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Mohammad Khalil Mohammad Alramadeen ¹, Nurul Nahirah binti Rasidik ²

Preface

As the Chief Editor, I am proud to present this second issue of our journal, which continues to reflect the growing strength and diversity of tourism and hospitality research in Malaysia and beyond. In this issue, we successfully published 12 papers, showcasing a balanced mix of conceptual, empirical, and industry-related studies. This achievement is further strengthened by contributions from international authors, including those from Uzbekistan, Indonesia, and Korea, highlighting the expanding global engagement of JoCTH.

We are particularly pleased to include a contribution from the industry through the paper by Madam Wan Azmin Mohd Abu Bakar from Persatuan Hal Ehwal Veteran ATM (PERHEBAT), which discusses the involvement of Malaysian Armed Forces veterans in the tourism industry. This paper provides valuable practical insights and reflects the importance of bridging academia and industry in developing a more inclusive and sustainable tourism sector.

The papers in this issue cover broad yet interconnected themes in contemporary tourism research. Muslim-friendly tourism continues to be a central focus, with studies exploring Generation Z preferences in adventure tourism, operational challenges in integrating faith-based elements, and conceptual frameworks for mobile engagement in meeting religious needs. Additionally, research on modest fashion and Muslim women travellers highlights issues of comfort, safety, and belonging, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity in tourism experiences.

Youth engagement and motivation in tourism are also prominently featured. Studies on Generation Z participation in mosque tourism and adventure tourism provide insights into the evolving behaviours and expectations of younger travellers, offering important implications for tourism planning and marketing strategies.

Innovation and emerging tourism trends are reflected in research on fandom-driven tourism, particularly in the context of K-pop concert experiences in Malaysia, as well as studies examining last-mile connectivity and its influence on tourists' visit intentions. These contributions demonstrate how infrastructure and popular culture shape modern travel behaviour.

Cultural and heritage dimensions are explored through research on culinary identity and intercultural exchange in Hoi An and Da Nang, alongside a bibliometric study on dark tourism, which maps the development of this growing research area. These studies contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between culture, history, and tourism experiences.

From an industry and analytical perspective, this issue also includes research on forecasting hotel service indicators in the Khorezm region, Uzbekistan, providing valuable insights into tourism performance and planning.

Finally, the inclusion of a paper written in Arabic on language and tourism in Southeast Asia highlights the importance of linguistic diversity and effective communication in enhancing the travel experience, particularly for Muslim tourists.

Overall, this issue demonstrates a strong foundation of collaboration, relevance, and academic rigor. The diversity of topics and contributors reflects a vibrant research community that bridges theory and practice across different cultural and geographical contexts. Moving forward, the journal aims to further expand its international reach and continue fostering impactful and interdisciplinary tourism research.

Sincerely,
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mazni Saad
Chief-in-Editor

Penglibatan Veteran Angkatan Tentera Malaysia (ATM) dalam Industri Pelancongan Malaysia

Wan Azmin Mohd Abu Bakar

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Abstract – Artikel ini membincangkan peranan serta potensi veteran Angkatan Tentera Malaysia (ATM) sebagai tenaga strategik dalam pembangunan industri pelancongan Malaysia. Dengan mengambil kira konteks sosioekonomi Malaysia, kompetensi dan pengalaman yang dimiliki oleh veteran ATM, telah menjadi nilai tambah kepada perkembangan sektor pelancongan yang semakin menuntut tenaga kerja yang berkemahiran tinggi dan berdisiplin. Artikel ini turut menilai cabaran yang dihadapi oleh golongan veteran ATM dalam menceburi sektor tersebut, di samping mengemukakan strategi yang relevan untuk memastikan penyertaan mereka dapat diperkasakan secara berkesan. Secara keseluruhannya, artikel ini menekankan bahawa veteran ATM memiliki nilai tambah yang signifikan dan berpotensi menjadi pemangkin penting dalam meningkatkan daya saing serta kelestarian industri pelancongan Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: industri pelancongan; kompetensi veteran; kerjaya kedua; pembangunan sosioekonomi; strategi pemeraksanaan; warisan ketenteraan

1.0 PENGENALAN

Industri pelancongan Malaysia merupakan salah satu sektor strategik yang telah lama menjadi penyumbang utama kepada ekonomi negara. Menurut Tourism Satellite Account (2024) yang dikeluarkan oleh Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia (DOSM), industri pelancongan menjana RM291.9 bilion dan menyumbang 15.1% kepada Keluaran

Dalam Negeri Kasar (KDNK) pada tahun 2024 jika dibandingkan pada tahun 2023 iaitu sebanyak 14.9%. Hal ini menunjukkan pemulihan dan pertumbuhan yang mantap dalam sektor ini selepas impak pandemik COVID-19 dan sekali gus membuka kembali ruang kepada tenaga kerja dan usahawan baharu.

Potensi industri pelancongan boleh diperkukuhkan dengan memberi fokus kepada beberapa aspek utama seperti pelancongan lestari, pelancongan digital dan pelancongan luar bandar seperti yang digariskan dalam Polisi Pelancongan Nasional 2030 (MOTAC, 2021). Matlamat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pengalaman pelancongan di Malaysia melalui pengurusan yang lebih cekap, penggunaan teknologi, dan integrasi warisan serta budaya dalam produk pelancongan negara. Industri pelancongan juga perlu diberi perhatian dalam pembangunan “Kampung Mesra Pelancongan” yang bertujuan untuk memperkenalkan lebih banyak destinasi pelancongan luar bandar yang tidak hanya berasaskan alam semula jadi, tetapi juga kaya dengan warisan budaya tempatan. Konsep ini bukan sahaja menawarkan peluang bagi pelancong untuk merasai pengalaman yang lebih autentik, tetapi juga memberi manfaat kepada komuniti tempatan dari segi ekonomi dan pembangunan sosial (UNWTO, 2022).

2.0 VETERAN ATM DALAM INDUSTRI PELANCONGAN

2.1 Lanskap Sosioekonomi Veteran Angkatan Tentera Malaysia (ATM) dan Keperluan Peluang Baharu

Veteran ATM merupakan kumpulan yang semakin dilihat mempunyai potensi besar untuk mengisi ruang dan keperluan industri pelancongan negara. Veteran ATM terdiri daripada individu yang telah berkhidmat dalam tiga cabang perkhidmatan ATM iaitu Tentera Darat Malaysia (TDM), Tentera Laut Diraja Malaysia (TLDM) dan Tentera Udara Diraja Malaysia (TUDM). Setiap tahun, sekitar 5,000 hingga 6,000 orang anggota ATM akan menamatkan perkhidmatan dan sebahagian besar daripada mereka ini berada dalam lingkungan usia produktif, iaitu sekitar 32 hingga 55 tahun (JHEV, 2023). Sehingga Oktober 2025, dilaporkan veteran ATM berjumlah 222,084 (portal JHEV, 2025) orang yang merangkumi pelbagai latar belakang kepakaran, termasuk kemahiran berstruktur, kepimpinan, pengurusan keselamatan, kecekapan teknikal dan kecekapan dalam operasi lapangan di sepanjang tempoh perkhidmatan. Peralihan daripada kerjaya ketenteraan kepada kerjaya awam merupakan cabaran besar bagi kebanyakan veteran.

Veteran ATM juga merupakan golongan yang menjalani kehidupan kerjaya yang berdisiplin ketat dan terdedah kepada latihan ketenteraan yang intensif selama bertahun-tahun. Data Jabatan Hal Ehwal Veteran ATM (JHEV, 2022) menunjukkan bahawa sebahagian besar veteran ini tidak mempunyai pekerjaan tetap dalam tempoh dua tahun selepas meninggalkan perkhidmatan dan 45% daripadanya bergantung kepada pekerjaan tidak formal. Walaupun pelbagai program latihan dan sokongan telah disediakan melalui Perbadanan Hal Ehwal Bekas Angkatan Tentera (PERHEBAT) dan agensi awam/swasta yang lain, sebahagian veteran masih menghadapi kekangan untuk menyesuaikan diri dalam industri yang lebih komersial sifatnya.

Pada masa yang sama, industri pelancongan Malaysia menunjukkan perkembangan pesat, terutamanya dalam sektor ekopelancongan komuniti dan pelancongan pengembaraan (UNWTO, 2021; Buckley, 2020). Menurut Buckley (2020), pelancongan pengembaraan dan pelancongan berasaskan alam merupakan antara sektor yang berkembang pesat di destinasi yang memiliki kekayaan biodiversiti dan landskap semula jadi, dan hal ini menjadikan Malaysia berpotensi besar dalam memenuhi permintaan tersebut. Malaysia mempunyai lebih 70% kawasan hutan hujan tropika,

taman negara, berpuluh-puluh kawasan konservasi dan pelbagai produk pelancongan budaya serta sejarah. Kesemua ini memerlukan tenaga kerja yang mempunyai kemahiran dalam aspek keselamatan, navigasi, penceritaan sejarah, pengurusan operasi di lapangan dan pemandu pelancong. Kesemua bidang ini merupakan bidang yang telah sebatik dalam kehidupan seorang anggota tentera. Apa yang mereka perlu adalah latihan dan kemahiran khusus yang diiktiraf dalam pasaran industri dan pekerjaan

2.2 Keupayaan dan Kompetensi Veteran ATM dalam Konteks Pelancongan

Keupayaan veteran ATM ini sebenarnya jauh lebih kompleks daripada apa yang sering disangka. Mereka bukan sahaja terlatih dari aspek ketahanan mental dan fizikal, tetapi juga memiliki kecekapan dalam pengurusan situasi, penyelesaian masalah, analisis risiko dan komunikasi strategik. Dalam operasi ketenteraan, mereka dilatih untuk memahami struktur organisasi, mengatur logistik, mengawal keselamatan persekitaran dan melaksanakan arahan secara sistematik. Apabila diaplikasikan dalam industri pelancongan, kemahiran ini terbukti sangat bernilai.

Sebagai contoh, dalam produk pelancongan berasaskan pengembaraan seperti pendakian bukit atau gunung, ekspedisi hutan, aktiviti daya tahan atau lawatan ke kawasan terpencil, mereka mempunyai kemampuan untuk merancang laluan, mengurus risiko kecederaan, memantau tingkah laku peserta dan memastikan keselamatan sepanjang program. Tambahan pula, pengalaman mereka dalam navigasi kompas, membaca peta topografi dan komunikasi radio membolehkan mereka menjalankan aktiviti lapangan dengan tahap keselamatan lebih tinggi berbanding individu tanpa latihan ketenteraan.

Selain itu, veteran ATM juga sering menjadi sumber penceritaan sejarah yang autentik. Pelancongan sejarah ketenteraan semakin mendapat perhatian, terutama dalam kalangan pelancong domestik yang ingin memahami perjuangan negara dalam mempertahankan kedaulatan. Mereka bukan sekadar bertindak sebagai penyampai maklumat, malah sebagai saksi sejarah yang menghidupkan naratif patriotik melalui pengalaman dan memori sebenar di lokasi bersejarah. Peranan ini sejajar dengan konsep pelancongan medan tempur (battlefield tourism) yang diuraikan oleh Seaton (2000), yang menegaskan bahawa lawatan ke tapak konflik bersejarah berfungsi sebagai saluran untuk mentafsir dan memahami peristiwa sejarah, di samping mengukuhkan identiti nasional serta

memupuk kesedaran patriotisme melalui penghayatan emosi pelancong.

2.3 Bentuk Penglibatan Veteran ATM

Penglibatan veteran dalam industri pelancongan menunjukkan kepelbagaian bentuk dan peranan yang tidak terhad kepada satu model penyertaan sahaja. Sebaliknya, penglibatan ini berkembang secara fleksibel mengikut minat individu, tahap keupayaan fizikal, pengalaman profesional serta peluang pasaran setempat. Kepelbagaian ini membolehkan veteran memilih peranan yang bersesuaian, sama ada sebagai pengusaha, fasilitator, pencerita sejarah atau tenaga sokongan dalam aktiviti pelancongan. Dalam konteks pelancongan luar bandar, veteran sering muncul sebagai penggerak utama ekonomi tempatan melalui penglibatan aktif dalam program homestay atau inap desa serta pusat latihan komuniti. (UNDP, 2018). Selaras dengan laporan dari UNDP (2018), penglibatan veteran dalam inisiatif ini bukan sahaja menyumbang kepada peningkatan pendapatan komuniti luar bandar, malah turut menyokong agenda pembangunan mampan melalui pemerkasaan sosial, ekonomi dan pembangunan kapasiti komuniti setempat.

Mereka mengendalikan aktiviti seperti jejak alam, menyeberangi sungai, kem motivasi dan modul pembinaan pasukan yang mendapat sambutan pelajar, syarikat korporat dan masyarakat. Veteran turut menjadi jurulatih keselamatan untuk syarikat pelancongan yang menawarkan pakej lasak. Terdapat juga veteran yang mengusahakan agensi pelancongan mereka sendiri. Veteran yang memiliki kelayakan akademik pula berkhidmat sebagai pemandu pelancong bertauliah, pegawai rekreasi di resort, taman negara atau destinasi pelancongan popular yang lain.

Sementara itu, penglibatan veteran dalam pelancongan ketenteraan atau military tourism juga semakin berkembang. Lawatan ke tapak bersejarah seperti bekas kubu pertahanan, muzium angkatan tentera, kawasan operasi era darurat dan lokasi sejarah negara menjadi semakin relevan apabila veteran terlibat sebagai pencerita utama. Mereka bukan sekadar berkongsi fakta sejarah, tetapi juga emosi, cabaran dan nilai perjuangan yang menghidupkan pengalaman pelancongan tersebut. Contohnya Malaysia Military History Tourism Association (MMHTA) ditubuhkan oleh veteran ATM dan berfokus kepada pelancongan sejarah ketenteraan yang dikenali sebagai Miltours yang merupakan program lawatan eksklusif yang

dikendalikan oleh bekas pegawai tentera (MMHTA, 2022). Mereka mempunyai akses ke tapak-tapak bersejarah ketenteraan (termasuk yang dikawal ketat) dan pemandu pelancong adalah dari kalangan bekas anggota tentera. Oleh itu, mereka dapat berkongsi pengalaman dan kenangan peribadi secara langsung dengan pelancong. Ini adalah salah satu contoh paling jelas di mana veteran ATM menggunakan latar belakang ketenteraan mereka (sejarah, operasi, kenangan peribadi) untuk mencipta nilai pelancongan sejarah.

2.3.1 Usahawan Veteran ATM dalam Pelancongan Rekreasi dan Komuniti: Ilustrasi Empirikal

Ibrahim bin Haji Palau merupakan seorang veteran ATM yang menamatkan perkhidmatan pada Januari 2017 dengan pangkat terakhir sebagai Pegawai Waran I (PW1) dalam Tentera Laut Diraja Malaysia (TLDM). Unit terakhir beliau ialah di KD Panglima Hitam dan jawatan terakhir yang disandang ialah sebagai Bintara Inovasi serta Bintara Tim Risik Gempur. Selepas persaraan, beliau mengikuti kursus latihan peralihan sambil bekerja di Tawau, Sabah. Hal ini membuka ruang kepada penglibatan aktif beliau dalam sektor pelancongan rekreasi dan membuka syarikat Assifa' Enterprise, berpusat di Taman Rekreasi Hutan Simpan Mambalua, Tawau Sabah. Keputusan ini dipengaruhi oleh keyakinan terhadap kemahiran dan kompetensi yang dibentuk sepanjang perkhidmatan ketenteraan, sokongan institusi melalui Perbadanan Hal Ehwal Bekas Angkatan Tentera (PERHEBAT), serta peluang kolaborasi strategik bersama agensi tempatan seperti Jabatan Perhutanan Daerah Tawau, Kementerian Belia dan Sukan Bahagian Tawau, MOTAC Sabah, KD Sri Tawau dan pihak berkuasa tempatan. Dalam peranan sebagai usahawan pelancongan, beliau mengendalikan pelbagai aktiviti rekreasi berasaskan alam dan pembangunan insan, termasuk aktiviti menakik turun, terbang kelawar, mendaki, berkayak, aktiviti air, perkhemahan serta program pembinaan pasukan dan kepimpinan. Aktiviti-aktiviti ini disokong oleh kelayakan profesional yang dimiliki setelah bersara dalam bidang rekreasi dan keselamatan, yang membolehkan pelaksanaan operasi secara sistematik, selamat dan berdisiplin.

Selainnya, Kiyok Anak Awos, seorang veteran Tentera Darat Malaysia yang menamatkan perkhidmatan pada Januari 2022 dengan pangkat Staf Sarjan, telah mempamerkan bentuk penglibatan yang berbeza namun saling melengkapi dalam industri pelancongan komuniti. Unit terakhir beliau ialah 72 Semboyan, Kem Muara Tuang dan selepas persaraan, beliau mengikuti latihan peralihan di

Pusat Latihan dan Bimbingan Veteran (PLBV) PERHEBAT Sarawak dalam kursus Perusahaan Kecil dan Sederhana (PKS) yang mana memberi pendedahan serta dorongan untuk menceburi keusahawanan inap desa. Kepercayaan dan keyakinan terhadap potensi semula jadi kawasan Bung Siju di Kampung Sapit (Ulu Padawan) telah menyebabkan beliau membangunkan Sunrise View Village Stay, iaitu sebuah produk pelancongan luar bandar yang berasaskan ekopelancongan dan pengalaman alam semula jadi. Destinasi ini terletak pada ketinggian sekitar 1,500 kaki dari paras laut dan menawarkan penginapan berkonsepkan perkhemahan dan pondok ringkas, di samping aktiviti seperti pendakian pendek ke puncak, trek alam, pemerhatian burung, fotografi landskap serta lawatan ke air terjun berhampiran. Pakej penginapan jangka pendek yang disediakan telah mendapat komen positif dari pelancong dan sekali gus menunjukkan keupayaan veteran ATM memanfaatkan disiplin, perancangan operasi dan kepekaan terhadap keselamatan untuk membangunkan pelancongan komuniti yang mampan dan berdaya saing.

Secara keseluruhannya, kedua-dua ilustrasi empirikal ini memperlihatkan kepelbagaian laluan penglibatan veteran ATM dalam industri pelancongan, sama ada melalui pengendalian aktiviti rekreasi lasak mahupun pembangunan inap desa berasaskan komuniti dan alam semula jadi. Walaupun berbeza dari segi skala dan bentuk perniagaan, kedua-duanya berkongsi ciri teras yang sama, iaitu pemindahan kemahiran ketenteraan seperti disiplin, pengurusan risiko, perancangan operasi dan kepimpinan ke dalam konteks pelancongan. Pengalaman ini mengukuhkan hujah bahawa veteran ATM merupakan aset strategik kepada pembangunan pelancongan yang selamat, berkualiti dan berteraskan komuniti.

3.0 CABARAN MENCEBURI INDUSTRI PELANCONGAN

Walaupun veteran ATM ini memiliki disiplin, ketahanan mental, serta pelbagai kemahiran teknikal hasil pengalaman berkhidmat dalam pasukan keselamatan, mereka masih berhadapan dengan pelbagai cabaran apabila memasuki industri pelancongan yang bersifat komersial dan berorientasikan pelanggan.

Salah satu cabaran utama ialah kurang berpengalaman dalam bidang perkhidmatan pelanggan, perhotelan dan pengurusan pelancongan yang memerlukan pendekatan lebih tersusun, mesra

dan sistematik berbanding struktur ketenteraan. Mereka juga kekurangan pensijilan profesional yang diiktiraf dalam sektor pelancongan atau hospitaliti, dan hal ini menjadikan proses mendapatkan pekerjaan atau peluang perniagaan dalam industri tersebut lebih sukar atau terhad. Selain itu, ramai veteran berdepan dengan kesulitan mengurus perniagaan sendiri kerana kurangnya pendedahan kepada ilmu asas keusahawanan seperti pengurusan kewangan, operasi harian dan strategi pembangunan perniagaan. Kekangan modal turut menjadi penghalang, memandangkan sebahagian veteran tidak mempunyai akses mudah kepada pembiayaan untuk memulakan atau mengembangkan perniagaan pelancongan. Di samping itu, kurangnya kemahiran dalam teknologi pemasaran moden, termasuk pemasaran digital, media sosial dan sistem tempahan dalam talian telah menghadkan kemampuan mereka untuk bersaing dalam pasaran pelancongan masa kini yang sangat bergantung pada platform digital.

Selain berhadapan dengan cabaran teknikal dan ekonomi, veteran ATM turut mengalami cabaran yang signifikan dalam aspek penyesuaian identiti profesional apabila beralih ke sektor awam, khususnya industri pelancongan. Sepanjang tempoh perkhidmatan ketenteraan, mereka dibentuk dalam persekitaran kerja yang berteraskan disiplin tinggi, struktur organisasi yang tegas, hierarki yang jelas serta pematuhan kepada rutin dan arahan yang ketat. Corak kerja sedemikian membentuk identiti profesional yang berorientasikan arahan, kawalan dan standard operasi yang formal. Namun, peralihan ke industri pelancongan yang bersifat lebih fleksibel, santai dan berfokuskan kepuasan pelanggan memerlukan penyesuaian sikap, nilai dan gaya interaksi yang berbeza. Keperluan untuk berkomunikasi secara mesra, berinteraksi secara tidak formal dengan pelancong serta mempamerkan kreativiti dalam mempromosikan diri atau produk pelancongan boleh menimbulkan tekanan psikologi, kekeliruan peranan dan ketidakselesaan emosi kepada sesetengah veteran. Seperti yang dinyatakan oleh Khoo dan Badaruzaman (2014), industri pelancongan menuntut kemahiran komunikasi interpersonal yang lebih lembut dan keupayaan membina hubungan sosial secara spontan, yang mungkin tidak selari sepenuhnya dengan pengalaman kerja ketenteraan.

Hal ini akan menjadi satu perubahan budaya kerja yang mungkin dirasakan janggal bagi mereka. Transisi ini bukan sahaja memerlukan perubahan dalam pemikiran, tetapi juga kemampuan untuk membina keyakinan diri dalam situasi kerja yang sangat berbeza daripada pengalaman mereka

terdahulu. Dengan semua cabaran ini, jelas bahawa veteran memerlukan sokongan, latihan serta bimbingan yang berstruktur bagi memastikan proses penyesuaian ke dalam industri pelancongan berjalan lebih lancar dan berkesan.

4.0 IMPAK PENGLIBATAN VETERAN ATM

Penglibatan veteran ATM dalam sektor pelancongan akan membawa satu gelombang baharu yang memberi kesan mendalam kepada ekonomi, masyarakat dan identiti negara. Kehadiran mereka bukan sekadar menambah jumlah pemain industri, tetapi menyuntik nilai dan karakter yang jarang terdapat dalam kelompok pekerja lain. Ramai di antara mereka yang kembali ke kampung halaman selepas bersara dan bidang pelancongan menjadi ruang paling sesuai untuk membina kehidupan kedua yang stabil dan bermakna. Dari sinilah bermula rentetan perubahan yang memberi manfaat kepada pelbagai lapisan masyarakat.

Di kawasan desa atau luar bandar, penglibatan mereka dapat menghidupkan semula ekonomi setempat. Mereka membuka inap desa, kem rekreasi, pusat agro pelancongan dan chalet kecil yang menjadi tarikan pelancong domestik. Kehadiran pelawat yang menikmati pengalaman alam semula jadi atau aktiviti komuniti menjana perbelanjaan baharu dalam bentuk makanan, pengangkutan, cenderahati dan program rekreasi. Kesannya, kampung-kampung yang pada awalnya sunyi akan bertukar menjadi destinasi yang lebih hidup dan berdaya ekonomi, sementara penduduk tempatan pula menerima aliran pendapatan yang berterusan.

