managers. Several authors have also described tour guides as 'an information giver and fount of knowledge', 'mentors' (Cohen, 1985), 'a mediator' (de Kadt, 1979; Nettekoven, 1979; Pearce, 1982), 'culture brokers' (McKean, 1976) and, 'middleman' (van den Bergh, 1980), etc.

According to Dahles (2002), tour guiding has a critical role in how a destination place is portrayed in determining the calibre of the visitor experience, the duration of stay, and the subsequent economic benefits for a local community. The tour guide is one of the most crucial aspects of a visitor's experience at a location (Prakash *et al.*, 2010). They assist tourists in designing their own experiences. Tour guides are front-line employees who present travellers with the 'moment of truth', which can make or break the trip (Zhang & Chow, 2004). As cited by Cetin and Other (2016), even though guides have been around for more than 2,600 years, they only started playing a significant role in the travel business with the rise of mass tourism. Today, organised tourism would be very challenging without the assistance of tour guides, both tour managers and tour leaders (who accompany the group during the travel) and tour guides (who welcome the group to the destination) (Cetin & Oter, 2016; Prakash *et al.*, 2010).

Although there are various definitions of a tour guide, the International Association of Tour Managers (IATM) and the

European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (EFTGA) have agreed upon the following definition: "A tour guide is a person who leads groups or individual foreign or domestic visitors around the monuments, sites, and museums of a city or region; to interpret the cultural and natural heritage and environment in a way that is inspiring and entertaining in the visitor's chosen language" (EFTGA, 2014). IATM claims that tour guides serve as 'intermediaries' between tourists and the 'unknown' environment, acting as 'buffers' between tourists and the social environment, arranging transportation, interpreting, handling issues, protecting travellers from difficulties, and creating a safe environment for tourists (Zhang & Chow, 2004).

Professionals in the tourism and hospitality industries, often called 'tour guides', escort tourists around popular destinations (Ap & Wong, 2001). Tour guides can take visitors on excursions, museums, and tours of various geographical areas. The best tour guides have a wealth of information about the local culture, history, and practicalities to share with their clients (Cohen, 1985). In order to provide visitors with a memorable experience, many businesses and groups employ guides, some of whom may have specialised knowledge and expertise in the area, culture, or type of recreation for which they are hired.

Moreover, a book that was written by Pond (1993) makes the case that a tour guide should be someone who can take on responsibility, an educator who helps the visitors understand the places they visit, an ambassador who extends hospitality and promotes the destination in a way that encourages visitors to return, a host who can create a comfortable environment for the guest, a tour manager who knows how and when to fulfil the previous four roles, and a facilitator who knows how and when to carry out the previous four roles (facilitator).

Tour guides offer various services, with specific duties varying by speciality. To a greater or lesser extent, depending on factors like group size, mode of transportation, age range, and duration of the trip, tour guides are responsible for providing amusement for their clients, fielding inquiries, and imparting helpful knowledge (Mossberg, 1995; Dahles, 2002). Generally speaking, a tour guide has extensive expertise about a specific location, historical period, or type of activity and is hired to show visitors around and answer questions about it (Prakash *et al.*, 2010). Although a guide's passion for a topic is important, some employers require professional training to ensure that their employees are adequately equipped to provide tourists with valuable and interesting information (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2016; Lin *et al.*, 2017; Guzel and Sezerel., 2020; Pereira, 2015).

According to Cetin and Other (2016), a knowledgeable guide is one of the most significant resources a tourism business can have. A guide can be considered the 'façade' of a firm or business. Many foreign tourists see their tour guides as ambassadors of the city or nation they visit. While the Oxford Dictionary defines a guide as merely "a person who shows others the way," studies have shown that a tour guide's responsibilities are much more expansive. Early research on tour guides concentrated on the function of tour guides. As stated by Cohen (1985), the words 'pathfinder' and 'mentor' are two of the origins of the term 'tour guide'. The leading and mediating domains of the tour guide's duty inspired the two origin lines.

Cetin and Other (2016) stated that Cohen (1985) outlined four fundamental aspects of a tour guide's role. The elements are communicative, social, interactive, and instrumental. The tour guide's most important responsibility is ensuring the excursion is completed successfully as a continuous social venture. Second, the social aspect emphasises the individual's responsibility for the cohesiveness and morale of the travelling company. The third aspect of participation is his or her function as an intermediary between his or her group and the local population, landmarks, institutions, and tourist attractions. The fourth position of the communicative component refers to the tour guide's role in informing tourists about the destination (Cohen, 1985).