Lebih menarik, latar belakang ketenteraan memberikan kelebihan unik yang menjadikan mereka aset strategik kepada industri pelancongan, khususnya dalam segmen pelancongan berasaskan alam semula jadi dan pengembaraan. Latihan ketenteraan yang berteraskan disiplin tinggi, pematuhan prosedur keselamatan serta kecekapan operasi membolehkan mereka membawa tahap profesionalisma yang tinggi dalam pengurusan aktiviti pelancongan. Seperti yang dihuraikan oleh Buckley (2020), ekopelancongan dan pelancongan pengembaraan menuntut kemahiran teknikal khusus seperti survival hutan, navigasi, pengurusan kecemasan serta keupayaan merancang dan melaksanakan aktiviti luar secara selamat, yang sememangnya selari dengan pengalaman serta latihan yang dimiliki oleh veteran. Kecekapan serta keyakinan ini bukan sahaja meningkatkan tahap keselamatan aktiviti pelancongan, malah

menyumbang kepada pengalaman pelancong yang lebih tersusun, profesional dan meyakinkan. Sebagai contoh, pemandu pelancong yang terdiri daripada veteran bukan sekadar membawa pelancong meneroka hutan, sungai atau kawasan terpencil, tetapi turut berperanan sebagai pengurus risiko yang berupaya bertindak pantas dalam situasi tidak dijangka. Keupayaan ini meningkatkan kepercayaan pelancong terhadap keselamatan, sekali gus memperkukuh daya saing Malaysia dalam sektor ekopelancongan dan pelancongan pengembaraan di peringkat serantau dan antarabangsa.

Dalam masa yang sama, pelancongan berasaskan sejarah dan ketenteraan menerima nafas baharu melalui penglibatan aktif veteran, yang membolehkan pelancong menghayati sejarah secara lebih mendalam dan berasaskan pengalaman sebenar. Seperti yang dihuraikan oleh Seaton (2000), pelancongan ke tapak konflik dan warisan ketenteraan berfungsi bukan sekadar sebagai aktiviti rekreasi, tetapi sebagai medium pendidikan, ingatan kolektif dan pembinaan identiti nasional. Selaras dengan perkembangan semasa, MMHTA (2022) turut menunjukkan bahawa penglibatan individu yang mempunyai latar belakang ketenteraan dalam penceritaan sejarah meningkatkan kredibiliti dan impak naratif yang disampaikan. Veteran berperanan sebagai pencerita utama bagi kisah-kisah pertempuran, pengorbanan pasukan keselamatan dan peristiwa penting yang membentuk keamanan negara. Hal ini sekali gus menjadikan sejarah lebih hidup, beremosi dan mudah dihayati oleh pelancong. Melalui pelaksanaan program jejak sejarah, lawatan berpandu ke tapak warisan, pameran ketenteraan serta pengurusan muzium berskala kecil, nilai patriotisma dan penghargaan terhadap pengorbanan negara dapat dipupuk, khususnya dalam kalangan generasi muda dan pelancong antarabangsa. Usaha ini bukan sahaja menyumbang kepada pemeliharaan warisan pertahanan negara, malah membuka ruang kepada pembangunan produk pelancongan seperti pelancongan ketenteraan (military tourism), yang semakin mendapat tempat dan permintaan di rantau Asia Tenggara.

Penglibatan ini juga membawa kesan sosial yang ketara kepada veteran sendiri. Ramai dalam kalangan mereka yang menghadapi cabaran pasca persaraan, sama ada dari segi pendapatan, motivasi atau penyesuaian diri. Apabila mereka terlibat dalam sektor pelancongan, ia memberi peluang untuk membina identiti baharu tanpa meninggalkan elemen kompetensi lama yang telah mereka pupuk selama puluhan tahun dalam perkhidmatan. Mereka dapat berdikari, mengurangkan kebergantungan

terhadap bantuan kebajikan dan kembali merasakan diri berguna serta dihargai oleh masyarakat. Rasa bangga ini mempunyai kesan positif kepada kesejahteraan mental dan sosial mereka.

Selain itu, veteran turut membawa manfaat kepada pembangunan komuniti. Kemahiran mereka dalam latihan, kepimpinan, dan pengurusan kecemasan dipindahkan kepada penduduk tempatan melalui kursus-kursus seperti asas rekreasi, pengendalian aktiviti luar, keselamatan pelancongan dan pengukuhan pasukan atau pembinaan pasukan. Secara tidak langsung, komuniti menjadi lebih bersedia, berdisiplin dan berdaya saing dalam mengendalikan destinasi pelancongan mereka sendiri. Ekosistem pelancongan yang wujud menjadi lebih kukuh dan inklusif kerana menerima input daripada pelbagai kelompok masyarakat yang saling melengkapi.

Dari sudut imej negara pula, kehadiran veteran dalam industri pelancongan meningkatkan kualiti perkhidmatan serta tahap keyakinan pelancong. Pelancong yang berinteraksi dengan veteran akan mengaitkan mereka dengan nilai integriti, ketepatan masa dan kesantunan. Sifat profesional ini memberi gambaran positif terhadap negara dan meningkatkan tahap kepuasan pelanggan, seterusnya menggalakkan promosi secara lisan yang membawa kepada peningkatan kedatangan pelancong.

Secara keseluruhannya, impak penglibatan veteran ATM dalam industri pelancongan bukan sekadar memberi nilai ekonomi semata-mata malah merupakan transformasi menyeluruh yang menggabungkan kesejahteraan veteran, pengukuhan komuniti, pemerksaan sejarah dan peningkatan imej negara. Industri pelancongan sendiri menjadi lebih kaya dan pelbagai kerana disokong oleh tenaga kerja yang memiliki pengalaman unik serta nilai-nilai ketenteraan yang sukar diganti. Jika usaha ini terus diperluaskan, veteran bukan sahaja akan menjadi sebahagian daripada industri pelancongan, tetapi akan menjadi pemangkin kepada masa depan pelancongan Malaysia yang lebih mampan dan beridentiti.

5.0 CADANGAN DASAR DAN IMPLIKASI POLISI

Bagi memperkukuh penglibatan veteran ATM dalam industri pelancongan, satu kerangka dasar bersepadu antara Kementerian Pertahanan (MINDEF) dan Kementerian Pelancongan, Seni dan Budaya (MOTAC) wajar diwujudkan bagi menyokong peralihan kerjaya anggota ATM ke

sektor pelancongan. Kerjasama ini boleh diterjemahkan melalui pembangunan laluan kerjaya khusus (career pathway) yang menghubungkan kemahiran ketenteraan dengan keperluan industri pelancongan, terutamanya dalam sektor pelancongan pengembaraan, pelancongan luar bandar dan pelancongan sejarah ketenteraan. Antara intervensi utama yang dicadangkan ialah pelaksanaan mekanisme pengiktirafan pembelajaran terdahulu (Recognition of Prior Learning) bagi memudahkan veteran memperoleh pensijilan profesional seperti lesen pemandu pelancong, seterusnya mengurangkan halangan kemasukan ke pasaran pekerjaan serta mempercepatkan integrasi mereka dalam ekosistem pelancongan negara.

Selain itu, dasar sokongan keusahawanan dan pendigitalan yang bersasar perlu diperkukuh bagi menangani kekangan struktur yang dihadapi veteran ATM dalam mengendalikan perusahaan pelancongan. Pihak berkepentingan seperti PERHEBAT, JHEV, MOTAC dan agensi pembangunan usahawan disaran membangunkan program latihan keusahawanan serta inkubator pelancongan khusus yang merangkumi aspek pengurusan kewangan, pembangunan produk, perkhidmatan pelanggan dan pemasaran digital. Pada masa yang sama, inisiatif pendigitalan perusahaan veteran melalui latihan teknologi, penggunaan sistem tempahan dalam talian dan platform pemasaran digital perlu digiatkan selaras dengan agenda digitalisasi pelancongan negara. Pendekatan dasar yang holistik ini bukan sahaja berpotensi meningkatkan kebolehpasaran dan daya saing veteran ATM, malah menyumbang kepada pembangunan pelancongan yang lebih inklusif, lestari dan berteraskan komuniti, sejajar dengan matlamat Polisi Pelancongan Nasional 2020-2030.

6.0 KESIMPULAN

Veteran ATM mempunyai potensi yang besar dan berkeupayaan unik dalam berperanan sebagai pemain utama dalam ekosistem pelancongan negara. Latar belakang ketenteraan mereka membekalkan pengalaman yang luas, disiplin yang tinggi, kemahiran teknikal dalam pengurusan risiko dan kepakaran lapangan yang jarang ditemui dalam kalangan tenaga kerja awam. Kombinasi ini menjadikan veteran sebagai aset berharga dalam pembangunan produk pelancongan, terutamanya dalam sektor ekopelancongan, pengembaraan dan pelancongan berasaskan pengalaman (experience-based tourism), di mana keselamatan, perancangan dan pengendalian aktiviti merupakan faktor kritikal.

Namun begitu, penyertaan veteran dalam sektor pelancongan tidak boleh berlaku secara automatik. Keberkesanan penglibatan mereka bergantung kepada sokongan berstruktur, termasuk latihan khusus untuk meningkatkan kemahiran komunikasi, pengurusan pelanggan, pemasaran dan adaptasi kepada budaya kerja yang berbeza daripada persekitaran ketenteraan. Di samping itu, dasar inklusif daripada kerajaan, peluang pemasaran yang kukuh, serta kerjasama strategik dengan organisasi

veteran dan pemegang taruh industri merupakan elemen penting bagi membolehkan potensi ini direalisasikan sepenuhnya. Dengan pendekatan bersepadu, bukan sahaja industri pelancongan dapat memanfaatkan kompetensi unik veteran, malah veteran itu sendiri mendapat manfaat melalui peluang pekerjaan, pembinaan identiti baharu, pengiktirafan sosial dan peningkatan kesejahteraan mental serta sosial.

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LAMPIRAN A

ANTARA VETERAN YANG TERLIBAT DALAM BIDANG PELANCONGAN



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Muslim Friendly Adventure Tourism among Generation Z in Malaysia: Needs and Preferences

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Abstract – The global Muslim travel market continues to expand rapidly, yet the integration of Muslim friendly principles within adventure tourism remains limited, particularly in addressing the needs of younger Muslim travellers. While Malaysia has positioned itself as a leading Muslim friendly destination, limited attention has been given to the integration of Muslim friendly principles within adventure tourism, particularly for Generation Z. This study aims to analyse Gen-Z's needs, and preferences regarding Muslim friendly adventure tourism in Malaysia. A quantitative research design was employed, with data collected from 150 Malaysian Gen Z respondents selected through purposive sampling based on the criteria of being Malaysian and having interest or experience in tourism-related activities, using a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine respondents' awareness, perceived needs, and preferred attributes of Muslim friendly adventure tourism. The findings indicate the key needs identified include the availability of halal food, accessible and hygienic prayer facilities, gender-segregated amenities, flexibility in religious practices, and the presence of same-gender guides during adventure activities. In terms of preferences, Gen Z travellers favour adventure operators that clearly communicate Muslim friendly features through digital platforms and provide transparent information on facilities and services. The study contributes to the limited empirical literature on Muslim friendly adventure

tourism by focusing on Gen Z, an emerging and influential market segment. Practically, the findings offer insights for tourism operators and policymakers to enhance inclusivity, service design, and marketing strategies in Malaysia's adventure tourism sector.

Keywords: Muslim Friendly Tourism; Adventure Tourism; Generation Z; Needs Analysis;

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Muslim friendly tourism sector has experienced notable growth in recent years, particularly following the recovery of global travel after the COVID-19 pandemic. Muslim travellers increasingly seek tourism experiences that allow them to fulfil religious obligations without compromising leisure and enjoyment (Battour, 2018). Malaysia has consistently ranked among the top destinations for Muslim friendly tourism due to its strong Muslim Friendly ecosystem, availability of prayer facilities, and supportive policy environment (Irshad et al., 2022). Initiatives such as the Muslim friendly Tourism and Hospitality Assurance and Recognition (MFAR) programme have further strengthened Malaysia's positioning within the global Muslim travel market.

Concurrently, adventure tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing tourism segments worldwide. Characterised by physical

activity, interaction with natural environments, and elements of risk and challenge, adventure tourism appeals strongly to younger travellers (Janowski et al., 2020; UNWTO, 2023). In Malaysia, the abundance of natural resources including rainforests, mountains, rivers, and marine ecosystems has supported the growth of adventure tourism activities such as hiking, white-water rafting, snorkelling, caving, and mountain biking.

Generation Z (Gen Z), generally defined as individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, represents a significant proportion of adventure tourists. This cohort is known for its digital literacy, preference for authentic experiences, and strong value orientation, including religious and ethical considerations (Mohd R. et al., 2019). Despite their growing participation in tourism, Gen Z Muslim travellers often face challenges in adventure tourism contexts, particularly in relation to prayer accessibility, halal food availability, gender interaction, and safety concerns.

In Malaysia, Generation Z represents a substantial demographic segment, accounting for approximately one-quarter of the national population, which highlights their growing importance as an emerging tourism market (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). As digitally connected and experience-oriented travellers, Muslim Gen Z tourists increasingly seek travel experiences that combine adventure, cultural immersion, sustainability, and religious compliance (CrescentRating & Mastercard, 2024).

Despite the growing popularity of adventure tourism among younger travellers, many adventure tourism environments are not fully equipped to accommodate the religious requirements of Muslim tourists. Activities conducted in remote natural settings often lack accessible prayer facilities, halal food options, or gender-sensitive arrangements, which may discourage participation among Muslim travellers, particularly those who are more conscious of religious obligations. These challenges highlight the need to better understand how Muslim friendly principles can be integrated into adventure tourism experiences that appeal to Generation Z. This issue is particularly relevant in adventure tourism activities such as hiking, diving, caving, and eco-adventures that are commonly conducted in remote natural environments where Muslim friendly facilities may be limited (UNWTO, 2023; Janowski et al., 2020).

While previous studies on Muslim friendly tourism in Malaysia have largely focused on hospitality, airlines, and destination image (Bangsawan et al., 2019; Irshad et al., 2022), limited research has examined Muslim friendly practices within adventure tourism. Moreover, empirical studies addressing the specific needs and preferences of Gen Z Muslim travellers remain scarce. Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to analyse Gen Z's needs, and preferences regarding Muslim friendly adventure tourism in Malaysia, thereby contributing to both academic literature and industry practice.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Muslim friendly Tourism

Muslim friendly tourism refers to tourism products and services that facilitate Muslim travellers in fulfilling their religious obligations while travelling. These typically include halal food, prayer facilities, appropriate accommodation, and an environment that respects Islamic values (Battour, 2018). Unlike fully Shariah-compliant tourism, Muslim friendly tourism adopts a flexible approach, allowing destinations to cater to Muslim needs without excluding non-Muslim travellers. The Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) defines Muslim Friendly Tourism as tourism products and services designed to accommodate the faith-based needs of Muslim travellers while maintaining inclusivity for non-Muslim visitors (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2020).

Malaysia's Muslim friendly tourism framework is supported by national standards such as MS 2610, which provide guidelines for accommodation, tour packages, and tourist guides (Bangsawan et al., 2019). However, these standards remain largely concentrated on hospitality and guided tours, with limited application to adventure tourism settings, particularly those located in remote or nature-based environments. Malaysia's Muslim Friendly Tourism ecosystem is further supported by national standards such as MS2610, which provide operational guidelines for Muslim friendly hospitality and tourism services (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2019; Bangsawan et al., 2019).

2.2 Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism is commonly defined as tourism involving physical activity, interaction with natural environments, and cultural engagement (UNWTO, 2023). It is often categorised into soft adventure (low-risk, guided activities) and hard adventure (high-risk, skill-intensive activities). Although adventure tourism offers transformative and

meaningful experiences, it also raises concerns related to safety, accessibility, and infrastructure, especially for Muslim travellers who require additional facilities to observe religious practices (Janowski et al., 2020).

In Malaysia, adventure tourism has gained international recognition, with the country frequently nominated for global adventure tourism awards. Nevertheless, the integration of Muslim friendly elements within adventure tourism remains underdeveloped, resulting in potential barriers for Muslim participation, particularly among women and younger travellers. Among popular adventure tourism activities include eco-tourism experiences, jungle trekking, hiking, scuba diving, cave exploration, and nature-based excursions, which often require specific physical, psychological, and safety considerations for travellers (UNWTO, 2023).

2.3 Generation Z and Tourism Behaviour

Generation Z travellers differ from previous generations in terms of motivations, information-seeking behaviour, and preferences. They rely heavily on digital platforms and social media for travel planning and value transparency, authenticity, and inclusivity (Mohd R. et al., 2019). Gen Z Muslim travellers, in particular, seek experiences that align with both lifestyle aspirations and religious commitments.

Studies suggest that younger Muslim travellers may exhibit lower awareness of formal Muslim friendly standards but express strong expectations for practical facilities such as halal food, prayer spaces, and modest environments (Irshad et al., 2022). Understanding these expectations is crucial for designing tourism products that resonate with this demographic. Industry reports also indicate that Gen Z travellers increasingly demonstrate independent travel behaviour and strong reliance on digital platforms and peer reviews when selecting tourism services (CrescentRating & Mastercard, 2024; DinarStandard, 2023).

2.4 Needs and Preferences in Muslim friendly Adventure Tourism

The concept of needs in tourism is often explained using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, where physiological and safety needs must be met before higher-level motivations such as self-actualisation can be achieved (Maslow, 1943). In adventure tourism, safety, comfort, and basic facilities are essential prerequisites for enjoyment.

For Muslim travellers, needs extend to religious requirements, including halal food, prayer facilities, gender segregation, and ethical conduct (Battour, 2018; Bangsawan et al., 2019). Preferences, on the other hand, reflect subjective choices shaped by individual values, social influences, and technological trends (Mohd R. et al., 2019). In the context of Muslim friendly adventure tourism, preferences may include the presence of same-gender guides, clear communication of facilities, and flexibility in scheduling activities around prayer times. Despite growing interest, empirical research examining these needs and preferences among Gen Z Muslim travellers in adventure tourism remains limited, particularly within the Malaysian context.

Based on the literature discussed above, two key constructs emerge as central to understanding Muslim friendly adventure tourism among Generation Z, namely tourist needs and preferences. Needs refer to essential requirements that enable Muslim travellers to fulfil religious obligations while travelling, such as halal food availability and prayer facilities. Preferences, on the other hand, represent individual choices and expectations regarding how tourism services should be delivered. Understanding both constructs is important in designing adventure tourism experiences that are inclusive and aligned with the values of Muslim travellers.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research approach using a descriptive design to analyse Gen-Z's needs, and preferences regarding Muslim friendly adventure tourism in Malaysia. Quantitative methods are appropriate for identifying patterns, trends, and generalisable insights within a defined population.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprised Malaysian Generation Z individuals aged between 12 and 27 years. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that respondents met the predetermined criteria of being Malaysian Gen Z and having an interest or prior exposure to tourism or outdoor activities. This sampling approach is appropriate when the objective is to obtain information from respondents who possess relevant knowledge or experience related to the research topic. A total of 150 valid responses were collected, which is considered adequate for

descriptive statistical analysis in exploratory tourism studies.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: demographic profile, perceived needs, and preferences. Items in Sections B to D were measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. An open-ended question was included to capture additional insights on perceived requirements for Muslim friendly adventure tourism.

3.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical techniques were employed because they allow researchers to identify patterns, trends, and priority attributes within respondents' perceptions, which aligns with the study's objective of analysing Gen Z's needs and preferences in Muslim friendly adventure tourism. The collected data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which is widely used in quantitative tourism research to generate descriptive statistics and identify patterns in respondents' perceptions (Field, 2018).

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Profile

The demographic profile of the respondents indicates that the majority were aged 21–23 years, accounting for 74.7% (n = 112) of the sample, followed by those aged 16–19 years at 14.0% (n = 21). Respondents aged 24–27 years represented 8.0% (n = 12), while the 12–15 years age group constituted the smallest proportion at 3.3% (n = 5). In terms of gender, the sample was predominantly female, comprising 78.7% (n = 118), while male respondents accounted for 21.3% (n = 32). Regarding education level, most respondents held a bachelor's degree (84.7%, n = 127), followed by those with a diploma or certificate (10.0%, n = 15), and respondents with secondary school education (5.3%, n = 8). Concerning employment status, the majority of respondents were students, representing 92.0% (n = 138) of the sample, while employed respondents accounted for 5.3% (n = 8), unemployed respondents for 2.0% (n = 3), and self-employed respondents for 0.7% (n = 1). This demographic distribution reflects a strong representation of young, educated Gen Z individuals, which is relevant for understanding their perspectives and preferences toward Muslim friendly adventure tourism.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	12–15 years	5	3.3
	16–19 years	21	14.0
	21–23 years	112	74.7
	24–27 years	12	8.0
Gender	Male	32	21.3
	Female	118	78.7
Education Level	Secondary School	8	5.3
	Diploma/Certificate	15	10.0
	Bachelor's Degree	127	84.7
Employment Status	Student	138	92.0
	Employed	8	5.3
	Unemployed	3	2.0
	Self-employed	1	0.7

4.2 Needs in Muslim friendly Adventure Tourism

Several critical needs emerged from the analysis. The availability of halal food was identified as the most essential requirement, followed by accessible and hygienic prayer facilities. Respondents also emphasised the importance of gender-segregated facilities, particularly for activities involving water or physical contact. Flexibility in scheduling

activities to accommodate prayer times and the presence of same-gender guides were also highlighted as significant needs.

The frequency and percentage distributions in Table 2 indicate that the majority of Gen Z respondents expressed high levels of agreement with statements related to Muslim friendly needs in

adventure tourism. For most items, a large proportion of respondents selected “Agree” (A) and “Strongly Agree” (SA), demonstrating strong consensus on the importance of religious and cultural accommodations.

Notably, 84% of respondents strongly agreed that access to halal food and prayer facilities is essential, with only a very small percentage disagreeing (2.8% combined for SD and D). Similarly, 77.3% strongly agreed that adventure tour operators should provide detailed descriptions of Muslim friendly amenities, while only 2.6% expressed disagreement. The need for clear information about Muslim friendly options was also

strongly supported, with 74.7% strongly agreeing and 22% agreeing.

In contrast, items related to gender-related arrangements, such as gender-segregated facilities and having a guide of the same gender, showed comparatively more varied, responses. Although the majority still agreed or strongly agreed (over 85% combined), these items recorded higher percentages of disagreement (up to 18.7% for same-gender guides), indicating differing levels of importance among respondents. Overall, the frequency and percentage results suggest that core religious facilities and transparent information are prioritized more strongly than gender-specific services.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Gen Z Needs in Muslim Friendly Adventure Tourism

Item	Frequency				Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
	SD	D	A	SA			
Access to Halal food and prayer facilities is essential for my adventure travel experience.	2 (2.1%)	1 (0.7%)	21 (14%)	126 (84%)	3.81	0.501	1
I need adventure tours that offer services accommodating my cultural and religious practices.	3 (2%)	5 (3.3%)	41 (27.3%)	101 (67.3%)	3.6	0.655	5
Gender-segregated facilities are necessary for my comfort during adventure activities.	1 (0.7%)	11 (7.3%)	48 (32%)	90 (60%)	3.51	0.663	6
I require clear information about Muslim friendly options when planning an adventure tour.	2 (1.3%)	3 (2%)	33 (22%)	112 (74.7%)	3.7	0.576	3
It is important for adventure tour operators to provide detailed descriptions of their Muslim friendly amenities.	2 (1.3%)	2 (1.3%)	30 (20%)	116 (77.3%)	3.73	0.552	2
I expect adventure tours to be flexible in accommodating my religious practices and needs.	2 (1.3%)	2 (1.3%)	35 (23.3%)	111 (74%)	3.7	0.565	4
I want to have a guide or instructor of my own gender during adventure tourism activity,	6 (4%)	22 (14.7%)	42 (28%)	80 (53.3%)	3.31	0.867	7

*SD: Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, A: Agree, SA: Strongly Agree

These findings suggest that religious facilitation remains a fundamental determinant in shaping Muslim travellers’ participation in adventure tourism. While adventure tourism is typically associated with risk-taking and physical challenges, the results indicate that Muslim travellers still prioritise basic religious needs such as halal food availability and prayer accessibility before engaging in adventure experiences.

The findings demonstrate that while Gen Z Muslim travellers in Malaysia are receptive to the concept of Muslim friendly adventure tourism, gaps remain in knowledge dissemination and service

provision. The moderate level of awareness observed among respondents is consistent with previous studies suggesting limited understanding of formal Muslim friendly standards among younger travellers (Irshad et al., 2022).

Consistent with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, the prioritisation of halal food, prayer facilities, and safety-related concerns underscores the importance of meeting basic and religious needs before higher-level experiential motivations can be fulfilled (Maslow, 1943). This aligns with Battour (2018), who emphasised that religious facilitation is a prerequisite for Muslim tourists’ satisfaction.

The emphasis on gender segregation and same-gender guides reflect findings from earlier Muslim friendly tourism studies, which highlight modesty, comfort, and safety as critical determinants of travel participation, particularly among Muslim women (Bangsawan et al., 2019). Furthermore, the strong preference for clear digital communication supports existing literature on Gen-Z's reliance on online platforms for travel planning and decision-making (Mohd R. et al., 2019).

Overall, the results suggest that adventure tourism operators that proactively integrate Muslim friendly attributes and communicate them effectively are more likely to attract and retain Gen Z Muslim travellers.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study provides empirical insights into Gen Z's needs, and preferences regarding Muslim friendly adventure tourism in Malaysia. The findings highlight the necessity for adventure tourism operators to integrate Muslim friendly elements into service design, particularly in relation to halal food provision, prayer accessibility, gender-sensitive facilities, and effective communication. Given that the majority of respondents were female, the findings highlight the importance of gender-sensitive facilities, privacy, and modest environments in adventure tourism settings, which are essential considerations for Muslim female travellers in fulfilling religious obligations during travel (Battour, 2018; Bangsawan et al., 2019). From a theoretical perspective, the study extends the

application of Muslim friendly tourism concepts to adventure tourism and contributes to the limited literature focusing on Gen Z Muslim travellers. Practically, the results offer guidance for tourism operators and policymakers to enhance inclusivity and competitiveness within Malaysia's adventure tourism sector. Future research may adopt qualitative or mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into behavioural motivations and decision-making processes among Muslim Gen Z travellers, as qualitative approaches have been widely recommended in tourism research to capture deeper experiential perspectives.

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Integrating Faith and Adventure: Operational Challenges in Muslim-Friendly Tourism

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Abstract—Muslim-Friendly tourism is a rapidly growing niche that caters to travellers seeking services aligned with Islamic principles, such as halal food, prayer facilities, and gender sensitive arrangements. While widely studied in urban contexts, its integration within adventure tourism often conducted in remote, nature-based environments remains underexplored. This study examines the practical challenges faced by tourism practitioners in providing Muslim-Friendly services in adventure tourism in Malaysia. A qualitative approach was employed, with semi-structured interviews conducted with five purposively selected practitioners, including tour operators, guides, and academics. Data were thematically analysed to capture experiences related to infrastructure, service delivery, staff competency, and the balance between adventure activities and religious requirements. Findings indicate that practitioners face interrelated challenges, including limited Muslim-Friendly facilities, high operational costs, insufficient training, and difficulties ensuring religious observances and gender sensitivity during activities. Service provision is often adaptive, temporary, and reliant on operators' creativity. The study highlights the need for targeted training, context sensitive operational guidelines, and financial or institutional support for operators. Addressing these challenges can improve service

quality, inclusivity, and Muslim traveller satisfaction, while reinforcing Malaysia's position as a leading Muslim-Friendly destination. The research contributes to knowledge on integrating faith-based needs within adventure tourism and offers practical recommendations for sustainable and culturally sensitive tourism development.

Keywords: Muslim Friendly Tourism; Adventure Tourism; Islamic Tourism; Operational Challenges

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the fastest-growing industries globally, driven by increased mobility, digitalisation, and the diversification of travel motivations. As tourist demand becomes more segmented, niche markets have emerged to cater to travellers with specific cultural, lifestyle, and religious needs. One of the most rapidly expanding niches is Muslim-Friendly tourism (MFT), which refers to tourism products, services, and experiences that comply with Islamic principles. These include the provision of halal food, access to prayer facilities, modest services, and the avoidance of alcohol and non-halal activities (Battour & Ismail, 2022).

The growth of Muslim-Friendly tourism is closely linked to the increasing Muslim population

and the rising participation of Muslims in domestic and international travel. According to CrescentRating (2024), the global Muslim travel market continues to show strong recovery and growth following the COVID-19 pandemic, with Muslim travellers becoming more experience-oriented while still prioritising faith-based needs. As a result, destinations and tourism providers are increasingly integrating Muslim-Friendly elements into their tourism offerings to remain competitive. The importance of Muslim-Friendly tourism is further reinforced by the rapid growth of the global Muslim population, which is projected to reach nearly 2.2 billion by 2030, representing a significant segment of the global travel market (Pew Research Center, 2017; CrescentRating, 2024). Malaysia has consistently been ranked among the leading Muslim-Friendly destinations worldwide due to its comprehensive halal ecosystem, government support, and strong tourism infrastructure (CrescentRating, 2023).

Despite these positive developments, several challenges remain in the implementation of Muslim-Friendly tourism practices. Previous studies highlight issues such as limited understanding of Muslim-Friendly requirements among tourism operators, inconsistent halal certification standards, and difficulties in ensuring religious comfort across different tourism contexts (Henderson, 2021; Battour et al., 2023). These challenges become more pronounced in tourism settings that rely heavily on outdoor environments and flexible infrastructure.

At the same time, adventure tourism has gained increasing popularity among modern travellers seeking unique, physically challenging, and experience-based travel. Adventure tourism typically involves activities that take place in natural or rural environments, such as hiking, trekking, camping, water-based activities, and eco-adventures (UNWTO, 2023). This form of tourism has shown strong growth, particularly among younger travellers who value personal development, nature connection, and meaningful travel experiences (Haddouche & Salom, 2023). However, adventure tourism activities are often conducted in remote locations where access to tourism facilities is limited, making it more difficult to accommodate specific religious and cultural needs.

Although both Muslim-Friendly tourism and adventure tourism are growing sectors, academic research that integrates these two areas remains relatively limited, particularly in nature-based and outdoor tourism contexts (Rahman, 2021; Mohsin et al., 2022). Muslim travellers who wish to

engage in adventure tourism often encounter challenges that affect their overall travel experience. These include limited availability of halal food in remote areas, lack of suitable prayer spaces during outdoor activities, insufficient gender-sensitive arrangements, and a lack of awareness among adventure tour operators regarding Muslim-Friendly practices (Rahman, 2021; Mohsin et al., 2022). Consequently, Muslim travellers may struggle to balance participation in adventure activities with their religious obligations.

Most existing research on Muslim-Friendly tourism has focused primarily on urban tourism contexts such as hotels, restaurants, shopping centres, and cultural attractions (Battour & Ismail, 2022; Henderson, 2021). While these studies provide valuable insights into Muslim traveller expectations, they offer limited understanding of how Muslim-Friendly practices can be applied in adventure tourism settings. Adventure tourism differs significantly from conventional tourism due to its mobile nature, reliance on natural environments, and limited physical infrastructure. These characteristics create operational challenges in providing consistent halal services and religious facilities throughout the travel experience (Rahman & Zailani, 2022).

In recent years, there has also been a noticeable shift in travel preferences among young Muslim travellers toward adventure-based and nature-oriented tourism. This segment seeks experiences that combine physical challenge, self-discovery, and environmental appreciation while remaining aligned with Islamic values (Han et al., 2022; Haddouche & Salom, 2023). This trend highlights the growing importance of adapting adventure tourism products to cater to Muslim travellers. However, many tour operators face constraints such as limited training in Muslim-Friendly tourism, logistical difficulties in remote environments, and the absence of clear operational guidelines for Muslim-Friendly adventure tourism.

Given these gaps, there is a clear need for a more comprehensive understanding of the market trends and operational challenges associated with Muslim-Friendly adventure tourism, particularly from the perspective of tour operators who play a central role in service design and delivery. Examining these challenges is crucial for the development of effective strategies that promote inclusivity, enhance service quality, and improve overall Muslim traveller satisfaction. Accordingly, this study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by investigating the challenges faced by

tour operators in providing Muslim-Friendly services within the context of adventure tourism, with a specific focus on supporting sustainable and inclusive tourism development in Malaysia. These operational challenges include logistical limitations in providing halal food and prayer facilities in remote environments, managing gender-sensitive arrangements during outdoor activities, and ensuring staff possess adequate knowledge of Muslim-Friendly service practices. In addressing these challenges, this study explores operational issues in Muslim-Friendly adventure tourism based on five key themes identified in previous tourism service studies: access, communication, services, environment, and social perceptions. Thus, the main objective of this study is to examine the practical challenges faced by tourism industry practitioners in delivering Muslim-Friendly services within adventure tourism contexts.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Muslim-Friendly adventure tourism is an emerging segment within the tourism industry that integrates adventure-based activities with the religious values and lifestyle requirements of Muslim travellers. Adventure tourism is generally defined as travel that involves physical activities, interaction with natural environments, and cultural exploration (UNWTO, 2014). It attracts tourists who seek excitement, challenge, and personal fulfilment through activities such as hiking, mountain climbing, rafting, diving, and wildlife exploration (Swarbrooke et al., 2003). These activities are commonly categorised into soft adventure and hard adventure. Soft adventure activities, such as jungle trekking, snorkelling, and nature walks, involve lower levels of risk and physical intensity, while hard adventure activities, including mountaineering and white-water rafting, require higher levels of skill, physical endurance, and risk tolerance (Buckley, 2006). The global Muslim travel market is projected to reach USD 225 billion by 2028, reflecting the increasing demand for tourism experiences that integrate religious needs with leisure activities, including nature-based and adventure tourism experiences (CrescentRating, 2024; DinarStandard, 2023).

Adventure tourism is increasingly popular due to its ability to provide meaningful experiences, encourage personal development, and foster a deeper connection with nature. Many travellers are drawn to this form of tourism as it offers opportunities for self-discovery, confidence building, and escape from routine lifestyles. In recent years, adventure tourism has also been associated with sustainable tourism practices, as it

often promotes environmental awareness, conservation, and responsible interaction with natural and local cultural environments.

In contrast, Muslim-Friendly tourism, also referred to as halal tourism, emphasises the provision of tourism services and facilities that comply with Islamic principles. These include the availability of halal food, access to prayer facilities, modest service environments, and gender sensitive arrangements (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Muslim-Friendly tourism aims to ensure that Muslim travellers can fulfil their religious obligations while enjoying leisure and travel experiences without discomfort or compromise of their faith.

The integration of Islamic values into adventure tourism has led to the development of Muslim-Friendly adventure tourism. This form of tourism adapts adventure activities to meet Muslim travellers' religious needs while maintaining the core elements of adventure and exploration. For example, some tour operators offer halal-compliant trekking or camping packages that include halal-certified meals, scheduled prayer times, and suitable prayer spaces during outdoor activities. In addition, gender-sensitive arrangements, such as the availability of female guides for women travellers and privacy considerations during activities like scuba diving or swimming, have been increasingly incorporated (CrescentRating, 2023).

Countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia have emerged as leading destinations in promoting Muslim-Friendly adventure tourism by combining natural attractions, adventure experiences, and Islamic hospitality. These destinations benefit from strong halal ecosystems, supportive government policies, and growing awareness among tourism operators regarding Muslim travellers' needs. As the global Muslim travel market continues to expand, Muslim-Friendly adventure tourism presents significant potential for future growth. This segment not only supports economic development but also aligns with broader tourism goals related to sustainability, cultural respect, and inclusive tourism development (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

Overall, Muslim-Friendly adventure tourism represents an important opportunity for destinations and tour operators to diversify their offerings while catering to a growing and experience-oriented Muslim travel market. However, its successful implementation depends on the ability of tourism providers to balance adventure, safety, sustainability, and religious compliance

within challenging outdoor and nature-based environments.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of tourism industry practitioners' in delivering Muslim-Friendly services within adventure tourism contexts. A qualitative approach allows for flexibility and depth, capturing the personal and contextual dimensions of participants' experiences. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method, as they encourage open dialogue and rich insights that structured surveys might miss. Research questions and study objectives were developed based on a thorough literature review and served as a guide in designing the interview protocol. Themes such as access, communication, services, environment, and social perceptions were explored to align with the study's aim.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique aimed at identifying information rich cases that provide an in-depth understanding relevant to the research question. The sample targeted tourism industry practitioners who had actively participated in adventure tourism. A total of five participants were selected, based on the principle of data saturation, where additional interviews no longer yield new insights (Rahimi & Khatooni., 2024). Previous literature suggests that between five and ten interviews may be sufficient to achieve thematic saturation when studying relatively homogeneous participant groups (Guest et al., 2006; Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the study's objectives and ethical considerations, including confidentiality and voluntary participation. The interviews, guided by open-ended questions adapted from Bahardeen (2018), were recorded, transcribed, and analysed. A pre-test involving one academic and one experienced adventure practitioner confirmed the relevance,

clarity, and appropriateness of the interview questions.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Consistent with the study's objective of integrating faith and adventure tourism, the findings highlight several operational challenges faced by tourism practitioners in balancing religious requirements with the practical realities of adventure tourism environments. The findings are presented according to five analytical themes identified in the methodology: access to facilities, communication of Muslim-friendly services, service provision, environmental constraints, and social perceptions within adventure tourism settings. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents involved in this study. The respondents represent a diverse range of roles within the tourism and adventure tourism industry, providing varied professional perspectives on Muslim-Friendly adventure tourism. The sample includes an adventure tour operator (R1), a tourism practitioner (R2), a tourism academic (R3), a travel agency representative (R4), and an adventure tourism guide (R5). This diversity of positions allows for a comprehensive understanding of both operational and strategic challenges from multiple stakeholder viewpoints. In terms of organisational affiliation, the respondents are drawn from different types of organisations, including private tour companies, tourism organisations, higher education institutions, travel agencies, and adventure companies. This variation enhances the credibility of the findings by incorporating insights from both industry practitioners and academic experts. Regarding professional experience, all respondents possess substantial industry exposure, ranging from 4 to 10 years. The inclusion of respondents with varying levels of experience ensures that the findings reflect both established industry practices and emerging operational challenges, thereby strengthening the depth and reliability of the qualitative analysis.

Table 1: The demographic of the respondents

Respondent	Position / Role	Type of Organisation	Years of Experience
R1	Adventure Tour Operator	Private Tour Company	5 years
R2	Tourism Practitioner	Tourism Organisation	8 years
R3	Tourism Academic	Higher Education Institution	10 years
R4	Travel Agency Representative	Travel Agency	6 years
R5	Adventure Tourism Guide	Adventure Company	4 years

In line with the study objective, the findings demonstrate that tourism industry practitioners encounter a range of practical and interconnected challenges when delivering Muslim-Friendly services within adventure tourism contexts. These challenges arise primarily from the nature of adventure tourism, which is typically conducted in remote, nature-based environments, and are further intensified by financial, human resource, and operational constraints. As a result, practitioners must continuously negotiate between practical limitations and the religious needs of Muslim travellers.

A key challenge identified is the limited availability of Muslim-Friendly infrastructure and facilities at adventure tourism sites. Respondents reported difficulties in providing suitable prayer spaces, clean ablution facilities, and consistent access to halal food, particularly along trekking routes and in isolated natural areas. For example, muddy and unclean trail conditions often discourage prayer despite travellers' intentions (R1), while the remoteness of destinations makes the establishment of permanent prayer facilities impractical (R3). Extended travel durations and limited rest stops further restrict access to halal food, requiring travellers to rely on improvised or minimal options (R4). Consistent with prior studies, these constraints reflect the structural limitations of adventure tourism destinations, which prioritise natural landscapes and conservation over permanent infrastructure (Tavakoli & Mura, 2021). Consequently, Muslim-Friendly services in such settings tend to be temporary and adaptive, relying heavily on operators' creativity and discretion. From a faith-based perspective, these challenges demonstrate the difficulty of maintaining religious observance in adventure tourism settings where environmental conditions and limited infrastructure may restrict the provision of Muslim-Friendly facilities.

Financial constraints further exacerbate these infrastructural limitations. The findings indicate that delivering Muslim-Friendly services often involves additional costs related to halal certification, specialised transport, local service providers, and destination-specific fees. Respondents noted that budget-oriented adventure packages leave limited capacity to absorb such costs, while trips to remote or high-altitude locations significantly increase operational expenses due to the need for four-wheel-drive vehicles, boats, or porters (R1; R3). As highlighted by one respondent, not all operators are financially capable of investing in comprehensive Muslim-Friendly provisions (R5). This supports existing literature identifying financial

limitations as a major barrier, particularly for small and medium-sized operators with limited capital (Muslim & Harun, 2022). Consequently, practitioners often prioritise safety and core logistics over religious accommodations, despite recognising their importance.

Another practical challenge relates to limited knowledge and the absence of structured training among tourism staff and guides. The findings suggest that Muslim-Friendly tourism is frequently interpreted narrowly, with emphasis placed primarily on halal food, while other aspects such as prayer facilitation, Qibla direction, modesty, and gender interaction receive less attention. Respondents stressed the importance of guides who are not only technically competent in adventure safety but also capable of supporting guests' religious needs (R1). However, reliance on part-time or freelance guides, who often lack formal training, limits consistent service delivery (R2). This issue is further complicated in multicultural or international destinations, where guides must balance religious sensitivities with diverse tourist behaviours, occasionally seeking religious guidance themselves (R5). These findings align with previous research highlighting gaps in staff awareness and competency as a critical challenge in Muslim-Friendly tourism implementation (Ayunni, 2020).

Balancing adventure activities with religious and cultural requirements also emerged as a significant practical challenge. Adventure tourism frequently involves mixed-gender participation, physical contact during safety or rescue situations, and exposure to varying dress norms, which may conflict with Islamic principles of modesty. Respondents noted that even women-only trips cannot fully avoid interactions with male hikers, and emergency situations may necessitate assistance from male guides, making strict gender segregation impractical (R1). Additionally, managing the sharing of photographs and social media content was identified as challenging due to the spontaneous nature of adventure activities (R4). In international destinations such as Taman Negara, practitioners highlighted ethical tensions in maintaining religious boundaries while prioritising safety and professionalism (R5). These findings support earlier research suggesting that flexible, context-sensitive approaches are necessary when integrating religious principles into adventure tourism settings (Zulkifli et al., 2023).

Overall, the findings indicate that the delivery of Muslim-Friendly services in adventure tourism is shaped by a complex interaction of

environmental, financial, human resource, and ethical factors. While demand for Muslim-Friendly adventure tourism is increasing, practitioners' ability to respond effectively depends on adaptive operational strategies, improved staff training, and stronger institutional support. Without clear guidelines, financial incentives, and collaborative frameworks, tourism industry practitioners may continue to face difficulties in integrating Muslim-Friendly principles into adventure tourism operations in a sustainable and consistent manner.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the study demonstrates that integrating faith-based needs within adventure tourism requires adaptive operational strategies that allow tourism providers to accommodate Islamic practices while maintaining the experiential nature of adventure tourism. This study examined the practical challenges faced by tourism industry practitioners in delivering Muslim-Friendly services within adventure tourism contexts. The findings reveal that practitioners navigate a complex set of interrelated constraints, including limited infrastructure, financial pressures, insufficient staff training, and operational challenges inherent to remote, nature-based environments. These challenges are further compounded by the need to balance adventure activities with Islamic principles, such as modesty, gender sensitivity, and religious observances, while ensuring safety and quality experiences for travellers. As a result, the provision of Muslim-Friendly adventure tourism services remains adaptive, temporary, and relies heavily on practitioners' creativity and discretion. The study has several practical implications for the tourism industry. First, there is a clear need for targeted capacity-building initiatives to enhance

practitioners' knowledge and skills in Muslim-Friendly service provision, particularly regarding prayer facilitation, halal compliance, and culturally sensitive operations. Second, the findings highlight the importance of developing adaptive service models and operational guidelines that address the unique challenges of remote adventure tourism settings. Third, financial and institutional support mechanisms, such as subsidies for halal certification or collaborative infrastructure development, are essential to enable smaller operators to provide comprehensive Muslim-Friendly services without compromising safety or operational efficiency. By addressing these challenges, the adventure tourism sector can better meet the growing demand for Muslim-Friendly experiences, enhancing satisfaction, inclusivity, and Malaysia's position as a leading Muslim-Friendly destination.

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Understanding Dark Tourism Research through Bibliometric Mapping from 2017 to 2025

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Abstract—This study aims to map the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and research trends in dark tourism scholarship over the past decade. It employs a systematic literature review combined with bibliometric network analysis of Scopus indexed journal articles published between 2017 and 2025, following PRISMA guidelines and using VOSviewer for data visualisation. The findings indicate a steady growth in dark tourism research, with dominant themes including thanatourism, memorial landscapes, visitor motivation, sustainability, and digital memorialisation, alongside increasing thematic diversification and uneven global research influence. The study is limited to English language publications indexed in Scopus, which may exclude relevant regional scholarship. Practically, the findings support the development of ethically informed destination management and interpretation strategies. Socially, dark tourism is shown to have potential to contribute to collective memory, ethical reflection, and social learning when responsibly managed. The originality of this study lies in its integrated bibliometric and thematic approach, which provides a comprehensive overview of the development of dark tourism research and offers a structured foundation for future theoretical and applied investigations.

Keywords: dark tourism; bibliometric analysis; thematic evolution; heritage tourism; visitor behaviour

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Dark tourism refers to travel to places associated with death, suffering, disaster, and human tragedy, including sites of war, genocide, natural catastrophes, and memorial landscapes (Martini & Buda, 2020). As a growing segment of contemporary tourism, dark tourism functions not only as a leisure activity but also as a medium through which societies engage with difficult histories, collective memory, and moral reflection (Apetrei et al., 2024). In this context, dark tourism is not merely understood as visiting sites of death, but as a socially constructed practice shaped by historical narratives, cultural meanings, and ethical interpretations of past events (Zhang, 2022). The development of dark tourism is influenced by structural factors such as heritage management, political context, and tourism governance, as well as dynamic elements including media representation, digital platforms, and shifting visitor motivations (Tevely, 2025). Consequently, recent scholarship increasingly conceptualises dark tourism as a multidimensional and socially embedded phenomenon that reflects broader transformations in memory, culture, and global mobility.

Recognising dark tourism as an important site of meaning-making, destination managers, policymakers, and tourism stakeholders continue to develop strategies that frame tragic pasts for contemporary audiences (Assylkhanova et al., 2025). One significant development is the integration of educational, commemorative, and interpretive approaches into dark tourism destinations. These approaches operate not only as tools for attracting visitors, but also as mechanisms for shaping historical understanding, ethical awareness, and emotional engagement. This connection highlights the importance of linking theoretical perspectives on memory, morality, and tourism consumption with empirical studies of visitor behaviour and destination management, in order to better understand how dark tourism contributes to social learning and cultural reflection.