4.4 The importance of Muslim-friendly tour guide services

In addition, a study identified four key facets of the job of a tour guide. These elements are communicative, social, interactive, and instrumental (Cetin & Oter, 2015; Cohen, 1985). The instrumental aspect of the tour guide's job, first and foremost, relates to his or her accountability for completing the journey as a continuous social venture. Second, the social aspect is focused on the individual's accountability for the cohesiveness and morale of the travelling party. The third element of engagement is his or her role as a liaison between his or her group and the local populace, landmarks, institutions, and tourist attractions. The fourth position of the communicative component pertains to the tour guide's function of providing tourists with information about the destination (Cohen, 1985).

In addition, Table 1 shows the study conducted by Jamaluddin *et al.* (2023) outlines five fundamental characteristics that must be met in order to be considered a Muslim-friendly tour guide.

Therefore, a Muslim-friendly tour guide is knowledgeable about the Islamic culture and norms and thus able to offer truthful information to Muslim tourists. It means that they know the importance of religious activities and services and can help the visitors to find the right places for praying, halal foods, and other religious needs (Sünnetçioğlu *et al.*, 2020). The cultural sensitivity of a Muslim-friendly tour guide does not only cover adequate and appropriate information forwarding. This is because they are familiar with the culture and religion of the Muslims and can, therefore, provide Islam-oriented information to Muslim tourists, which can be more detailed and informative (Jim, 2008). They know the importance of prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage, for instance, the five times a day prayer, the fasting in the month of Ramadan, and the travelling to holy places. Thus, they can direct the guests to the correct location for prayers by pointing out the nearest mosque or organising suitable praying areas.

Besides, it helps to suggest halal food choices, considering the dietary needs and guaranteeing that Muslim travellers can eat appropriately (Sünnetçioğlu *et al.*, 2020). They can also help with other religious needs, like identifying places for washing (wudu), identifying suitable clothing, and visiting holy places. This way, by ensuring that he or she is culturally sensitive, a Muslim-friendly tour guide makes the Muslim travellers feel welcomed and able to practice their faith while on their tour.

Table 1: Basic characteristics of Muslim-friendly tour guide

No	Characteristic	Explanation	Reference
1	Cultural Sensitivity	They should be aware of the different wants and needs of Muslim travellers and show respect for their beliefs and traditions.	Cetinkaya & Oter, 2017; Lin Lin & Chen, 2017
2	Knowledge of Islamic practices	They can help Muslim travellers and give them correct information about religious duties and things to consider because they understand.	Battour & Ismail, 2016
3	Language skills	Knowing how well tour guides speak English is important because that is the language they use to discuss interesting historical sites with individuals from other countries.	Chanwanakul, 2021
4	Familiarity with halal services	Tour guides should know about restaurants, hotels, and other places that are Halal-certified or Muslim-friendly and can meet the dietary needs of Muslim tourists.	Battour & Ismail, 2016
5	Excellent communication and interpersonal skills	A tourist guide is someone who talks directly to visitors and residents. They must discuss nearby places so the group can understand and connect with them.	Lovrentej, 2015

Furthermore, according to Amr *et al.* (2019), one of the significant issues for Muslims is the search for halal food during travel. A Muslim-friendly tour guide will be able to direct tourists to restaurants or shops that have halal certification and where they can get halal food while they travel. Muslim travellers are usually in the dilemma of searching for an appropriate halal food alternative that respects the Muslim dietary code (Amr *et al.*, 2019).

A Muslim-friendly tour guide solves this by using their understanding of the area and the people they can vouch for to direct tourists to eateries and shops that are halal certified. They are aware of the conditions that govern the cooking of halal foods and will help the traveller to identify places where these conditions are well understood. From local to international, the tour guide can offer various options and meals to meet the customers' needs.

This way, proficiency in the services provided will allow Muslim tourists to enjoy delicious meals without doubts about the food's origin, cooking, and components (Bohari *et al.*, 2013). It gives the illusion of having fulfilled one's taste buds and allows the travellers to get the whole experience of the culture of the place they are visiting. Thus, by providing accurate information on the halal meal options in a given country, a Muslim-friendly tour operator makes the journey enjoyable while ensuring that meal difficulties do not mar the vacation.

Furthermore, a Muslim-friendly tour guide knows that Muslim travellers need to pray and will help them find the nearest mosque, prayer room, or any suitable place to offer their prayers. They can guarantee that the travel itinerary follows the prayer timings, enabling travellers to observe their prayers. Understanding the importance of prayer for Muslim tourists, a Muslim-friendly tour guide takes extra measures to meet their client's religious requirements (Battour, 2016). They are well aware of the surroundings and can quickly point out the nearest mosque or prayer hall where travellers can perform prayers. From having to look for a quiet corner in a heavily populated urban area or look for a mosque in a remote village, the tour guide guarantees that there is always space to pray.