Dark tourism occupies a complex position within global tourism systems, similar to how memory functions within society (Liberato et al., 2019). When narratives of tragedy are carefully curated, dark tourism can foster empathy, reflection, and historical awareness. However, when poorly managed or excessively commercialised, it risks trivialising suffering, distorting historical facts, and reinforcing voyeuristic consumption of death (Ullah et al., 2025). Foundational theories of dark tourism, including Seaton's concept of thanatourism and Stone's spectrum of darkness, emphasise that visitor engagement with death-related sites varies in intensity, motivation, and moral framing (Magano et al., 2023). These perspectives demonstrate that dark tourism directly influences how societies remember violence, interpret past injustices, and negotiate the boundaries between commemoration and commodification.

Despite its growing prominence, dark tourism practice often prioritises market-driven objectives over ethical and educational considerations (Chen & Xu, 2021). Many dark tourism initiatives struggle to balance visitor demand with respect for victims, survivors, and affected communities. Effective dark tourism management requires sensitivity, transparency, contextual accuracy, and cultural awareness, all of which vary across destinations and sociopolitical settings (Barbu Kleitsch & Bader-Jurj, 2026). Managerial misjudgements such as sensationalist interpretation, inappropriate marketing strategies, or exclusion of local voices can undermine the moral legitimacy of dark tourism and provoke public controversy. Thus, dark tourism should not be viewed merely as a niche tourism product, but as a

complex cultural practice that requires careful negotiation between remembrance, representation, and responsibility (Martini & Buda, 2020).

Within tourism studies, dark tourism is increasingly recognised as a lens through which broader issues of sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility can be examined (Lv et al., 2022). Destinations associated with trauma often face long-term social and economic consequences, and tourism development in such contexts can either contribute to healing and regeneration or deepen existing inequalities (Lundin & Soulard, 2025). When dark tourism is aligned with principles of responsible tourism and inclusive heritage management, it can support local development, strengthen collective memory, and promote intercultural understanding (Bilginoğlu, 2025). Conversely, when deeper social grievances and power asymmetries are ignored, dark tourism may result in superficial engagement and symbolic consumption rather than meaningful reflection.

Before developing comprehensive frameworks for dark tourism research and practice, scholars must consider several enabling conditions. These include inclusive interpretation processes that involve affected communities, ethical guidelines that prioritise dignity and accuracy, transparent governance structures, integration of educational objectives, avoidance of exploitative narratives, and long-term evaluation of social impacts on host societies (Tripathi & Bansal, 2025). These conditions are essential for ensuring that dark tourism contributes positively to cultural understanding rather than reinforcing harm or misrepresentation.

Defining dark tourism solely as travel to sites of death is therefore insufficient. Dark tourism encompasses a wide range of destinations, practices, and meanings, including memorial tourism, genocide tourism, disaster tourism, and heritage interpretation related to violence and loss (Siti Hamidah & Hakim, 2023). It involves the interaction of tourists, narratives, spaces, and institutions within specific cultural and historical contexts. The growing integration of digital media, online reviews, and promotional platforms further complicates how dark tourism is produced, consumed, and evaluated in contemporary society.

Acknowledging the expanding role of dark tourism in global tourism discourse, this study examines how dark tourism has been conceptualised, analysed, and developed within academic scholarship over the last decade.

Preliminary exploration of the literature reveals influential contributions addressing visitor motivation, ethical debates, destination management, and cultural representation. These studies indicate that dark tourism research has evolved significantly, moving from definitional debates towards more nuanced discussions of experience, morality, and social impact.

From this perspective, research on dark tourism offers an opportunity to map global scholarly contributions, identify leading actors, and examine thematic developments within the field. Although previous studies have reviewed specific aspects of dark tourism, such as motivation or ethics, while previous studies have examined dark tourism through systematic reviews, comprehensive bibliometric analyses that map the intellectual structure and evolving research trends of dark tourism scholarship over the last decade remain relatively limited. Therefore, this study combines a systematic literature review with bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed publications from 2017 to 2025 in order to present a comprehensive overview of publication trends, thematic structures, and collaborative networks in dark tourism research. Based on this objective, the study proposes five research questions:

RQ1: How has dark tourism research developed over the period from 2017 to 2025?

RQ2: Which countries and institutions contribute most significantly to dark tourism scholarship?

RQ3: Which journals serve as the leading outlets for dark tourism research?

RQ4: What thematic trends and conceptual frameworks characterise contemporary dark tourism studies?

RQ5: Who are the most influential authors and collaborative networks in dark tourism research?

Systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis offer complementary strengths. Systematic review enables in-depth examination of research content, while bibliometric analysis provides performance indicators, conceptual mapping, and network visualisation. Accordingly, RQ1 reflects the content-oriented focus of the systematic review, RQ2 and RQ3 address performance analysis, RQ4 explores thematic development through science mapping, and RQ5 examines patterns of scholarly collaboration within the dark tourism research landscape.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Dark tourism has emerged as a significant field of inquiry within tourism studies, attracting sustained scholarly attention over the last two decades. Early conceptualisations of dark tourism focused on defining its scope and boundaries, with Lennon (2017) introducing the term to describe visits to sites associated with death, disaster, and atrocity. Seaton (1999) earlier conceptualised a similar phenomenon through the notion of thanatourism, emphasising tourists' motivations to engage with death-related experiences. These foundational works positioned dark tourism as a distinct form of tourism consumption, rooted in both historical curiosity and emotional engagement with human suffering.

Subsequent scholarship expanded beyond definitional debates to explore the motivations and experiences of dark tourism visitors. Research has consistently shown that visitors are driven by a combination of educational, commemorative, emotional, and moral motivations rather than mere fascination with death (Sigala & Steriopoulos, 2021). For many tourists, dark tourism sites function as spaces of learning and reflection, enabling engagement with difficult histories and collective memory. Studies examining visitor experience highlight the emotional intensity of dark tourism encounters, often characterised by empathy, sadness, and moral contemplation (Light, 2017). These findings challenge simplistic assumptions that dark tourism is inherently voyeuristic or sensationalist.

Alongside motivation and experience, ethical considerations have become a central theme in dark tourism research. Scholars have raised concerns regarding the commodification of tragedy, the risk of historical distortion, and the moral responsibilities of destination managers (Light, 2017). Ethical debates often focus on the balance between commercial imperatives and respectful representation of victims and survivors. Tripathi & Bansal (2025) argues that ethical dark tourism requires careful interpretation, contextual accuracy, and sensitivity to local communities. Failure to meet these standards may result in public backlash, reputational damage, and the erosion of trust between stakeholders and visitors.

Another prominent strand of literature examines dark tourism destinations as heritage and memory sites. Research in this area highlights the role of museums, memorials, and former conflict zones in shaping national and transnational narratives of the past (Pfoser & Stach, 2025). Dark tourism sites are not neutral spaces but are embedded

within political, cultural, and ideological contexts that influence how history is presented and remembered. Studies have shown that state involvement, curatorial choices, and narrative framing significantly affect visitor interpretation and meaning-making processes (Barbu Kleitsch & Bader-Jurj, 2026). This perspective underscores the importance of power relations and representation in dark tourism development.

In recent years, dark tourism scholarship has increasingly adopted interdisciplinary approaches, incorporating perspectives from sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and communication. Researchers have explored the influence of media and digital platforms on the popularisation and interpretation of dark tourism destinations, particularly through social media, virtual tours, and user-generated content (Light, 2017). These developments have transformed how dark tourism is marketed and consumed, raising new questions about authenticity, emotional engagement, and ethical responsibility in digital environments.

Despite the growing volume of research, several gaps remain within the dark tourism literature. Existing studies are often fragmented, focusing on specific destinations, themes, or methodological approaches. Comprehensive assessments of the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and collaborative patterns of dark tourism research are still limited. Moreover, most reviews remain narrative or thematic in nature, lacking systematic mapping of scholarly production over time. Addressing these gaps requires integrative approaches that combine systematic literature review with bibliometric analysis to provide a holistic overview of how dark tourism research has developed, diversified, and matured within the global academic landscape.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study design

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and bibliometric analysis to examine the development and structure of dark tourism research within scholarly publications and to reveal the bibliometric profile of this research domain. In several references, this combined methodological approach is referred to as Systematic Literature Network Analysis (SLNA). Previous researchers have applied SLNA to identify research trends by integrating a systematic literature review (Newman & Gough, 2020) with bibliographic analysis (BA) (Zupic & Čater, 2015).

In this context, the SLR component of the study followed the PRISMA model guidelines (Moher, 2009), which outline a systematic process of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of sources, as illustrated in Figure 1. The bibliometric analysis component was employed to identify research patterns, examine publication trends, and visualise metadata related to dark tourism studies, including co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence, and institutional collaboration structures.

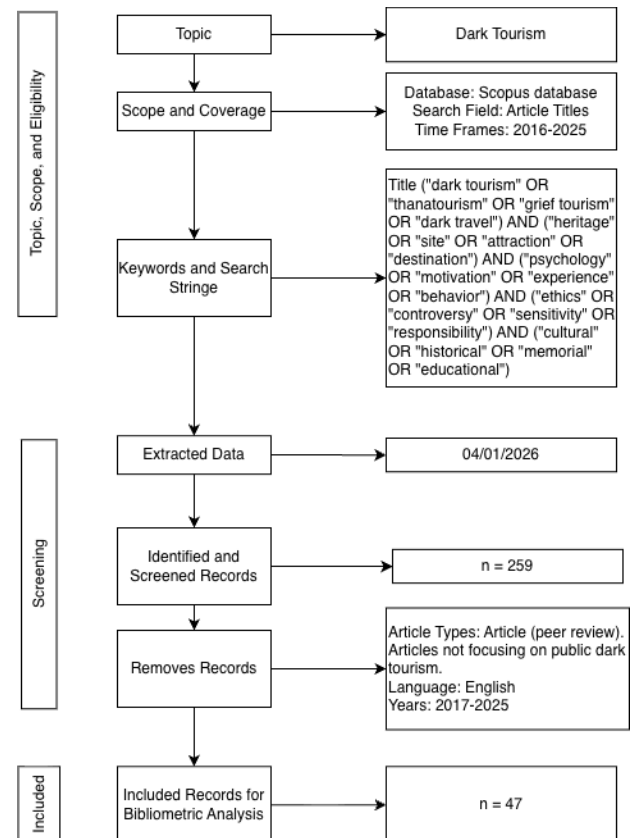


Figure 1 Diagram of the PRISMA. PRISMA, preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses

3.2 Data Search and Identification

The data for this study were obtained from the Scopus database, accessed on 4 January 2026. The dataset consisted of peer reviewed journal articles published over the last ten years from 2017 to 2025 that examined dark tourism as a research topic. Scopus was selected as the primary data source because it is Elsevier's abstract and citation database, launched in 2004, and is widely recognised as one of the most comprehensive academic databases used in international scholarly research. Articles indexed in Scopus generally undergo a rigorous peer review process, ensuring the quality,

credibility, and reliability of the data used in this study.

To identify publications relevant to the study objectives, the search was conducted using the following keyword string: ("dark tourism" OR "thanatourism" OR "grief tourism" OR "dark travel") AND ("heritage" OR "site" OR "attraction" OR "destination") AND ("psychology" OR "motivation" OR "experience" OR "behavior") AND ("ethics" OR "controversy" OR "sensitivity" OR "responsibility") AND ("cultural" OR "historical" OR "memorial" OR "educational"). These keywords were selected to capture a broad yet focused range of literature addressing dark tourism from multiple perspectives, including destination characteristics, visitor motivation and experience, ethical considerations, and cultural and historical contexts.

The search was conducted within the "topic" category in Scopus, covering titles, abstracts, and keywords, to ensure comprehensive retrieval of relevant studies. Inclusion and exclusion criteria, as

presented in Table 1, were applied to refine the dataset. Only peer reviewed journal articles written in English and directly related to dark tourism were included, while conference proceedings, editorials, book chapters, reviews, and unrelated studies were excluded.

After finalising the dataset, all bibliographic information was exported in CSV format for further processing. The data were analysed using VOSviewer to generate bibliometric visualisations, including co authorship networks, keyword co occurrence maps, and country collaboration patterns. Additional analyses were conducted using Microsoft Excel for data cleaning and descriptive statistics, Publish or Perish software to validate citation counts and impact metrics, Scholarcy for structured content summarisation, and EdrawMax for the preparation of charts and diagrams. The results are presented in the form of tables, figures, and thematic visualisations to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into the structure and development of dark tourism research

Table 1 Inclusion–exclusion criteria

Criteria Type	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Topic relevance	Articles that examine dark tourism, including thanatourism, grief tourism, or dark travel, in relation to heritage, destinations, visitor motivation, experience, ethical considerations, cultural representation, or historical interpretation.	Articles unrelated to dark tourism; studies focused solely on general tourism, leisure travel, hospitality management, or heritage studies without any connection to death, tragedy, or commemorative contexts.
Document type	Peer reviewed journal articles.	Conference papers, editorials, book chapters, review articles, dissertations, working papers, and news articles.
Language	English language publications.	Non English publications.
Timeframe	Publications from 2017 to 2025.	Publications outside the designated timeframe.
Indexing	Documents indexed in Scopus.	Documents not indexed in Scopus.
Accessibility of data	Articles with accessible abstracts and bibliographic metadata sufficient for screening and analysis.	Articles lacking abstracts or essential bibliographic information.

3.3 Statistical Analysis

In this study, the 10 most influential publications on dark tourism were examined in detail according to their research focus, journals of publication, contributing institutions, key concepts, analytical approaches, methodological designs, and suggested directions for future research. The bibliometric analysis followed the principles of bibliometric theory, applying mathematical and statistical methods to analyse relevant literature across diverse fields related to dark tourism, including tourism studies, cultural studies, psychology, and heritage research (Adams, 2009; Budd, 1988; Diem & Wolter, 2013).

This study utilised VOSviewer software version 1.6.16 to perform the bibliographic analysis. VOSviewer is a freely available computer program designed to construct and visualise bibliometric maps. Compared with other bibliometric mapping tools, VOSviewer places particular emphasis on producing accessible and interpretable graphical representations of large bibliometric datasets (van Eck & Waltman, 2017).

The features of VOSviewer were especially useful for visualising the metadata of dark tourism publications, including analyses of bibliographic coupling, co authorship networks, and co citation relationships. This enabled an in depth examination of collaboration patterns among authors, thematic linkages across research topics, and the interconnections among key concepts within the dark tourism research landscape.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Dark tourism is closely associated with the ways societies engage with death, tragedy, and difficult heritage, and it plays an important role in shaping cultural memory, visitor experience, and ethical reflection. The dynamics of dark tourism are influenced by multiple factors, including historical context, cultural values, modes of interpretation, and the psychological motivations of visitors. Previous studies suggest that engagement with dark tourism sites is not merely driven by curiosity, but also by educational intentions, commemoration, and a desire to understand past suffering. As observed across various destinations, the meaning and impact of dark tourism are shaped not only by site characteristics but also by the narratives presented and the involvement of local communities, heritage institutions, and tourism stakeholders.

Over the past decade, research on dark tourism has expanded beyond early descriptive discussions of

macabre attractions to include more critical and interdisciplinary perspectives. Contemporary studies increasingly address visitor motivation, emotional experience, ethical responsibility, and issues of representation and authenticity. This development reflects a growing recognition that dark tourism is a multidimensional phenomenon requiring insights from tourism studies, psychology, cultural studies, heritage management, and ethic.

The findings of the bibliometric and systematic literature review conducted in this study reveal clear publication patterns, emerging thematic trends, leading journals, contributing countries, institutional affiliations, and commonly applied methodological approaches within dark tourism scholarship. These patterns were analysed in relation to the research questions and objectives established earlier.

Figure 2 illustrates the research trends in dark tourism studies from 2017 to 2025, presenting both the number of publications (Documents) and the average citations per year (MeanTCperYear).

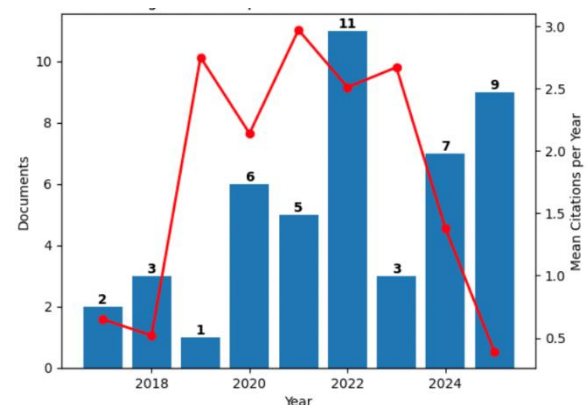


Figure 2 The publication data in 2017–2025 with the number of documents and MeanTCperYear

The data indicate that the number of publications on dark tourism shows an overall upward trend from 2017 to 2025, although with noticeable year-to-year fluctuations. In 2017, only two documents were published, followed by three documents in 2018 and a decline to one document in 2019. A more substantial increase is observed in 2020, with six publications, and this level of scholarly output remains relatively stable in 2021 with five documents. The most significant growth occurs in 2022, when the number of publications reaches eleven documents, before declining to three documents in 2023. Publication activity rises again in the most recent years, with seven documents published in 2024 and reaching a peak of nine

documents in 2025. This pattern indicates a growing and sustained academic interest in dark tourism research, particularly after 2020.

Regarding citation impact, the MeanTCperYear values vary considerably across the observed period. The highest average citation rate is recorded in 2021, with a MeanTCperYear value of 2.97, suggesting that publications from this year achieved the strongest scholarly influence. High citation averages are also observed in 2019, with a MeanTCperYear of 2.75, and in 2023, with a value of 2.67, indicating that studies published during these years addressed themes of notable relevance within dark tourism scholarship. In contrast, lower MeanTCperYear values are found in 2017 (0.65), 2018 (0.52), and 2025 (0.39), which can be attributed to the limited volume of publications and the shorter time span available for citation accumulation in more recent years.

Despite these fluctuations, the overall trend demonstrates an increasing academic engagement with dark tourism topics. The rise in publication numbers after 2019 reflects the steady expansion of research interest, while variations in citation averages suggest differences in the immediate scholarly impact of individual studies depending on their thematic focus and timing.

In summary, these results highlight that dark tourism research is both expanding and diversifying. The field shows increasing attention to interdisciplinary approaches that integrate tourism studies, psychology, cultural studies, and heritage research. This growth provides a solid foundation for future studies to further examine ethical concerns, visitor motivations, and the role of dark tourism in shaping cultural memory and educational practices.

4.1 Can dark tourism contribute to sustainable cultural understanding and ethical engagement?

Dark tourism, particularly when framed within heritage interpretation and ethical tourism practices, plays a significant role in shaping visitor perceptions, collective memory, and cultural understanding of past tragedies. Rather than functioning solely as a form of niche tourism, dark tourism has increasingly been recognised as a medium through which societies negotiate meaning, responsibility, and remembrance. Research suggests that well-managed dark tourism sites can contribute to educational outcomes, reflective engagement, and ethical awareness, thereby fostering more responsible forms of tourism consumption and heritage appreciation (Gardiner, 2022).

Several studies emphasise that dark tourism should not be understood merely as the consumption of sites associated with death, but as a complex social and cultural practice shaped by narratives, emotions, and power relations. For instance, Mangwane (2019) highlights how dark tourism experiences are embedded in local cultural contexts and postcolonial dynamics, influencing how histories of suffering are represented and interpreted. Similarly, Craig Wight (2020) demonstrates that visitor engagement at dark tourism sites is closely linked to authenticity, emotional intensity, and the perceived legitimacy of interpretative frameworks.

From a heritage perspective, dark tourism has been shown to intersect with issues of memory politics, identity construction, and place-making. Wyatt (2021) illustrates how heritage interpretation at dark tourism sites can mediate between commemoration and tourism development, while Tibergien (2022) further argues that spatial narratives and geographical context play a crucial role in shaping visitors' ethical and emotional responses. These findings suggest that dark tourism operates not only at the level of individual experience but also within broader cultural and spatial systems.

Ethical considerations remain central to dark tourism scholarship. Čakar (2020) and Šuligoj (2022) underline the importance of responsible management practices, particularly in relation to commodification, sensitivity toward affected communities, and the risk of trivialising suffering. Their findings indicate that ethical tensions emerge when economic objectives overshadow commemorative and educational purposes, reinforcing the need for governance frameworks that prioritise respect, accuracy, and inclusivity.

More recent contributions further expand the scope of dark tourism research by examining contemporary visitor behaviour and emotional engagement. Dresler (2023) explores how visitor motivations and affective responses evolve in response to changing social contexts, while Wyatt (2024) demonstrates that emotional immersion and reflective meaning-making are key determinants of visitor satisfaction and learning outcomes. These studies collectively suggest that dark tourism experiences are increasingly shaped by psychological and experiential dimensions rather than purely site-based attributes.

In addition, MacCarthy (2021) highlights the managerial implications of dark tourism for destination planning and stakeholder coordination,

emphasising the need to balance visitor demand with ethical responsibility and community interests. This reinforces the view that dark tourism functions as a multi-actor system involving heritage managers, tourism authorities, local communities, and visitors.

Table 2 presents the ten most cited publications in dark tourism research, summarising their key concepts, methodological approaches, scholarly contributions, and proposed directions for

future research. Taken together, these studies underscore the importance of interdisciplinary approaches that integrate tourism studies, heritage research, psychology, and ethics. The findings suggest that when managed responsibly, dark tourism can contribute not only to tourism development but also to deeper cultural understanding, ethical reflection, and sustainable heritage practices.

Table 1 The 10 most cited publications on Dark Tourism (2017–2025)

References	Cites	Titles	Key concepts	Methods	Scholarly highlights	Future research
(Gardiner, Vada, Yang, Khoo, & Le, 2022)	57	Recreating history: The evolving negotiation of staged authenticity in tourism experiences	Dark tourism; ethics; moral gaze; visitor engagement	Qualitative analysis of visitor narratives and site interpretation	Demonstrates how ethical framing shapes visitor reflection and moral responsibility	Examine ethical interpretation across different cultural and geographical contexts
(Craig Wight, 2020)	56	Visitor perceptions of European Holocaust Heritage: A social media analysis	Authenticity; emotional experience; dark tourism motivation	Mixed-method approach combining surveys and qualitative interviews	Shows that perceived authenticity intensifies emotional and reflective visitor experiences	Explore digital mediation of authenticity in dark tourism sites
(Wyatt, Leask, & Barron, 2021)	46	Interpreting difficult heritage: Dark tourism and memorial landscapes	Heritage interpretation; memorialisation; difficult heritage	Qualitative case studies of heritage sites	Highlights the role of interpretation in balancing commemoration and tourism development	Comparative studies of memorial interpretation across regions
(Çakar, 2020)	28	Investigation of the Motivations and Experiences of Tourists Visiting the Gallipoli Peninsula as a Dark Tourism Destination	Ethics; commodification; responsible tourism	Conceptual analysis supported by empirical examples	Identifies tensions between commercialisation and ethical responsibility	Develop governance frameworks for ethical dark tourism management
(Mangwane, Hermann, & Lenhard, 2019)	22	Who visits the apartheid museum and why? An exploratory study of the motivations to visit a	Postcolonialism; cultural representation; dark heritage	Qualitative interviews and narrative analysis	Reveals how power relations shape dark tourism narratives in	Examine local community perspectives in

References	Cites	Titles	Key concepts	Methods	Scholarly highlights	Future research
		dark tourism site in South Africa			postcolonial contexts	dark tourism destinations
(Šuligoj & Kennell, 2022)	18	The role of dark commemorative and sport events in peaceful coexistence in the Western Balkans	Sustainable tourism; responsibility; heritage management	Case study analysis of heritage destinations	Emphasises sustainability as a core principle in dark tourism governance	Integrate sustainability indicators into dark tourism policy evaluation
(Dresler, 2023)	16	Multiplicity of moral emotions in educational dark tourism	Visitor emotion; experience design; affective tourism	Quantitative survey and experiential analysis	Shows how emotional intensity influences learning and visitor satisfaction	Longitudinal studies on emotional impact of dark tourism visits
(Tiberghien & Lennon, 2022)	16	Managing authenticity and performance in Gulag Tourism, Kazakhstan	Tourism geography; spatial narratives; place-making	Qualitative spatial and interpretive analysis	Demonstrates how geographical context shapes meaning-making processes	Explore spatial storytelling through digital and immersive technologies
(Wyatt, Leask, & Barron, 2024)	13	Designing dark tourism experiences: an exploration of edutainment interpretation at lighter dark visitor attractions	Emotional immersion; learning; visitor behaviour	Structural equation modelling	Establishes links between emotion, reflection, and educational outcomes	Test model across different types of dark tourism sites
(MacCarthy, 2021)	13	Using Dialectic Thematic Analysis in dark tourism: Combining deductive and inductive reasoning in a modular method	Destination management; stakeholders; ethics	Qualitative stakeholder interviews	Highlights the role of coordination among managers, communities, and visitors	Investigate participatory governance models in dark tourism management

4.2 The analysis of the most contributive countries with the highest number of publications on dark tourism

The thematic trend developing in the top contributing countries to dark tourism research was analysed and is presented in detail in Table 3 and Figure 3. This analysis highlights the geographical distribution of scholarly output and citation impact within the field of dark tourism studies.

Table 3 indicates that several countries are actively engaged in producing publications related to dark tourism, although the volume of publications and citation impact varies considerably across regions. The United Kingdom emerges as the leading contributor, with a total of 19 publications and 114 citations, indicating both high productivity and strong scholarly influence. Japan ranks second in terms of publication output with 10 articles; however, these publications have not yet accumulated citations, which may reflect their recent publication dates or limited international visibility.

Indonesia contributes 9 publications with a total of 4 citations, demonstrating a growing academic interest in dark tourism within Southeast Asia. China follows closely with 8 publications but no recorded citations, suggesting that while research activity is increasing, its global academic impact remains limited at this stage. Spain contributes 7 publications with 14 citations, reflecting moderate productivity and citation performance.

Australia stands out in terms of citation impact relative to its publication volume, producing 6 publications that have accumulated 70 citations. This indicates that Australian contributions to dark tourism research are particularly influential within the scholarly community. Romania contributes 5 publications with a total of 1 citation, while the United States produces 4 publications with 6 citations.

Hungary and the Philippines each contribute 3 publications. Hungary records 1 citation, whereas the Philippines achieves a higher citation count of 11, suggesting stronger visibility and impact despite similar publication output. Overall, these findings reveal an uneven distribution of scholarly influence across countries, where higher publication volume does not necessarily correspond to higher citation impact.

In summary, the geographical distribution of dark tourism research demonstrates both concentration and diversity. While European and Asia-Pacific countries dominate in terms of

publication output, citation impact varies significantly, highlighting differences in research visibility, journal placement, and thematic relevance. These patterns suggest opportunities for greater international collaboration and comparative research to enhance the global development of dark tourism scholarship.

Table 2 Top Contributing Countries in Dark Tourism Research

Countries	Total Publications	Total Citations
UK	19	114
JAPAN	10	0
INDONESIA	9	4
CHINA	8	0
SPAIN	7	14
AUSTRALIA	6	70
ROMANIA	5	1
USA	4	6
HUNGARY	3	1
PHILIPPINES	3	11

The networks of countries contributing to dark tourism research are presented in Figure 3. The results indicate that scholarly contributions originate from a diverse range of countries, reflecting the international scope of dark tourism as a research field. Countries with higher publication output and citation impact tend to occupy more central positions within the collaboration network, suggesting stronger international visibility and research connectivity.

The United Kingdom emerges as a key contributor, reflecting both a high volume of publications and substantial citation impact, which positions it as an important hub in the global dark tourism research network. Australia also demonstrates a strong presence, particularly in terms of citation influence, indicating that its scholarly contributions resonate widely within international academic discourse. Spain and the United States show moderate levels of engagement, contributing to the diffusion of dark tourism research across different geographical contexts.

Several Asian countries, including Japan, Indonesia, China, and the Philippines, are increasingly represented within the research

landscape. Although some of these countries display lower citation counts or more limited collaborative reach, their growing publication output suggests emerging participation in international dark tourism scholarship. This pattern points to opportunities for expanded cross-national collaboration, particularly between established research centres in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.

Overall, the collaboration network highlights an uneven distribution of international

research linkages, where countries with strong publication and citation performance are more centrally connected, while others remain on the periphery. These findings suggest considerable potential for strengthening international collaboration in dark tourism research, especially through comparative studies and joint projects that bridge regions with differing research capacities and thematic priorities

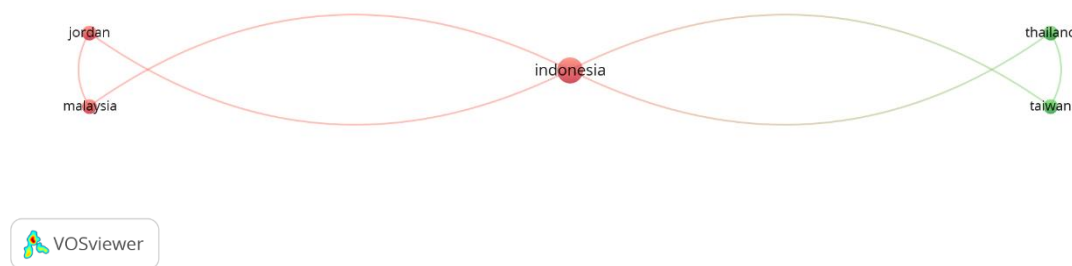


Figure 3 Co-occurrence network of the most contributive countries

Recent trends illustrated in Figure 3 show that Indonesia occupies a central position within the international co-occurrence network, indicating its role as a key connecting country among several regional partners. The strongest collaborative links are observed between Indonesia and neighboring or regionally proximate countries such as Malaysia, Jordan, Thailand, and Taiwan. This pattern suggests that research collaboration in this field is currently more regionally clustered rather than globally dispersed.

The visualization highlights the importance of regional academic networks in shaping research output, particularly within Southeast Asia and its adjacent regions. Countries such as Malaysia and Jordan form a closely connected cluster with Indonesia, while Thailand and Taiwan appear linked through another collaborative pathway, reflecting emerging cross-regional research interactions. However, the limited number of nodes and connections also indicates that international collaboration remains relatively concentrated and has not yet expanded extensively to a broader global scale.

Overall, these findings underscore the strategic role of Indonesia as a regional hub in this research field, while also pointing to the need for wider international engagement beyond regional partnerships. Strengthening collaboration with countries outside the immediate regional network

could contribute to greater knowledge exchange, higher citation impact, and a more inclusive global research landscape in the future.

Figure 4 presents a density visualization map of the most contributive institutions generated using VOSviewer. The map highlights several institutional hotspots, indicated by areas with higher color intensity, which represent institutions with a relatively higher frequency of publications and stronger research presence in this field. Among the most prominent institutions are the Asian Institute of Tourism, Universitas Indonesia, the College of Tourism and Hospitality, and the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at De La Salle University.

The concentration of bright areas suggests that institutional contributions are unevenly distributed, with a limited number of universities acting as major knowledge hubs. These institutions appear to play a central role in shaping research output and academic collaboration, particularly within the tourism, hospitality, and sustainability-related dimensions of dark tourism. Conversely, the surrounding lower-density areas indicate the presence of other institutions with more limited publication output or weaker collaborative intensity.

Overall, this density map illustrates that research on dark tourism is driven by a core group of highly productive institutions, while broader institutional participation remains relatively dispersed. This pattern points to opportunities for

expanding inter-institutional collaboration and strengthening research capacity across a wider range

of universities to foster a more inclusive and interconnected academic network in future studies.

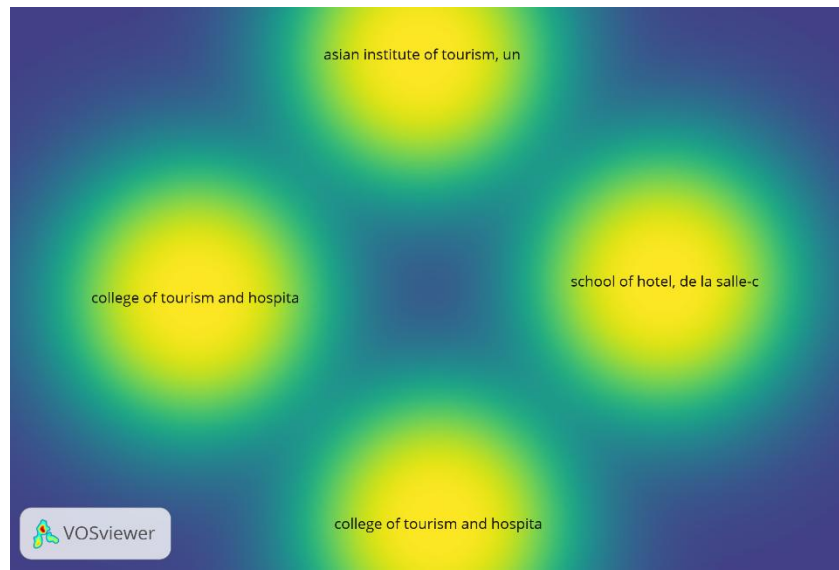


Figure 4 Density visualization map of the most contributive institutions

Figure 5 presents the most contributive institutions based on total publications in this research field. Chiba University emerges as the leading institution with 8 publications, followed by Jinan University with 7 publications. Griffith Business School ranks third, contributing 5 publications. Institutions with a moderate level of contribution include Edinburgh Napier University Business School and President University, each with 4 publications. Meanwhile, Pukyong National University and Tshwane University of Technology each recorded 3 publications, indicating a growing institutional engagement in this area.

Finally, Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, Duquesne University, and Edinburgh Napier University each contributed 2 publications, reflecting emerging but still limited institutional participation. Overall, the distribution illustrates that research output is concentrated in a small number of institutions, while broader institutional involvement remains fragmented, suggesting opportunities for expanded collaboration and knowledge production in future studie

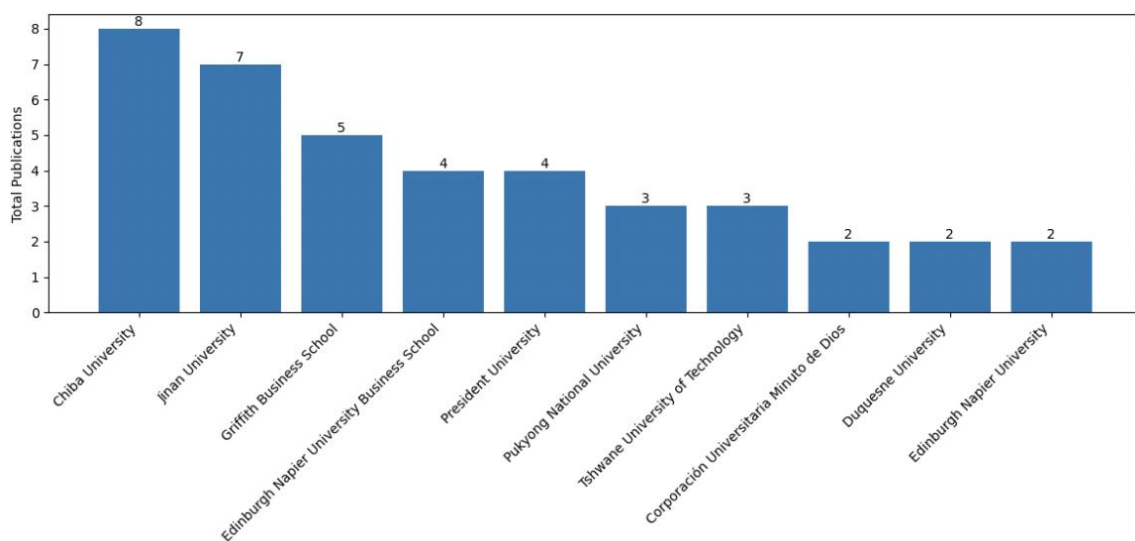


Figure 5 Most contributive institutions

It is important to note that the number of documents produced by an institution is not always directly proportional to its citation impact. While institutions such as Chiba University and Jinan University lead in terms of publication volume, other institutions with fewer documents may still achieve notable scholarly visibility through highly cited individual articles. This pattern indicates that research influence in dark tourism is shaped not only by productivity but also by the relevance, quality, and timing of publications.

These trends suggest that even institutions with a relatively limited number of publications can strengthen their academic reputation and position themselves as important contributors within the field. Overall, the global landscape of dark tourism research reflects a combination of established institutional leadership and emerging centers of excellence, highlighting the potential for growth through broader, more inclusive international and inter-institutional collaboration.

4.3 A contribution analysis of the journals publishing dark tourism studies

Another important aspect of this study concerns the contribution of academic journals that publish research on dark tourism within their respective thematic scopes. The analysis identifies a diverse set of journals that have served as publication outlets for dark tourism scholarship, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the field, particularly its intersections with tourism management, cultural studies, geography, and sustainability.

Table 4 Leading Journals Publishing Dark Tourism Studies

SOURCE	TC	TP
ANNALS OF TOURISM RESEARCH	11	2
TOURISM GEOGRAPHIES	27	2
TOURISM MANAGEMENT	113	2
ACADEMICA TURISTICA	3	1
ENLIGHTENING TOURISM	2	1
EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF TOURISM RESEARCH	28	1
GEOJOURNAL OF TOURISM AND GEOSITES	2	1
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CUBAN STUDIES	1	1
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CULTURE, TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH	22	1
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND PUBLIC HEALTH	12	1

As presented in Table 4, publications on dark tourism are distributed across several leading tourism and hospitality journals. Tourism Management emerges as the most influential source in terms of citation impact, recording the highest total citations (TC = 113) despite publishing only two articles (TP = 2). This indicates that articles published in this journal tend to achieve substantial scholarly visibility and influence. Other prominent journals include Tourism Geographies (TC = 27; TP = 2) and the European Journal of Tourism Research (TC = 28; TP = 1), both of which demonstrate strong citation performance relative to their publication volume.

Several journals contribute to the field through single but impactful publications, such as the International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research (TC = 22; TP = 1) and the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (TC = 12; TP = 1). Meanwhile, Annals of Tourism Research, although publishing only two articles (TP = 2), also contributes to the academic discourse with a total of 11 citations, underscoring its role as a reputable outlet for theoretically grounded tourism research.

Overall, the distribution of publications suggests that dark tourism research is well integrated into high-impact tourism journals, even when the number of published articles remains relatively limited. This pattern highlights the importance of journal quality and disciplinary fit over sheer publication quantity. Future dark tourism research would benefit from targeting established tourism and hospitality journals with strong citation performance to enhance research visibility, scholarly impact, and cross-disciplinary engagement.

4.4 Analysis of thematic trends of publications on dark tourism

Thematic analysis of publications plays a crucial role in this study because examining thematic trends in dark tourism research allows scholars to identify research directions, assess novelty, and connect multiple interdisciplinary perspectives. By analysing keyword co occurrence networks, researchers are able to select relevant themes and research objects, clarify scholarly contributions, and support the advancement of knowledge within the field of dark tourism. Given the multidimensional nature of dark tourism, which intersects tourism studies, heritage research, psychology, and ethics, thematic mapping provides an important foundation for understanding how the field has evolved over time.

Figure 6 presents an overview of the author keywords identified in the dataset. This analysis is based on keywords selected by the authors, under the assumption that these terms best represent the research focus and expertise of the contributing scholars. The co-occurrence network reveals several thematic clusters, with the keyword dark tourism occupying a central position, indicating its function as the main conceptual node connecting diverse research themes.

One major cluster is centred on keywords such as thanatourism, memorial landscape, death, and cultural tourism. This cluster reflects the continued prominence of heritage oriented and commemorative perspectives within dark tourism research. Studies within this thematic area focus on how sites associated with death and suffering are interpreted, represented, and integrated into cultural and historical narratives. The presence of terms such as discourse analysis and fear suggest an increasing scholarly interest in interpretative processes and emotional responses, rather than solely in site classification or typology.

Another prominent cluster highlights keywords related to motivation, affect, and authenticity. This thematic grouping indicates a growing emphasis on visitor psychology and experiential dimensions of dark tourism. Research in this area seeks to understand why tourists are drawn

to sites of tragedy and how emotional engagement influences meaning making, ethical reflection, and learning outcomes. The appearance of location specific keywords, including Auschwitz, Berlin, Con Dao, and references to Filipino culture, demonstrates that empirical studies remain strongly grounded in case based and place specific contexts, often linked to national memory and post conflict narratives.

A further cluster is associated with digital memorials and edutainment, pointing to an emerging research direction that examines the role of digital technologies and mediated interpretation in dark tourism experiences. This thematic development reflects broader transformations in tourism communication and heritage presentation, where digital platforms increasingly shape visitor engagement, narrative construction, and commemorative practices.

Figure 7 provides a temporal overlay analysis of index keywords, in which node colours represent the average year of publication and node sizes indicate the frequency of keyword occurrence. Earlier studies, represented by darker blue tones, primarily focused on foundational concepts such as thanatourism, heritage tourism, and visitor motivations. This phase reflects the initial consolidation of the field through definitional clarification and behavioural exploration.

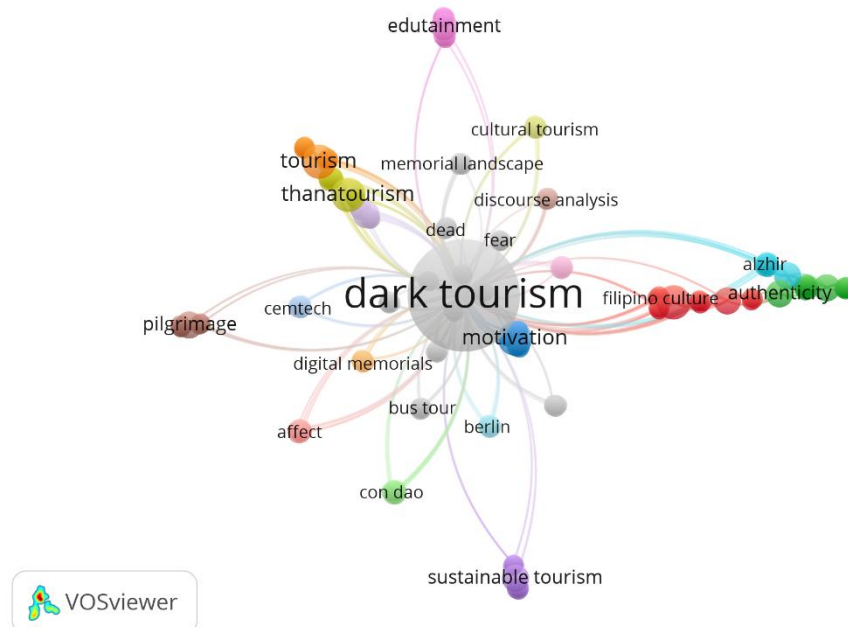


Figure 6 Co-occurrence networks of research themes based on author keywords

Studies published during the middle period, shown in green tones, increasingly addressed themes such as *tourist behaviour*, *tourism development*, and *cross cultural validation*. This shift indicates a broadening of methodological approaches and an expansion of theoretical perspectives within dark tourism scholarship. More recent studies,

highlighted in yellow tones, place greater emphasis on *sustainable tourism*, *behavioural intention*, *digital memorialisation*, and *cross modal experiences*. These trends suggest a growing alignment between dark tourism research and contemporary concerns related to sustainability, ethics, and technological mediation.

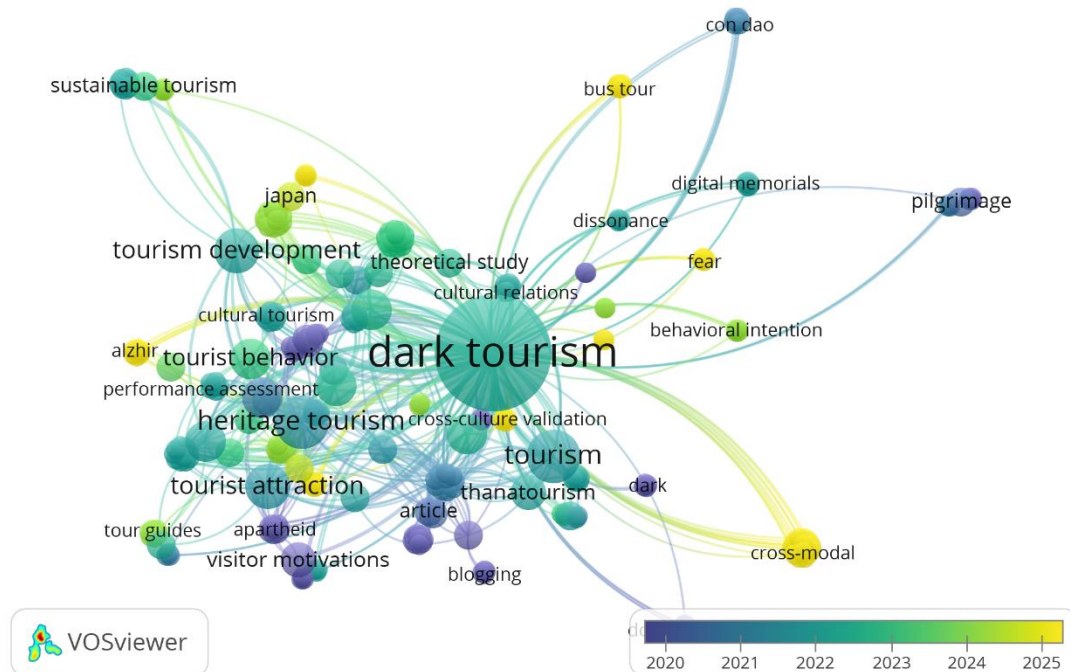


Figure 7 Co-occurrence networks of research themes based on index keyword

Overall, the keyword co occurrence analysis demonstrates that dark tourism research has developed from an early focus on site based and definitional issues towards a more interdisciplinary and reflexive field of inquiry. Current scholarship increasingly integrates psychological, cultural, ethical, and technological perspectives, positioning dark tourism as a complex social practice rather than a marginal tourism phenomenon. These findings highlight substantial opportunities for future research that further connects dark tourism with sustainability studies, digital communication, and critical heritage scholarship, thereby enhancing both theoretical depth and practical relevance.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This article presents a systematic literature network analysis of dark tourism research. Using the Scopus database, it provides a comprehensive overview of scholarly developments and offers a structured roadmap for future research in this field. While a

substantial body of literature has examined dark tourism from conceptual, experiential, and ethical perspectives, relatively few studies have mapped its intellectual structure through an integrated bibliometric and systematic review approach. This study addresses that gap by analysing publication trends, thematic patterns, and collaborative networks within dark tourism scholarship from 2017 to 2025.