They also pay attention to the prayer timings while preparing the itinerary and give enough time for the travellers to pray without hurrying them or affecting their timeline (Battour, 2016). The tour guide may also inform the travellers of the *Qibla*, which is the direction of the *Kaaba* in Mecca used in the praying. Hence, by taking care of logistical issues of prayer arrangements, a Muslim-friendly tour guide ensures that Muslim travellers can fulfil their spiritual needs and adhere to their religious practices while touring (Battour, 2018). This concern towards prayer facilities not only helps customers feel more comfortable but also reflects the tour guide's awareness of the religious requirements of guests.

Moreover, Muslim tourists usually plan their visits to various historical and religious places (Bhuiyan *et al.*, 2011). Knowledge of Islamic heritage is a key characteristic of a Muslim-friendly tour guide, which enables him or her to offer informative background information and stories when visiting mosques, Islamic landmarks, and historical sites linked to Muslim histories. A professional Muslim-friendly tour guide is conversant with Islamic history and culture, making the trip more enjoyable for the Muslim traveller. They possess a good knowledge concerning the various histories and religions of the

regions they visit; thus, they can provide historical and religious information when visiting mosques, Islamic landmarks, and historical places of interest associated with the history of Muslims (Bhuiyan *et al.*, 2011; Abdulhusain *et al.*, 2022). They can recount the tales and events of these sites, the people related to them, and the history of Islamic civilisation.

Their knowledge not only entails facts and statistics but also explains the history and significance of these places (Bhuiyan *et al.*, 2011). Thus, the tour guide informs the Muslim visitors about the history of different places, which allows them to feel more confident, look for their origins, and appreciate the history of Muslims in the visited countries. This is because the guide can enhance the experience of the Muslim traveller by leading them to visit historical mosques, appreciate the architecture and learn about scholars and leaders (Al-Amin, 2002).

However, it is important to recognise that each culture has its own rules and etiquette, especially when dealing with Muslim tourists, as highlighted by Jafari and Way (1994). A Muslim-friendly tour guide is well conversant with Muslim norms and, among other things, will be able to advise tourists on the correct dress code and other conduct to follow within society so as not to offend society in any way. Cultural etiquette is always important, especially in a Muslim country (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). A Muslim-friendly tour guide will provide information about the multicultural population of the country and the general rules that Muslims obey. They are familiar with the correct conduct and acceptable dress code in Islam and the region (Jafari & Way, 1994).

With this knowledge, they will be able to enlighten the Muslim traveller on how to engage the locals appropriately, be polite and avoid offending them. They can help identify the correct dress code for religious sites or conservative regions, which means that travellers will dress modestly and in a culturally appropriate manner (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). In addition, the tour guide can explain how to greet and conduct oneself in the presence of Muslims, their gestures, and social etiquette that tourists should seek to observe while interacting with the locals and fostering goodwill (Arun *et al.*, 2023). By providing information on cultural etiquette, the Muslim-friendly tour guide helps Muslim tourists have a smooth cultural interaction and respect and enjoy their tour experience by being culturally sensitive in different destinations.

5. Conclusion

Briefly, due to the growing Muslim population, Muslim-friendly tour guide services are critical for Muslim travellers. The Muslim world population is rapidly growing worldwide, with around 1.8 billion followers, making Islam the world's second biggest religion after Christianity. As the number of Muslims grows, numerous areas related to and corresponding to those who follow Islam, such as tourism, are expanding. The tourist industry is becoming a successful and profitable worldwide leisure activity for many countries. Because Muslims are the world's fastest-growing religion, it is undeniable that they contribute significantly to many countries' economic and financial growth, especially regarding job opportunities.

Next, the responsibility for Muslims to follow Islamic law while travelling should be taken seriously, as Muslims need to obey

Allah's command. From the most minor details, the *Qur'an* and the teachings of the Prophet PBUH are widely recognised as the primary guides for Muslims in their lives. As for the recommendation, the emergence of Muslim-friendly tour guide services in the halal tourism business requires practitioners to have a clear understanding of the practices of *Shari'ah* compliance as a prerequisite for high-value tourism experiences among Muslim travellers. Thus, the consideration of *Shari'ah* compliance should also be expanded to other related tourism businesses and facilities, such as attractions, airports, visitor information centres, and events. The service provider's duty in constructing the appropriate tourism products and services is to assemble related tourism components to fulfil the Muslim tourist requirements. So, the relationship between tourism and religion can be shown.

Allah has stated in *Surah Al-Mulk* verse 15: "He is the One who made the earth easy for you, so walk in all directions and eat some of His sustenance. And only to Him are you (returned after) resurrected," as well as in *Surah Hujurat* verse 13: "O humankind, indeed, We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." It is crystal clear that tourism is a deed that is vouched for by Muslims who have stable finances to move around and explore the whole universe, which is created miraculously by The All-Mighty. As a result of Muslim sources and guides, the welfare of Muslims is better taken care of, such as having a proper place to worship, having a variety of halal food sources, and spreading Islamic values to non-Muslims throughout the land, sea and air.

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