The systematic review of the ten most influential articles reveals a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches. These studies address themes such as visitor motivation, emotional engagement, authenticity, ethical responsibility, heritage interpretation, and destination management. Despite their diversity, a shared insight emerges: dark tourism is a complex social and cultural practice that extends beyond site visitation and requires careful negotiation between commemoration, education, and tourism development. The literature consistently emphasises that responsible dark tourism depends on ethical

interpretation, sensitivity to affected communities, and meaningful engagement with historical narratives.

The keyword co occurrence analysis highlights the dominant and emerging research themes within the field, including thanatourism, memorial landscapes, visitor behaviour, sustainability, and digital memorialisation. These thematic clusters provide valuable direction for future research by indicating areas of consolidation as well as topics that are gaining increasing scholarly attention. In parallel, the author based bibliographic coupling network illustrates the global knowledge structure of dark tourism research, identifying key contributing countries, institutions, and collaborative patterns. The findings demonstrate that while research output is growing across regions, scholarly influence remains uneven, suggesting the need for stronger international and cross regional collaboration.

By integrating bibliometric mapping with thematic analysis, this study traces the evolution of dark tourism research over the past decade and offers practical insights for advancing the field. The results contribute to a deeper understanding of how dark tourism scholarship has developed and where future research efforts may be most productively directed. Overall, this study provides a foundation for further theoretical refinement, evidence based policy development, and responsible tourism practices that recognise dark tourism as an important medium for cultural memory, ethical reflection, and social learning.

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A Conceptual Framework of Mobile Engagement in Meeting Faith-Based Needs in Muslim-Friendly Tourism

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Abstract—The rapid growth of Muslim-friendly tourism has intensified scholarly and practical interest in understanding how Muslim travelers' faith-based needs are accommodated in contemporary travel environments. While prior studies have identified essential religious requirements such as halal food, prayer facilities, and shariah compliant services, limited conceptual work explains how digital technologies particularly mobile applications mediate the fulfillment of these needs across the travel journey. This paper develops a conceptual framework that positions mobile engagement as a central mechanism linking Muslim travelers' faith-based needs to enhanced travel confidence, emotional comfort, and destination satisfaction. Drawing from halal tourism literature, digital engagement theory, and technology-enabled service design, the framework conceptualizes mobile applications as functional, psychological, and social enablers that support religious continuity during travel. The paper contributes theoretically by integrating faith-based tourism and mobile engagement into a unified conceptual model and offers practical insights for destination managers and digital platform developers seeking to design inclusive Muslim-friendly tourism experiences.

Keywords: Muslim-friendly tourism, faith-based needs, mobile engagement, halal tourism, conceptual framework

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Muslim-friendly tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism industry, driven by the increasing mobility of Muslim travelers and heightened awareness of halal and shariah-compliant services (Battour et al., 2022; Mastercard & CrescentRating, 2023). Unlike conventional tourists, Muslim travelers must continuously fulfill faith-based obligations during travel, including dietary requirements, worship practices, moral conduct, and privacy considerations (Putra & Tucunan, 2021; Hanafiah et al., 2022). Parallel to this growth, tourism has undergone rapid digital transformation. Mobile applications, artificial intelligence (AI), and online platforms have become central to travel planning, on-site navigation, and experience sharing (Pencarelli, 2020; Cuomo et al., 2021). For Muslim travelers, mobile technologies play an even more critical role by providing real-time access to prayer times, qibla direction, halal food locations, mosque directories, and shariah-compliant accommodation options (CrescentRating, 2023; Husna, 2023). While prior studies have examined Muslim traveler satisfaction, halal service quality, and technology usage independently (Yaakop et al., 2017; Assaker et al., 2020), there remains a lack of integrative conceptual models explaining how mobile engagement mediates the fulfillment of faith-based needs and shapes travel experiences. This paper addresses this theoretical gap by proposing a conceptual framework that

explains the role of mobile applications as faith-facilitating technologies within Muslim-friendly tourism.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 Muslim Faith-Based Needs in Tourism

Halal tourism has been very significant with Muslim-friendly concept in tourism sector. Halal tourism is developed in fulfilling the faith-based need demand that needs to be performed by Muslim travelers as their main worshipping practices, with the assistances of adequate facilities and services. Faith-based needs, Muslim needs and spiritual needs are the familiar terms used by researchers depicting on the similarities of Muslims religious practices in their daily routines. MasterCard-CrescentRating (2019) listed out six basic needs that a Muslim required during travelling which are:

- a) Purification facilities with water/ water-friendly washroom
- b) Facilities to worship (salat)
- c) Halal food
- d) Tourism activities that obey with Islamic values and rules such as no element of immorality and evil
- e) Ramadan service
- f) Prohibition to non-halal recreation facilities/ services with privacy

a) Purification facilities with water/ water-friendly washroom

In Muslims prayer daily routine, it is obliged to perform ablution or wudu as an act of being clean and pure form from any dirt or Hadas (impurity). Hence, washroom with water pipes or bidet is encouraged to be provided as it eases for Muslim travelers to cleanse well before performing the prayers. Hence, the availability of sanctified facilities with water-friendly washrooms are highly urgent for every Muslims in whatever situation they are in.

b) Facilities to worship (salat)

Every Muslims are obligated to perform five times prayer per day as it is also their main worshipping act to the Almighty, Allah S.W.T. thus, it is vital for the destination hosts to provide prayer spaces such as mosques or musolla together with sanctified facilities or ablution area to ease them in performing prayers anytime especially for Muslim women as they need to cover up their aurah from the non-mahram men and women gazes.

c) Halal food services

Seeking for Halal products and services is crucial even during travelling as consuming healthy, clean and safe food is obligated and mandatory in Muslims daily routine as per mentioned in Halal section from Islamic Law. A hadith narrated by al-Tabarani also stated that “Searching for what is halal is an obligation upon every Muslim.”. With the references from Islamic Law and advices from past Islamic scholars and prophet, Halal food is highly prioritized to be seek during travelling that needs to be taken action by destination hosts.

d) Free immoral and Evil Islamic Tourism Activities

The first thing the Muslim travelers needs to be consider first before planning or joining any activities or events is to make sure that it is free from any kinds of immoralities such as dancing, concerts, clubbing, any kinds related to prostitution, nudity together with the one that serve non-Halal food such as alcohols or beers. Unwanted exposed of dressing code also taking into consideration when travelling as it will arouse lust and other unwanted evil intention.

e) Ramadan Packages

Muslim are commonly avoid travelling during Ramadhan period as it exhausts more than usual. However, there are groups of Muslim travelers who prefers to have vacation from the first of Ramdhan until the Eid-ul Fitr season. Hence, destination hosts can opt to provide services that serve Muslims during Ramadhan season such as including meals for suhoor (pre-dawn) and hosting iftar for breaking fast into their meal packages during their stay at the accommodations or at any restaurants and eateries. This kind of initiatives has indirectly promoted their businesses which making Muslim travelers to come and visit again in the next Ramadhan.

f) Restriction to non-sharia recreation services and facilities without privacy

Commonly, travelers would search for recreations during traveling and Muslim travelers would demand for separated spaces between women and men as it prioritizing the privacy for women aurah to not be exposed by non-Mahrams. For instance, gym hall and swimming pool should provide separated spaces for both genders in complying to shariah rule.

Overall, these Muslims six basic needs are just the foundation for business owners and authorities involved to get started in serving Muslim

customers. However, there are many additional needs that are opt to be considered which individually demanding. Such demands are like dress code, sexual behaviors and more (Putra and Tucunan, 2021). These six basic Muslim faith-based needs are also the same list reported by the publisher of annual Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), CrescentRating and stating that Muslims are also practicing their faith-based needs diversely. MasterCard-CrescentRating (2019) released newest categories of faith-based needs or Muslim needs

divided by three levels of categories which are the from the highest urgency is need to have, good to have and nice to have. The basic Muslim faith-based needs are then listed referring to urgency under each of these categories, assisting involved parties to have clear guidelines and references in taking initiatives to welcome Muslim travelers to their businesses. Table 1 below shows the comparison of Muslim needs in the year 2009 and 2019 (Hussain et al., 2021).

Table 1: Muslim-friendly Need (Crescentrating, 2024)

Category	Service Needs (2009)	Service Needs (2019)
Need to have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halal food service • Prayer facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halal food service • Prayer facilities • Water-friendly washroom
Good to have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-friendly washroom • Ramadan services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Islamophobia • Social causes • Ramadhan services • Local Muslim experiences
Nice to have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No-non halal activities • Recreational facilities and • services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No-non halal activities • Recreational facilities and services with privacies

Muslim faith-based needs also revolute align with revolution of mobile technology and somehow it affects their travel behavior in relying mobile services to seek information during traveling. By having deeper understanding on this revolution causes changes in prioritizing Muslim needs during travelling as the differences shown in Table 1 from year 2009 and 2019. Having the understandings of this alteration will gives benefits to parties involved in Muslim-friendly tourism and paved the way for series of development in products and services chain, assisted by academic researches materials for references context. Hence, focusing on Muslim-friendly tourism is urgently needed in sustaining the tourism segment in global market.

2.2 Muslim Faith-Based Needs from The Lense of Mobile Engagement

2.2.1 Muslim Travelers Demographics and Preferences

One main factor that driven the expansion of Muslim-friendly tourism is the rapid growth of Muslim population which currently reach over 2.014 billion (25% of the global population) worldwide

(Prayer Times, 2023). As in Asia, the homeland of most Muslim coming from reach 67% of the population itself, 17.9% are Sub-Saharan African, 12% are from North Africa and 2.7% are from Europe where all places of Muslim-friendly tourism can be popular (Mastercard-Crescentrating, 2022).

What is more interesting is that generations of the travelers, starting from millennials, Generation Z (GenZ), Generation Alpha (AlphaGen) has rapid interest in sustainable and responsible tourism practices which this could be mark as the key indicator for targeting market in facilitating the products and services. In detail, it is reported that 70% of among them are aged of 40, millennials (22.9%), Generation Z (21.5%) and Generation Alpha (27.2%) (GMTI report, 2023). Each of their own have different interest, preferences and urging to a new era of Halal travel and sustainable food and lifestyle services and products, which then making the restaurants and travel guides to obtain Halal and sharia compliant certificates in convincing Muslim travelers to expand this market globally (Azam et al., 2021).

There are five elements of external preferences summarized in providing involved parties to easily understand and refer which the six basic Muslim needs mentioned are also a part of the preferences. Conceptually, Muslim travelers are familiar with specific dietary and lifestyle which it revolves around the Halal base. The need of Halal food, prayer facilities and shariah compliance accommodation is not only caused by religious beliefs but also a fundamental needs as human being (Hanafiah et al., 2022; Ulfy et al., 2021). Muslim travelers also inclined to choose destinations with cultural and historical enrichment as they seek for places that have relations to Islamic history or heritage which symbolize their desire for spiritual need. Places of worships, local traditions and popular landmarks serves experiences that only can be found at specific destinations. Another preference mentioned is related to safety and respect along the trip where they are expecting to have senses of welcoming, respecting their beliefs and culture without being misinterpreted or discriminated. Plus, they are more prefer to places with accommodation and facilities that can served their faith-based needs (Yaakop et al., 2017). In the current digital era evolution. Muslim travelers tend to seek for seamless digital that goes with their faith-based needs. Accessing mobile features such as prayer times, qibla directions, lists of Halal restaurants with real-time locations, sharia compliant accommodations, nearby mosques and musollas within their current location does ease them a lot during travelling. it is a form of expectations made from their travel experiences (Crescent Rating, n.d.). Similarly to other tourists around the world, Muslim travellers also look for connections to express their preferences, expectations and experiences to other travellers (Pung et al., 2019). Besides, sharing insights and recommendations via online platforms promoting senses of companionship (Wang et al., 2017). Figure 1 illustrates the core preferences and faith-based needs that shape Muslim travelers' decision-making and behavior throughout the travel journey. These preferences encompass religious obligations (e.g., halal food, prayer facilities, and privacy), lifestyle expectations, cultural interests, safety considerations, and digital accessibility. Within the proposed conceptual framework, these elements represent the foundational antecedents that motivate Muslim travelers to seek supportive tourism environments. Mobile engagement functions as a mediating mechanism that enables travelers to identify, access, and verify these needs in real time through digital platforms. By translating abstract faith-based requirements into actionable information and services, mobile applications bridge

the gap between Muslim travelers' preferences and their experiential outcomes, such as emotional comfort, travel confidence, and destination satisfaction.

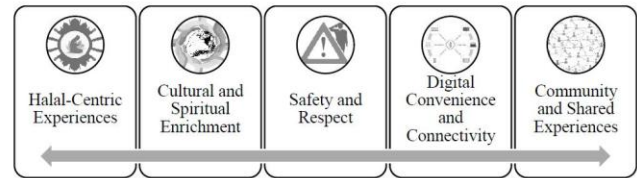


Figure 1: Muslim traveler's preferences in Muslim-friendly Tourism

2.3 Mobile Digital Features

2.3.1 Muslim-friendly Online Platforms

Generally, 70% of the travelers around the world is always relying to their phones during travelling (Google, 2018) which proved enough of how mobile engagement can alters travel trend globally. Online features such as blogs, online forums, social medias and applications, websites through search engines, booking and ticketing services, and newest is AI tools such as ChatGPT and AI result search in search engine has become essences in pre-trip planning for Muslim travelers as they can have initial information assisting in making decision that fit with their customized needs (Cuomo et al., 2021; Pencarelli, 2020). Newest data reveals that almost half of the travelers consume social media in planning their trip and most of them are GenZ (60%) with the rest are millennials. Fuad (2023) stated that social medias such as Instagram is best places to get travel ideas, followed by TikTok and Facebook. Online platform offers a one pit stop service where travelers can look for information related to Halal and shariah compliance details such as Halal food, Halal souvenirs hotspots, mosques and musollas locations and directions, prayer schedules, qibla directions and more in one go (CrescentRating, 2023; Husna, 2023). With that, many restaurants are urge to obtain Halal certificates for their businesses as gesture of respecting and welcoming by convincing their Muslim customers that their menus are safe to consumed.

Online platforms also capable in generating customized itineraries where they can select from food to eat, what to ride, where to sleep and even what to do at the destinations that aligns with tailor-made plans (Whitehead, 2020). There are even real-time updates such as prayer times, qibla directions, public transportation departure and arrival time, upcoming events and past traveler's reviews available for in planning their future destination

selected (Assaker et al., 2020). Navigation feature also another vital aspect of online platforms (Whithead, 2020). With the development of interactive map help the users to easily understand the directions mapped to nearby Halal restaurants, mosques and prayer rooms and other facilities needed. GPS functions as mapping-wise where users can point down locations easily. Data obtained by Google reported that more than 77% users has used navigation apps together with over a billion of Google Map users. Plus, 2% annual increase in navigation and transportation apps downloaded (Fuad, 2023). Besides that, digital platforms highlight how vital are cultural experiences that enhancing cultural events, activities and heritage sites (Cuomo et al., 2021). Hence, by engaging mobile services can lead to deeper understandings and stronger connection with the destinations visited together with the local adaptation encountered.

1	2	3	4	5
• Comprehensive information access	• Personalised itineraries	• Navigational assistance	• Real-time updates and reviews	• Enhanced cultural experience

Figure 2: Online Platform Contributions to Muslim-friendly Tourism

3.0 DISCUSSION

This study advances the conceptual understanding of Muslim-friendly tourism by positioning mobile engagement as a central mediating mechanism between Muslim travelers’ faith-based needs and their overall travel experience. While previous studies have primarily approached halal tourism through service attributes, destination readiness, or satisfaction outcomes (Yaakop et al., 2017; Putra & Tucunan, 2021; Hanafiah et al., 2022), the present framework reconceptualizes faith-based travel as a technology-mediated process shaped by continuous digital interaction. Muslim travelers are required to observe time-sensitive and context-dependent religious obligations such as prayer, halal consumption, modesty, and moral conduct, which can generate uncertainty and psychological strain, particularly in unfamiliar or non-Muslim-majority destinations (Hussain et al., 2021). Mobile applications mitigate these challenges by translating abstract religious requirements into real-time, location-based, and personalized solutions, thereby reducing cognitive effort and enhancing perceived control over the travel environment (Battour et al., 2022; Battour et al., 2023). In this sense, mobile engagement functions not merely as a functional facilitator but as a faith-facilitating mechanism that enables religious continuity during travel. The

framework further highlights emotional and spiritual comfort as critical intermediate outcomes of faith-based need fulfillment, extending beyond traditional tourism outcomes such as satisfaction or revisit intention (Yaakop et al., 2017; Assaker et al., 2020). When mobile technologies provide reliable access to prayer times, qibla direction, halal food verification, and shariah-compliant services, Muslim travelers experience reduced anxiety and enhanced emotional reassurance, which strengthens their spiritual well-being and positively shapes destination evaluations (Hanafiah et al., 2022; CrescentRating, 2023).

This emphasis responds to growing calls to integrate emotional and experiential dimensions into tourism research, particularly in digitally mediated contexts (Cuomo et al., 2021). Moreover, the findings suggest that Muslim-friendly tourism should be understood as a dynamic, digitally enabled ecosystem rather than a static collection of physical facilities. While core infrastructure such as halal-certified restaurants, mosques, and privacy-respecting recreational spaces remains essential (Mastercard–CrescentRating, 2019), their effectiveness is increasingly dependent on visibility, accessibility, and verification through mobile platforms (Whitehead, 2020; Husna, 2023). Digital platforms also facilitate social connectivity and peer validation, allowing Muslim travelers to share experiences, exchange recommendations, and collectively shape perceptions of destination friendliness (Pung et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2017). This co-creation process enhances trust and strengthens the perceived inclusivity of destinations, particularly for non-Muslim-majority contexts seeking to engage with the Muslim travel market. Theoretically, this study contributes by integrating halal tourism literature with digital engagement theory and tourism experience research, offering a process-oriented explanation of how technology mediates faith-based consumption in travel settings (Pencarelli, 2020; Cuomo et al., 2021).

Managerially, the framework underscores the importance for destination managers, tourism operators, and policymakers to prioritize digital inclusivity alongside physical service provision, as accurate, real-time, and culturally sensitive mobile features can significantly enhance Muslim travelers’ confidence and satisfaction without requiring extensive infrastructural investment (Battour et al., 2022; CrescentRating, 2023). Overall, this conceptualization moves beyond descriptive accounts of halal tourism by demonstrating how mobile engagement reshapes Muslim-friendly tourism into an adaptive, technology-driven

experience that aligns religious obligations with contemporary travel practices.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This conceptual paper advances understanding of Muslim-friendly tourism by positioning mobile engagement as a central mechanism through which Muslim travelers' faith-based needs are fulfilled in digitally mediated travel environments. Moving beyond traditional approaches that emphasize physical halal attributes and service availability, the paper conceptualizes mobile applications as faith-facilitating technologies that translate religious obligations such as halal consumption, prayer observance, privacy, and moral conduct into real-time, actionable travel solutions. By synthesizing halal tourism, digital engagement, and tourism experience literature, the proposed framework highlights how mobile engagement reduces uncertainty, enhances emotional and spiritual comfort, and contributes to positive destination evaluations among Muslim travelers. Theoretically, this study enriches halal tourism research by offering a process-oriented and technology-mediated perspective that integrates emotional and spiritual comfort as key intermediate outcomes linking faith-based need fulfillment to destination satisfaction, while also extending digital engagement theory by demonstrating that mobile technologies support religious assurance alongside functional convenience. From a managerial perspective, the findings underscore the importance for destination managers, tourism operators, and digital platform developers to prioritize digital inclusivity in parallel with physical infrastructure development, as the visibility, accessibility, and verification of Muslim-friendly services through mobile platforms increasingly shape travelers' confidence and satisfaction. Mobile solutions further offer a cost-

effective strategy for non-Muslim-majority destinations to engage with the Muslim travel market without extensive structural modification. At the policy level, the framework suggests the need for coordinated collaboration between tourism authorities, halal certification bodies, and technology providers to ensure the reliability and consistency of faith-based digital information. As a conceptual contribution, this study also provides a foundation for future empirical research, encouraging scholars to test the proposed relationships across diverse destinations, traveler segments, and technological contexts, and to explore how emerging digital innovations further reshape faith-based travel experiences. Overall, the paper demonstrates that mobile engagement is no longer peripheral but central to the realization of inclusive, sustainable, and Muslim-friendly tourism in the contemporary digital landscape.

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Modest Fashion and Muslim Women Travellers' Perceptions of Comfort, Safety, and Belonging: A Conceptual Review

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Abstract—Travel and tourism involving Muslim women have emerged as a growing phenomenon in recent years. Existing studies have started to recognise the importance of including women, or particularly Muslim women as subjects of discussion in travel and tourism research. Modest fashion in the context of travel goes beyond clothing, representing a lifestyle that embraces modesty, creativity, and cultural diversity. This paper discusses how modest fashion has become a vital aspect of Muslim women travellers' perceptions of comfort, safety, and belonging, fostering respect for their unique experiences and identities while navigating diverse travel environments. Despite its growing potential, there is limited research on modest fashion among Muslim women travellers. This article reviewed published journal articles and literature on modest fashion and Muslim women travellers. The findings show that modest fashion positively influences Muslim women travellers' perceptions of comfort, safety, and belonging, while also supporting confidence and self-expression during travel. This conceptual paper aims to foster understanding and respect for Muslim women travellers to guide and support future research, inform inclusive tourism practices, and encourage policymakers and industry stakeholders to consider modest fashion as an essential component of Muslim-friendly and gender-sensitive tourism

development while also highlighting, as well as integrating modest fashion, tourism, and gender studies respectively.

Keywords: Comfort; Belonging; Modest fashion; Travellers

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors globally, serving as a primary catalyst for economic development, employment generation, and cross-cultural exchange. The tourism industry contributes approximately 10% to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supports over 300 million jobs worldwide (Garg, 2025; WTTC, 2025). Within this landscape, the Muslim travel market has emerged as a high-growth segment and a critical area of interest for the global hospitality sector (Henderson, 2016). Muslim women represent an increasingly significant tourist segment, accounting for approximately 63 million international travellers, or nearly 45% of the total Muslim travel market (Mastercard & CrescentRating, 2019). For Muslim women, travelling is not merely a secular leisure activity; rather, it is often understood through the Islamic concept of safar, which encompasses the pursuit of knowledge, physical well-being, and spiritual reflection on God's creation (Jafari & Scott,

2014; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). According to Zhang et al. (2024), female tourism refers to leisure travel undertaken by women, often involving trips with female friends or family members; however, for this demographic, it is frequently viewed through the lens of faith, where adhering to religious guidelines and Islamic values remains an essential responsibility during their journeys (Tavakoli & Mura, 2021).

Despite significant geopolitical and economic uncertainties, such as regional conflicts and shifting trade alliances, Muslim consumer spending has remained notably resilient. In 2023, expenditure across Islamic economy sectors grew by 5.5%, and it is forecast to reach US\$3.36 trillion by 2028, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.3% (DinarStandard, 2024). This growth is particularly evident in outbound tourism, where spending is projected to rise significantly due to rising disposable incomes and greater travel accessibility, even amid persistent inflationary pressures.

The Shariah (Islamic law) principle of halal governs all facets of a Muslim's life, including fashion and attire, which are vital components of consumer culture and identity (Hassan & Harun, 2016; Tieman, 2021). Modest fashion in the context of travel is more than a wardrobe choice; it represents a lifestyle that integrates modesty, creativity, and cultural diversity. It is generally defined as clothing that covers the entire body in a loose, concealing manner (Sultana et al., 2021; Tarofder et al., 2021). Specifically, this attire typically includes long sleeves, an ankle-length hem, and a high neckline, often paired with trousers and head coverings (Fithriana & Nopitasari, 2018). For the Muslim woman traveller, these garments must be strategically adapted to various environments, from breathable fabrics for summer to insulated attire for winter trips, ensuring a balance between physical comfort, aesthetic appeal, and cultural interactions that foster mutual respect and understanding.

The motivations for dressing modestly are multifaceted and may shift throughout a woman's life cycle. While faith is a common motivator, some women adopt modest fashion to challenge community expectations or to enable social and geographical mobility (Lewis, 2013). Regardless of the underlying driver, modest fashion functions as a tool for authentic self-expression. Nevertheless, women continue to face significant constraints when navigating global tourism spaces, especially at coastal destinations where the "tourist gaze"

frequently conflict with modesty standards (Asbollah et al., 2025; Tavakoli & Mura, 2021).

Despite the robust growth of the Muslim travel market, there remains a notable lack of conceptual clarity about how clothing choices directly affect a traveller's psychological sense of safety, physical comfort, and social belonging. While existing literature often focuses on the macroeconomic impact of halal tourism, it frequently overlooks the lived experiences of Muslim women who must balance religious adherence with cultural interactions. This paper seeks to bridge this research gap by developing a conceptual framework that links modest fashion to the holistic well-being of Muslim women travellers, fostering empathy and a deeper appreciation of their journeys.

Accordingly, this paper aims to conceptually examine the role of modest fashion in shaping Muslim women travellers' perceptions of comfort, safety, and belonging, and to propose directions for future empirical research.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Muslim women's travellers' comfort, safety, and belonging

Female Muslim travellers represent an emerging phenomenon in the travel and tourism sector (Nisha & Cheung, 2022). Travelling as a Muslim woman can be an enriching and fulfilling experience, offering opportunities to discover new cultures, interact with diverse communities, and broaden one's perspective (Zhang et al., 2024). However, thoughtful preparation is essential to ensure comfort, safety, and the ability to practise religious obligations. Recreational or travel activities are not restricted in Islam, particularly for Muslim women (Muhammad Din, 2022). Numerous travel tips are available to assist Muslim women in maximising their travel experiences. Lightweight and breathable fabrics suitable for various climates greatly enhance comfort for Muslim women travellers (Ali, 2024). These fabrics help control body temperature, minimise discomfort from heat or humidity, and provide ease of movement during travel activities. By choosing appropriate materials, Muslim women can remain comfortable while maintaining modesty throughout their journeys. In addition to physical comfort, modest fashion also contributes to Muslim women travellers' sense of safety and belonging. Dressing modestly allows Muslim women to feel more confident and secure in unfamiliar environments, as it aligns with their personal and religious values. Wearing modest clothing helps

them feel more confident and secure in new settings, as it reflects their personal and religious principles.

Furthermore, modest fashion fosters a sense of belonging to one's religious identity while travelling. By adhering to modest attire, Muslim women are able to practise their faith consistently, even when outside their homes. This continuity fosters a sense of connection to their religious principles and community, thereby offering emotional reassurance and tranquillity. Thus, modest fashion significantly contributes to positive travel experiences for Muslim women by promoting comfort, safety, and a profound sense of religious identity.

2.2 Modest fashion and practicality in travel (relevance)

Modest fashion encompasses many aspects of life, including culture, religion, and ethnicity. It is not limited to Muslim women, as non-Muslim women also choose modest fashion. A study by Farudz (2024) found that non-Muslim women prefer modest fashion because it helps them feel safe and comfortable in managing their daily activities. Practicing modest dressing provides numerous advantages. Importantly, modest fashion enables authentic self-expression without compromising religious values.

For Muslim women, modest fashion holds additional significance, as it is closely connected to religious values and spiritual identity. Modesty in dress is not merely a stylistic preference but a form of worship and ethical commitment. As a result, Muslim women often face unique challenges when navigating spaces that may not fully accommodate their modesty requirements, particularly while traveling. Travel environments frequently demand practical clothing choices that support mobility, climate adaptability, and participation in diverse activities, which can sometimes conflict with conventional perceptions of modest dress. Balancing modesty with practicality therefore becomes a central concern for Muslim women travelers. Contrary to stereotypes that portray modest clothing as limiting or monotonous, modern modest fashion embraces creativity, individuality, and style diversity while still ensuring it comply with modest scope and principles. Muslim women travelers can express their personalities through color choices, patterns, accessories, and styling techniques while adhering to modesty principles. This flexibility allows them to participate in global fashion trends on their own terms, challenging homogenized

representations of Muslim women and highlighting their agency within the fashion and tourism spaces.

Travelling presents unique challenges for Muslim women, especially in balancing modesty with practicality when choosing travel clothing. Modest fashion addresses this need by offering diverse clothing options that align with personal style while ensuring comfort and confidence throughout the journey. Whether exploring vibrant urban environments, visiting heritage sites, or enjoying coastal destinations, halal fashion supports Muslim women in navigating diverse travel settings with confidence and dignity. At heritage and cultural sites, modest attire often aligns well with local customs, fostering respectful engagement and cultural sensitivity. In coastal or leisure destinations, modest swimwear and resort wear provide inclusive alternatives that allow Muslim women to participate in recreational activities without feeling excluded. Tavakoli and Mura (2021) emphasize that halal fashion enables Muslim travelers to experience destinations authentically while remaining true to their religious values, thereby enhancing both cultural immersion and personal fulfillment.

2.3 How modest fashion influences Muslim women's travel

Modest fashion plays a significant role in shaping and influencing Muslim women's travel experiences, influencing not only the destinations they choose but also how they engage in activities throughout their journeys (Fithriana & Nopitasari, 2018). Travel decisions for Muslim women are often guided by the need to balance personal comfort, religious observance, and cultural appropriateness, and modest fashion serves to facilitate this process. Clothing that aligns with principles of modesty allows women to feel confident, secure, and respected while navigating diverse environments, whether visiting heritage sites, urban centres, or coastal destinations. Such clothing choices are not only functional but also symbolic, reflecting identity, values, and self-expression, which are important components of a fulfilling travel experience.

Studies indicate that modest fashion can influence travel patterns by affecting the selection of destinations perceived as accommodating to Muslim women's needs. These needs often include access to prayer facilities, halal food, culturally sensitive environments, and appropriate accommodation options. Destinations that acknowledge and integrate these considerations, in combination with fashion that supports modesty and comfort, encourage

greater participation and engagement among Muslim women travellers (Aune et al., 2021).

In addition, modest fashion contributes to positive psychological outcomes, including confidence, a sense of safety, and a feeling of belonging. By wearing clothing that respects religious and cultural values, Muslim women are empowered to explore new environments without fear of discomfort or cultural misunderstanding. Integrating modest fashion into tourism studies provides scholars and industry stakeholders with a deeper understanding of Muslim women's travel behaviour, enabling the development of inclusive tourism policies, marketing strategies, and services that enhance travel satisfaction, accessibility, and overall experience. As such, modest fashion is not merely a style preference but a significant factor shaping the contemporary Muslim women travel experience.

Despite the many advantages of modest fashion, travelling presents specific challenges for Muslim women. These include navigating diverse dress codes and cultural norms, as well as engaging in activities such as sightseeing, outdoor adventures, and formal events. In some destinations, finding appropriate modest clothing can be difficult, requiring a careful balance between modesty, comfort, and practicality. Therefore, thoughtful and strategic wardrobe planning is essential. This involves selecting versatile clothing that can be layered, opting for breathable, comfortable fabrics, and packing outfits suited for different climates and social settings. With the right mindset, creativity, and preparation, Muslim women can manage these challenges effectively. Rather than being limiting, these experiences can be empowering, thus allowing Muslim women to express their identity with confidence while enjoying meaningful and comfortable travel experiences.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed for this study is a narrative literature review (Sukhera, 2022; Fox & Videmsek, 2026). The primary objective of a literature review is to synthesise and present the existing body of knowledge on a particular subject while maintaining a critical balance between comprehensive coverage and analytical depth (Sukhera, 2022). A narrative literature review is particularly effective for this study, as it integrates diverse scholarly sources to offer a balanced and coherent understanding of the complex relationship between faith and travel. As noted by Baker (2016), this approach is well-suited for discussing

conceptual and philosophical perspectives in a structured manner and for employing critical academic dialogue on emerging issues.

Narrative and systematic literature reviews serve different purposes in research. A narrative literature review is more flexible and less prescriptive, allowing researchers to provide a broad summary of a topic and discuss general patterns or ideas, often influenced by the author's viewpoint. It helps to explain the general background of a topic and highlight existing knowledge. In contrast, a systematic literature review adheres to a well-defined, strict, and organised process with designated steps to minimise bias and guarantee that the findings are dependable and consistent. A systematic literature review is commonly used when strong evidence is needed to support conclusions or decisions (Theile & Beall, 2024). In this article, a narrative literature review has been used to highlight aspects of comfort, safety, and belonging in a modest way and their relationship to Muslim women travellers.

To ensure the rigour of this conceptual paper, literature was drawn from leading academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The search employed targeted keywords including "modest fashion", "Muslim women travellers", "Hijabi Muslim travellers", "Modest fashion and Muslim women travellers", "halal tourism", and "travel constraints". The selection process focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, seminal books, and trusted industry reports (like those from DinarStandard and Mastercard-CrescentRating) to ensure the framework is rooted in both academic research and current market insights. The articles published in English were selected, discussed on conceptual, and empirical data related to topics of Muslim female traveller; tourism and Islamic attire; comfort; safety; religions; gender roles; belonging; and empowerment. Exclusion criteria involved the articles other than English language, areas of law, public health, psychology, economy, without connection to modest fashion or Islamic dress and Muslim women or female travellers. The selection and screening phase of the articles were carried out by three authors. All authors involved in the phase of full-text reading, and data extraction of the key findings. The authors also took part in the interpretative analysis of the discussion and conclusion. The analysis of the articles started with the extraction of information regarding the title, author and year, and the key findings. The initial search strategy came out with

1835 articles. First phase screening was 200 articles. Lastly, after the elimination process, 17 articles met the inclusion criteria. The timeframe of the selected articles is between 10 to 15 years ensuring coverage of both foundational, conceptual, and recent studies.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This paper examines the important relationship between modest fashion and Muslim women travellers' perceptions of comfort, safety, and belonging. Past research has mainly examined the motivations behind female travellers, safety issues, and the sense of belonging. For instance, studies on motivation explore why women travel, such as a desire for self-discovery, independence, relaxation, and cultural engagement. Not only that, studies on safety focus on women's concerns about personal security, harassment, and risk mitigation, along with the strategies they employ to stay safe. Meanwhile, studies on belonging emphasise how female travellers seek social connections, acceptance, and a feeling of inclusion in new environments, often

through interactions with local communities and fellow travellers.

Generally, Muslim women and individuals who wear hijab, frequently encounter discrimination, racism, judgement, and misunderstanding. At college and university campuses, students from minority religious backgrounds have numerous difficulties; their negative consequences are particularly noticeable for Muslim students. In an environment of Islamophobia, college students who wear the hijab may be more vulnerable to discrimination (Pouraskari, 2023).

In the context of travel, Muslim women travellers tend to face racism and gender oppression, as well as harassment. Other than that, Muslim women face travel constraints such as social responsibilities, cultural norms, and religious practices (Nguyen et al., 2024).

Table 1 summarises the selected articles (the title and key findings) from previous literature on modest fashion and Muslim women travellers.

Table 1: Literature Summary on the study of Modest Fashion and Muslim Women's Travelers

No.	Title	Author/Year	Key Findings
1.	Female travellers in the hospitality and tourism industry: A systematic literature review	Zhang et al., 2024	The study categorises 40 years of research into three dominant themes: Motivation, Risk, and Sexuality. A critical finding is that modern research now presents "contradictory viewpoints" compared to the past; for instance, what was once seen only as a "risk" is now often discussed through the lens of empowerment and gender equality. It highlights that young, solo, and middle-aged women have distinct psychological drivers. While "female tourism" is well-studied, the specific intersection of religious attire (Modest Fashion) and the Muslim woman's psychological state is an under-researched "niche."
2.	Recreation and the Creative Muslimah	Muhammad din, 2022	The paper explores how Muslim women from Indonesia, Pakistan, and the UK use digital platforms to create their own "halal-sensitive" travel experiences. It highlights that women are moving beyond traditional restrictive legal opinions to interpret religious texts themselves, framing travel as a spiritual journey to see the "signs of the Creator". Key initiatives like "Pink Mosques" and "Girls on Road" demonstrate how women proactively address the lack of inclusive spaces by documenting female-friendly facilities.
3.	Modest Fashion in UK Women's Working Life	Lewis et al., 2021	The study explores how Muslim women manage "professionalism" alongside modesty. It finds that modest fashion is a "situated practice" where women use clothing to navigate different social expectations. The paper also discusses how modest dress acts as a communicator of identity that can either invite respect or trigger bias. Women use their "look" to manage how others perceive them in public spaces.

			The authors show that "comfort" is not just about the fabric, but the <i>mental peace</i> of knowing one's outfit won't be misread. For a traveller, this means the comfort of being "modestly covered" while still looking "socially acceptable" in a foreign destination.
4.	Breaking barriers for Bangladeshi female solo travelers	Bernard et al., 2022	The study uses Hofstede's cultural dimensions to show how high "Power Distance" and "Collectivism" create barriers for Muslim women. It finds that solo travel is seen as a "risk to reputation." However, it suggests that for Muslim women, safety involves navigating social judgment as much as physical threats. It identifies that women use "travel as a tool for empowerment" to break these cultural barriers, moving from a state of being "protected/restricted" to being "independent/mobile."
5.	Understanding the Challenges Muslim Women Face in Adventure Tourism	Nasir et al., 2025	The study identifies that Muslim women in adventure tourism experience "negotiated constraints" shaped by infrastructure, safety, and clothing expectations. Key barriers include insufficient private changing and prayer facilities, fear of discrimination or harassment in remote settings, and reputational risk tied to family/community approval. Standard adventure gear often conflicts with modesty norms, forcing women to improvise (for example, choosing between a functional but revealing wetsuit and a modest but heavy or unsafe alternative), which can reduce comfort, performance, and physical safety. In this context, safety also means protection from the social gaze and exclusion in non-inclusive environments. The absence of gender-segregated facilities can make women feel like intruders rather than legitimate participants in adventure spaces.
6.	Veiled Muslim women's Strategies in response to Islamophobia in Paris	Najib & Hopkins, 2019	This study reveals that veiled women in Paris experience "spatial oppression", which shapes where they move and how they present themselves. They often avoid crowded or "privileged" districts where they anticipate scrutiny and instead stay within familiar, "friendly" neighborhoods. Alongside this spatial avoidance, they use embodied strategies by adjusting modest dress to appear more "discreet" or "professional", aiming to reduce Islamophobic targeting. Clothing functions as a tactical tool to manage visibility and safety in a geopolitical climate where the veil is politicised, helps women avert potential discrimination. Here, safety extends beyond physical protection to the active management of visibility to prevent social conflict, and belonging is associated with locating "safe pockets" where modest fashion is normalised rather than policed.
7.	Gender, Religion and Sociospatial (Im)mobilities: Toward an Intersectional Framework for Muslim Female Solo Travel	Rostami & Trupp (2025)	Stereotyping: Muslim women should travel only with their husbands or families. It is inappropriate for them to travel alone, thus inviting judgment from others, especially if they are travelling to Muslim countries. Other than that, Muslim women tend to face harassment due to their modest fashion and their religion in non-Muslim countries. The study applies an intersectional mobility framework, arguing that Muslim women's travel experiences are shaped by the interaction of 10 identity axes, with gender, religion, and nationality as the most influential. It introduces "compounded barriers", where overlapping

			identities produce distinct constraints. For example, the intersection of religion and Iranian nationality can expose women to both Islamophobia and “Iranophobia,” generating socio-spatial immobilities driven not only by formal rules but also by the social gaze and anticipatory fear. Safety is context-dependent, a woman may feel secure in a Muslim-majority setting yet feel unsafe in other destinations because of how her nationality and religion are read. Belonging is framed as an intersectional achievement, and higher education or employment status can increase confidence and capacity to navigate spaces marked by non-belonging.
8.	The flag-bearers of change in a patriarchal Muslim society: Narratives of Iranian solo female travellers on Instagram	Nikjoo et al., 2021	The study examines Instagram narratives of Iranian solo travelers and argues that travel operates as active resistance and a site of meaning-making and self-awareness. Women use digital storytelling to challenge patriarchal norms by publicly documenting mobility. Visibility on social media functions both as empowerment and as a mechanism to normalise Muslim women’s presence in “non-traditional” travel spaces. The findings also frame belonging as digitally produced, where women cultivate a sense of membership in a global community through Instagram, using shared modest fashion and travel content to build a “virtual home” and support network beyond national borders. Safety is articulated as social risk management: participants narrate travel as educational or transformative to legitimize mobility and reduce anticipated backlash from conservative home environments.
9.	Behind the invisible walls: Understanding constraints on Muslim solo female travel	Nematpour et al., 2024	The study categorises constraints on Muslim solo travellers into seven “invisible walls”: sociocultural, interpersonal, intrapersonal, religious, physical safety, practical, and structural. It argues that although religious and sociocultural pressures are often external, they are internalised as intrapersonal constraints, prompting women to self-regulate behaviour and dress to prevent conflict. Safety is conceptualised as multidimensional, covering physical risk, interpersonal harassment, and religious risk (anxiety about violating faith-based norms). Practical constraints, such as limited modest or gender-appropriate facilities, contribute to physical and mental fatigue during travel.
10.	Women's Travel Patterns, Attitudes, and Constraints Around the World	Rosenbloom, 2021	Women and men's travel differs, starting in childhood, differences that have largely persisted even as women enter the labor force and become drivers, because they reflect an unequal distribution of household and childcare and eldercare obligations. Women may also be constrained by cultural and religious norms. Women are often victims of sexual harassment and violence; they have fewer traffic crashes but are more likely to die in those crashes. Future research should focus on intersectionality, women and new technology, and why socio-demographic factors create gender differences in travel behavior. Policy analysts, planners, and engineers must ensure that persistent gender differences in travel patterns are reflected in public policy decisions to both redress inequities and to better service different transportation “markets.” Public actions should make

			travel more practical, secure, and safe for women and men travelers.
11.	Healthy, safe, and responsible: the modern female traveller	Bauer, 2021	The review highlights a travel-medicine gap around women's practical needs, focusing on personal hygiene, menstruation, and everyday bodily management across travel settings. It argues that inadequate toilet hygiene and limited private facilities create more than inconvenience, which is mental stress and safety risks when women must manage biological needs in exposed or vulnerable situations. The findings agree that comfort includes the ability to maintain hygiene routines that may be essential for religious practice (wudu/prayer) while wearing modest clothing. They also frame safety as shaped by practical constraints: time spent searching for privacy to adjust modest attire or manage hygiene can increase physical vulnerability in unfamiliar environments.
12.	The exploration of Iranian solo female travellers' experiences	Hosseini et al., 2021	The study finds that Iranian women's solo travel is motivated by freedom, flexibility, and self-empowerment. It argues that tourism enables women to become more visible in the public sphere that contest constraints associated with a religious-patriarchal context. This increased visibility supports mental well-being, strengthening independence and self-confidence. The findings also support belonging as a rights-based outcome: travel becomes a way to claim legitimate access to public space while remaining visibly Muslim, with belonging achieved when women can participate publicly without compromising identity. Safety is reframed as agency-based, as empowerment shifts women's orientation from being "protected" by others to feeling capable of assessing and navigating risk themselves.
13.	Perceived Risks and Comfort Zone Among African Female Solo Travellers	Liu et al. 2026	The research suggested the elements that contributed to uncomfortable experiences for solo female travellers. The results emphasise seven main elements that contributed to travel discomfort: sociocultural risk, physical vulnerability, psychological strain, social tension, intercultural adaptation challenges, destination performance limitations, and institutional barriers.
14.	In the Concept of Mahram for Women in Long-Distance Travel (in the Perspective of the Hadith of the Prophet)	Sodiqin & Mustaqim, 2025	The study studies the evolving interpretation of mahram requirements for long-distance travel. It contrasts traditional positions, which treat mahram accompaniment as obligatory, with contemporary scholarship that reframes the rule around its 'illat (underlying rationale), namely women's safety. Under this view, modern conditions such as secure transport and safe destinations can satisfy the safety rationale through trustworthy company or guaranteed security, rather than a specific male guardian. The paper therefore conceptualises safety as a religious condition, not only a physical state, thus traveling without a mahram in a demonstrably secure environment can be religiously legitimate, reducing spiritual anxiety. It also links this shift to belonging, as contemporary fatwas enabling solo or group travel allow women to participate in global travel practices without abandoning faith commitments.
15.	Fraught Relations: Indonesian Modest Fashion, New York	Saraswati, 2024	The study analyses travel as spectacle in Indonesian modest-fashion branding, showing how designers leveraged platforms like New York Fashion Week to

	Catwalks, and the Spectacle of Travel		stage the figure of the “mobile, global Muslimah.” It argues that mobility is deployed as both a marketing strategy and a political statement intended to counter Islamophobia. However, it highlights fraught relations in this visibility project: the luxury imagery of cosmopolitan Muslim travel sits in contrast to the exclusion of Muslim refugees from many of the same global spaces. The findings frame safety as partially discursive: high-end modest fashion operates as soft power that attempts to reshape the Western gaze, potentially reducing hostility by normalising Muslim women’s presence in elite travel and cultural settings.
16.	Complexities of women solo travelling in a conservative post-Soviet Muslim society	Gorji et al., 2022	The study describes a post-Soviet “double burden” shaping Uzbek women’s mobility, where patriarchal gender expectations intersect with lingering Soviet-era surveillance logics. Solo travel is often interpreted as suspicious or deviant, creating “invisible walls” that women attempt to escape through travel while continuously managing identity and respectability. Safety is primarily reputational as being seen alone can trigger social labeling. Hence, women adopt dress and conduct cues to signal they are “decent” and “respectable” while traveling. The paper reframes safety as social safety, the protection of honour and community standing, not only protection from physical crime. It also frames belonging as a balancing act between modern independence and traditional modesty, with travel operating as a liminal space where women can access a sense of global modern belonging while maintaining ties to local heritage.
17.	Liminal spaces of empowerment: veiled Muslim female tourists negotiate norms and Islamic attire by enjoying leisure without societal expectations	Fattah, 2025	The study revealed that study participants perceive their experiences as a “limonoid time space,” where Muslim women can modify their behaviours and Islamic/modest fashion attire while travelling in Western destinations. This act of alterations in attire and behavior are interpreted as a form of resistance to gendered expectations regarding appropriate Islamic dress/ modest fashion and conduct in their home environment. This resistance fosters a sense of freedom, and empowerment. The findings also show that tourism provides space for hijabi Muslim tourists for resistance against the oppressive gender roles. This study demonstrates comfort in the interpretation of Islamic dress or modest fashion, where it shows that wearing modest fashion does not prevent one from traveling comfortably. It also frames safety and belonging through the Islamic dress as the modest attire as an interpretation of empowerment and resistance.

4.1 Constraints

Muslim women face constraints when travelling, such as maintaining personal comfort. This includes finding suitable, modest, and appropriate clothing that aligns with their religious values, such as dressing modestly and participating in daily religious practices. Safety is another critical concern, especially in unfamiliar environments. In addition, Muslim women may face uncomfortable perceptions or misunderstandings from people in other countries due to cultural differences or a lack of awareness (Muhammad Din, 2022). These challenges require careful planning and awareness to ensure a smooth and positive travel experience.

Due to the patriarchal norms and religious influences, Muslim women often encounter more restrictions than other travellers. Due to this, Muslim women or those in locations with prevalent Islamophobia develop strategies to safeguard themselves and their families from verbal or mental abuse (Bernard et al., 2022; Najib & Hopkins, 2019). The findings indicate that gender and religion significantly influence how individuals adapt to new environments, shaping their efforts to find a sense of belonging and affecting how society perceives them.

Nevertheless, some findings also revealed positive developments among Muslim women travelers. They adopted strategies that allow them to travel comfortably and stand against disrespect and discrimination based on their fashion and religion (Nikjoo et al., 2021). These changes, shared on platforms like Instagram, inspired and motivated more Muslim women to pursue their travel dreams despite potential societal and environmental challenges.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

To conclude, modest fashion encompasses all aspects of life and significantly influences Muslim women travellers' experiences by promoting comfort, safety, and a feeling of belonging. However, there are fewer research studies focusing on Muslim women travellers and their views on comfort, safety, and belonging.

From the narrative review of past studies, the study concludes that Muslim women travellers do face both beneficial and adverse conditions. The research found that there are several social misconducts that had been faced by Muslim women travellers such as harassment and discrimination, especially in public spaces. These behaviors are identical to one another while happening at different places—targeting the same social group; Muslim

women travellers. Despite societal evolution and advancement in technology, the deeply rooted hatred and stereotyping have not been completely eradicated in a community, impacting solo travellers amidst increasing societal awareness and tolerance. Nevertheless, Muslim female travellers are willing to take the chance to explore and live for themselves even though they have to face Islamophobia in other countries. The social barriers experienced are not enough to stop female travellers to be on their own. The findings also found that other than their willingness to explore and face the risk, females nowadays are more braver in defending themselves against aggressive attackers, thus proving that they are not a group that can easily be victimised due to their religion and attire.

Besides the unfavourable experience, solo female travellers' experience also contributes to the tourism industry. For example, from the findings, tourism has shed lights and provides a platform for hijabi or female Muslim tourists to challenge the religion and gender restriction thus demonstrating their empowerment amidst travel experience.

Other than tourism itself stepping up in providing safe space for the Muslim female travellers, attire also plays a role in securing the safety of the travellers. From the findings, modest fashion supports Muslim women travellers by offering comfort and security. Wearing modest clothing during travel can spark positive curiosity, prompting respectful questions about the hijab. Such interactions foster cultural exchange, enhance mutual understanding, and help reduce misunderstandings between different cultures. Additionally, these engagements humanise religious practices that are often misunderstood or misrepresented in the media, promoting intercultural dialogue. Through open, respectful conversations among tourists, locals, and communities, modest fashion acts as a bridge across cultural and religious differences. Over time, increased awareness and exposure can help reduce prejudice, foster tolerance, and encourage more inclusive attitudes within diverse travel environments (Mohd Zain, 2020).

Lastly, modest fashion combines practicality and empowerment during travel (British Muslim Magazine, 2025). It supports Muslim women travellers by enabling them to perform daily prayers comfortably and confidently without altering or adjusting their clothing to meet modesty standards. Garments with modest cuts, sufficient coverage, and flexible fabrics facilitate ease of movement and support religious practices in public or unfamiliar settings, such as airports, rest areas, or

tourist attractions. Consequently, modest fashion not only preserves spiritual commitments but also enhances the dignity, confidence, and autonomy of Muslim women as they navigate various travel environments. Overall, the study provides insights for the tourism and fashion industries to enhance their services by addressing the needs of every travellers from diverse groups including Muslim women travellers.

5.1 Future Research Direction

Future research should focus more extensively on Muslim women and examine how socio-demographic factors contribute to gender differences in travel behaviour. While some existing tourism studies have increasingly acknowledged women as an important market segment, Muslim women remain underrepresented in mainstream tourism research. This gap is particularly significant given the diversity within the Muslim women traveller population itself, shaped by factors such as age, nationality, cultural background, education level, income, marital status, and travel experience. These socio-demographic variables influence not only travel motivations and destination choices, but also perceptions of safety, comfort, and belonging while travelling. A deeper understanding of these dimensions would enable scholars to move beyond generalised assumptions and provide a more nuanced portrayal of Muslim women's travel experiences.

Moreover, future empirical studies could explore how Muslim women's travel behaviour differs across destinations with varying levels of Muslim-friendliness. Destinations that provide halal food (toyyib), prayer facilities and activities, and modest fashion-friendly environments may reduce perceived travel constraints and encourage greater participation among Muslim women. On the other hand, destinations that lack such facilities may increase feelings of discomfort or exclusion, particularly for women who visibly practice modest dressing. Understanding how socio-demographic factors intersect with destination characteristics can offer valuable insights into how Muslim women make travel decisions and adapt their behaviour in response to environmental and cultural cues.

The findings of this study provide important guidance for policymakers and tourism industry professionals aiming to improve the travel experiences of Muslim women. Given that Muslim women represent a rapidly expanding and influential segment of the global tourism market, there is a growing demand for inclusive policies and practices that address their unique needs and preferences. Policymakers can use these findings to develop tourism strategies that promote inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and gender equity. This includes encouraging destinations to adopt Muslim-friendly standards, supporting modest fashion initiatives, and fostering environments that welcome and respect Muslim women.

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Motivating Factors for Generation Z Participation in Mosque Tourism

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Abstract—Mosque tourism has emerged as an important component of Islamic and cultural tourism in Malaysia. Despite strong institutional support, participation among younger visitors, particularly Generation Z (Gen Z), remains limited. This study explores the motivations influencing Gen Z participation in mosque tourism activities in Malaysia. A qualitative research design was employed using semi-structured interviews with five Gen Z visitors who had experienced mosque tourism. The findings reveal that Gen Z participation in mosque tourism is primarily motivated by educational and cultural learning, immersive and reflective experiences, and digital relevance. While architectural aesthetics attract initial interest, sustained engagement depends on meaningful interpretation and experiential design. The study is limited to four mosques in Peninsular Malaysia. Mosque tourism initiatives should integrate youth-oriented storytelling, experiential learning, and respectful digital engagement. Enhancing youth engagement contributes to cultural continuity and to the appreciation of heritage among younger generations. This study provides youth-centred empirical insights into the motivation for mosque tourism, drawing on experiential theory in the Malaysian context.

Keywords: Generation Z; Heritage Tourism; Islamic Tourism; Mosque Tourism; Tourism Motivation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Mosque tourism is a growing trend in the context of Islamic religious and cultural tourism, whereby it is now considered a significant part of Islamic tourism, as well as religious tourism and cultural tourism, especially in those countries that are predominantly

Muslim with strong religious backgrounds, history, and unique architectural practices (Rahman et al., 2026). Conventionally perceived mainly as places of worship, mosques have taken on more social and cultural functions, serving as places of learning, social gathering, and a source of heritage. Regarding tourism, mosques are becoming places where tourists can experience Islamic culture, history, and values, thereby enhancing intercultural understanding and appreciation of heritage (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Timothy & Olsen, 2006).

The growing importance of Islamic tourism is also reflected in industry reports. The Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) developed by Mastercard and CrescentRating estimates that the Muslim travel market will reach approximately USD 225 billion by 2028, indicating the increasing demand for Muslim-friendly destinations and Islamic heritage attractions such as mosques (CrescentRating, 2024). This trend highlights the increasing relevance of mosque tourism as part of the broader Islamic tourism ecosystem.

Mosque tourism has been a planned activity in national tourism development agendas in most Muslim majority destinations. The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have encouraged visitor-friendly cultural icons, such as mosques, which are accessible to both Muslim and non-Muslim visitors, through guided tours, visitor centres and interpretation resources (Battour & Ismail, 2016). These programs demonstrate how mosque tourism can serve as an educational, cultural diplomacy, and heritage protection venue when properly handled.

Mosque tourism is a component of larger Islamic tourism policies in Malaysia, spearheaded by the Islamic Tourism Centre within the Ministry

of Tourism, Arts and Culture. Architectural heritage and symbolism have promoted mosques such as the Putra Mosque, National Mosque, and Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Mosque as tourist attractions. These programs aim to portray mosques as open spaces where people can learn about Islam, Malaysian culture, and national identity. Nonetheless, although firmly supported by the institution and promoted as a tourism product, participation in mosque tourism activities remains uneven.

Like other forms of mosque tourism, the current practice in Malaysian mosque tourism emphasises architectural appreciation and factual explanation, often in short form and delivered informally. Although these methods can offer only entry-level information, they might not be entirely satisfactory for the experiential demands of modern visitors, especially younger couples and generations seeking a higher level of meaning, engagement, and personal connection when visiting a specific site (Yaman et al., 2023). The limited depth of interpretation may reduce visitors' emotional involvement and learning outcomes, thereby weakening memorability and diminishing intentions to revisit. Consequently, mosque tourism is perceived as visually appealing but experientially shallow, particularly among younger segments.

While mosque tourism has its challenges in terms of the form of informal explanation, Generation Z (Gen Z), or more individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2000s, generally, are an ever more significant market segment in the tourism industry and a focal point in terms of long-term sustainability of heritage tourism (Priporas et al., 2017). The current generation has been raised in a digitally mediated world and has been identified as highly technologically literate, exposed to world cultures, and highly active on social media. More importantly, Gen Z shows a preference for experience-based education and authenticity, which are important for personal and identity development (Lee et al., 2023).

Previous studies indicate that Gen Z tourists prefer involvement, emotional experiences, and meaningful stories over passive sightseeing, unlike past generations. The criteria they use to decide where to go are not solely determined by destination characteristics, but also by how experiences are popularised, framed, and interpreted in digital environments. Experience depth and shareability are particularly significant for their engagement because social media platforms fundamentally shape their

awareness, expectations, and post-visit reflections (Robinson & Schanzel, 2019).

Although the role of Gen Z in tourism studies is becoming increasingly significant, little has been done to investigate their involvement in religious and mosque tourism. The broad range of existing mosque tourism research in Malaysia has emphasised architectural appreciation, visitor satisfaction, and destination branding, with visitors often treated as a homogeneous group, without accounting for generational differences in motivation and experience (Isa et al., 2024). As such, there is still a gap in empirical research on Gen Z's perceptions of mosque tourism, the factors that lead them to attend these events, and how these events can be structured to meet their expectations and anticipations.

This gap is critical to address because younger generations are highly relevant to the future of religious heritage tourism. In the absence of meaningful Gen Z involvement, the mosque tourism programme may not stand a chance of surviving in an ever-experience-focused tourism world. Knowledge of youth motivation is thus important in creating both culturally sensitive and experiential tourism in mosques.

The objective of this study is to examine the motivations influencing Gen Z's participation in mosque tourism activities in Malaysia, particularly the roles of experiential learning, immersion, emotional engagement, and digital relevance, to provide youth-centred empirical evidence and practical insights for developing more meaningful and sustainable mosque tourism experiences.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Mosque Tourism as Religious and Heritage Tourism

Mosque tourism is often discussed alongside broader religious, Islamic, and heritage tourism. In a bibliometric analysis of 83 Scopus-indexed studies (2004-2025), Yasin et al. (2025) highlighted a growing scholarly interest that mainly focused on the themes of visitor experience, cultural interactions, and motivations. Religious tourism is travel with faith interests, spiritual and fulfillment, whereas heritage tourism focuses on a destination's historical, cultural, and symbolic resources (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). These areas overlap with mosque tourism, which involves visits to mosques that play a sacred and cultural role.

According to Battour and Ismail (2016), mosque tourism is a subsector of Islamic tourism that encompasses aspects of non-worship cultural learning, education, and heritage appreciation. Mosques represent both tangible and intangible heritage, including architectural design, spatial arrangement, decorative objects, religious meanings, historical accounts, and shared practices. Mosque tourism thus needs effective interpretive methods that can convey both tangible qualities and cultural and spiritual meanings.

Mosque tourism has also become part of national tourism policies in some of the Muslim majority travel destinations across the globe. For example, destinations like Turkey and the United Arab Emirates are promoting iconic mosques and fostering cultural appreciation by organising guided tours, visitor education programmes, and providing interpretive materials (Battour and Ismail, 2016). These projects indicate the potential of mosque tourism as a valuable instrument of cultural diplomacy and heritage education when experiential design and interpretation are prioritised.

In Malaysia, mosque tourism is also supported by national tourism initiatives led by the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture. ITC promotes mosques not only as places of worship but also as cultural and educational attractions where visitors can learn about Islamic civilisation and Malaysian identity. Through initiatives such as mosque tourism programmes and interpretive visitor experiences, mosques are increasingly positioned as platforms for intercultural understanding and heritage education (ITC, 2024).

The Islamic Tourism Centre has encouraged the development of Islamic tourism in Malaysia, including mosque tourism. Mosques are marketed as welcoming places where visitors of all kinds can participate and learn about Islamic culture and Malaysian identity. Nevertheless, empirical research indicates that mosque tourism in Malaysia focuses primarily on architecture rather than experiential aspects or storytelling (Yaman et al., 2023). The architectural focus can limit the deeper learning and emotional attachment, especially for those who visit the place in search of something significant.

2.2 Gen Z Tourism Motivation and Engagement

The term Gen Z is usually understood as referring to members of the generation born between 1997 and 2012, characterised by the impact of digital technology, worldwide connectivity, and rapid

access to information (Priporas et al., 2017). Gen Z has often been described in tourism research as seeking experiential, authentic, and meaningful travel experiences, which are believed to play an important role in personal development and identity creation (Lee et al., 2023).

In contrast to earlier generations, the Gen Z tourist segment is more interested in learning, emotional engagement, and experiential activities than in traditional sightseeing. Their travel intentions are directly connected to experiences that enable them to interact with locals, reflect on themselves, and immerse themselves in the culture rather than watch it (Robinson & Schanzel, 2019). Social media has become central to Gen Z's influence on travelling behaviour, destination awareness, expectations, and visit sharing.

Research has demonstrated that Gen Z utilises digital platforms to be inspired to travel, and visual content, peer recommendations, and user-generated media have a substantial impact on decision-making (Priporas et al., 2017). Studies also indicate that digital journeys stimulate curiosity, facilitate active tourist participation, and reshape travel experiences, influencing destination selection and visit decisions among modern travellers (Al-Romeedy et al., 2025; Konar et al., 2025). Nonetheless, the digital influence is not confined to destination decision-making, and Gen Z appreciates the experiences that can be shared and discussed in the online environment. This highlights the importance of experience and storytelling influence on youth engagement.

Traditional interpretive approaches in heritage tourism, focused on static exhibits and factual descriptions, do not usually appeal to Gen Z. Younger visitors are more willing to engage with heritage tourism through narratives, interactive experiences, and ways of relating heritage stories to the modern world (Md Sawari et al., 2024). Without this interaction, heritage sites would be seen as having a surface beauty and a lack of associated feelings.

2.3 Experience Economy Theory

The Experience Economy theory developed by Pine and Gilmore (1999) is also a valuable model for explaining how tourism experiences generate value beyond goods and services. Depending on the degree of visitor involvement and immersion, the theory defines four experiential realms, i.e., educational, aesthetic, escapist, and entertainment. The theory states that when visitors are actively engaged in one

or more of these dimensions of experience, memorable experiences will be created.

Educational and escapist experiences are specifically appropriate in the realms of tourism and heritage. Educational experiences entail active learning and cognitive processes, whereas escapist experiences enable visitors to engage with their setting on an emotional and psychological level (Moscardo, 2014). These dimensions are particularly crucial to religious heritage tourism, with learning, reflection, and emotional connection being the primary aspects of visitor experience.

Experiential value is closely related to storytelling, interaction, and digital mediation for Gen Z. According to Gretzel et al. (2015), digital technologies can enhance tourism experiences through pre-visit anticipation, on-site engagement, and post-visit reflections. When applied appropriately, digital tools complement authentic experiences rather than replacing them.

Applying the Experience Economy Theory to mosque tourism suggests that the aesthetic realm may initially attract people's attention. Yet, long-lasting engagement is possible through the application of educational interpretation and immersive experiences. Such an approach to motivation works exceptionally well for Gen Z, as it prioritises experience design over passive consumption.

2.4 Research Gap

A recent study on the implementation of digital storytelling found a significant enhancement through the persuasiveness of promotional messages (Chang et al., 2025). However, the study is limited to travel intentions to cultural heritage destinations.

Despite its growing academic presence in the Islamic and heritage tourism literature, the current literature has largely focused on mosque tourism through architectural appreciation, destination branding, visitor satisfaction, and management perspectives rather than on visitor-centred experience motivation (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Yaman et al., 2023). Mosque tourism is primarily discussed from an institutional, or supply-side, perspective. However, little is made of how the various visitor groups experience and perceive the activities of mosque tourism.

Simultaneously, there has been a surge in tourism research on Gen Z, which emphasises this cohort's prioritisation of experiential learning, authenticity, emotional involvement, and digital

mediation experiences (Priporas et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2023). Nevertheless, these studies are primarily focused on general leisure tourism, urban tourism, and digital travel behaviour, with little attention to a mosque tourism setting (Robinson & Schanzel, 2019).

In the Malaysian context, the study of mosque tourism is among the few youth-oriented studies conducted. Current Malaysian literature tends to focus on architectural attributes and overall visitor satisfaction, without analysing generational distinctions and experience motivations among younger tourists (Isa et al., 2024; Yaman et al., 2023). As a result, there is a lack of empirical knowledge about how Gen Z approaches mosque tourism and what drives them to participate.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative research design to understand the subjective motivations that can inform Gen Z's participation in mosque tourism in Malaysia. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate, as the research aimed to explore lived experiences, interpretive meanings, and personal reflections rather than quantifying the relationship between predetermined variables (Creswell and Poth, 2018). As religious and heritage tourism motivations are strongly rooted in personal identity, emotion, and cultural interpretation, qualitative enquiry can offer a deeper understanding of how young visitors create meaning when they visit mosques.

3.1 Sampling and Participants

A recommended sample size in qualitative tourism studies ranges from approximately 15 to 25 participants, as this is generally considered sufficient to achieve thematic saturation in studies examining shared experiential motivations. However, qualitative research does not follow a fixed rule for determining sample size, as the adequacy of participants is primarily determined by the point at which data saturation is achieved. According to Sharma et al. (2024), methodological guidelines for qualitative studies often rely on "rules of thumb", where sample sizes may vary considerably depending on the research design and scope, and smaller samples may be acceptable when rich and focused data are obtained. In this study, five participants were considered sufficient as thematic saturation was reached, where subsequent interviews produced no new codes or conceptual insights.

Several methods were used to recruit participants to reduce selection bias. The recruitment

was conducted within the premises of four large mosques in Peninsular Malaysia that actively receive visitors. Moreover, all participants had frequently visited mosques for tourism-related purposes, either independently or as part of an organised visit. The social media invitations were also sent to youth travel and heritage-interest communities to ensure that digitally active participants were involved. This multi-source approach to recruitment increased diversity and minimised over-dependence on personal networks.

These attempts were made to ensure variation in gender, educational background, religious orientation, and the frequency of visiting mosques. It also included both Muslims and non-Muslims, which provided the study with an opportunity to investigate the motives of mosque tourism, except for the strictly devotional ones. The representation of participants with varying levels of religiosity enriched the interpretative richness of the results and contributed to intercultural interest.

Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved. The point of saturation was identified when interviews conducted after that time yielded no new codes or conceptual insights, and the themes were observed to be consistent across participants.

3.2 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method due to their flexibility and ability to focus on the concepts (Bryman, 2016). The interviews were either face-to-face in the mosque visitor areas or online via video conferencing platforms, lasting 45 minutes, depending on participants' availability.

The interview guide included open-ended questions that explored participants' motivations for visiting mosques, their perceptions of architectural and cultural value, their emotional and reflective experiences of visiting mosques, and the impact of digital media on awareness and post-visit experience. Elaboration and clarification were encouraged by probing questions. All the interviews were recorded on audio tape with the participants' consent, and therefore verbatim transcription was done to ensure accurate analysis.

3.3 Data Analysis

The study employed the six-step thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis was initiated by repeatedly reading the transcripts to become familiar with the data. Primary

open coding was conducted to identify significant textual units related to motivations and experiences. The codes were then placed under broader conceptual categories, out of which initial themes were derived.

Themes were repeatedly checked to ensure internal consistency and differentiation between the categories. Conceptual clarity and alignment with the Experience Economy Theory were used to identify final themes, which were then defined and named. The coding was done manually to maintain close contact with the data, and a second academic reviewer triangulated it to further improve inter-coder reliability. Any differences in interpretation were debated until a consensus was reached.

3.4 Reliability and Ethical Concerns

Several strategies were employed to enhance credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Member checking was conducted with 5 subjects, each of whom was provided with a summary of their interpretation of the interviews to verify its accuracy. The analytical process involved peer debriefing to question assumptions and refine theme development. To minimize bias, reflexive journaling was used during data collection and analysis to record the researcher's assumptions. The findings section was based on thick descriptive accounts to justify transferability.

Informed consent was obtained from the participants, who were informed of the voluntary nature of participation and guaranteed confidentiality. Participants' identities were protected using alias.

3.5 Limitations

Despite the enhanced validity from the enlarged sample, the study is geographically confined to four mosques in Peninsular Malaysia. Since the architecture of mosques, visitor management procedures, and community involvement approaches may differ by region, their results may not be fully applicable to rural mosques, East Malaysia, or global Islamic heritage settings. Also, though the religious orientation was incorporated, the study did not examine differences based on levels of religiosity. The future studies ought to include greater geographical sampling and possible mixed-method courses to further justify these dimensions of motivation.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results indicated four interconnected themes that explain Gen Z's perception and experience of

mosque tourism. These are educational and cultural learning motivation, appeal as a first attraction, immersive and reflective experiences, and the impact of digital media and shareability. Verbatim excerpt for five participants is presented to enhance credibility and provide analytical transparency into the youth's thoughts. Although the number of participants was limited, data saturation was achieved after five interviews, as subsequent responses did not produce new codes or conceptual insights and the emerging themes were consistently repeated across participants.

4.1 Educational and Cultural Learning Motivation

Educational and cultural learning proved to be the most potent motivational factor for Gen Z to participate in mosque tourism. The participants underlined that they participated in this to explore the meanings behind architectural features, religious activities, and historical accounts, rather than just looking at the physical structures.

One participant explained:

"I am more interested when they explain why the mosque is designed like this, not just when it was built. When I understand the meaning, I appreciate the place more." (P1)

Another similarly noted:

"If there is someone who explains the history and the symbols, I feel like I learn something new. Without that, it feels empty." (P3)

These descriptions suggest that Gen Z is interested in thoughtful, rather than superficial, information. The participants appreciated storytelling, which links physical attributes such as design and space organization to broader Islamic values, cultural practices, and community history. This finding aligns with Moscardo (2014) that the heritage interpretation literature, which emphasises that meaningful learning occurs when visitors connect tangible heritage with intangible meanings. By doing so, they made architectural appreciation a significant learning experience.

In terms of the Experience Economy Theory, this theme aligns with the sphere of education, where active cognitive interaction increases memorability and emotional involvement. As one participant remarked:

"When I understand the story behind the mosque, I remember the visit longer. It feels more meaningful, not just a short visit." (P5)

4.2 Aesthetic Appeal as an Initial Attraction

Visual appeal and architecture were also cited as features that attract visitors from Gen Z to mosques. More often than not, participants cited distinctive designs, cultural pressures, and visual impact as reasons they came the first time, which was, in most cases, triggered by images found on social networks.

One participant stated:

"I wanted to visit because the mosque looked very beautiful. I saw it on social media and felt curious." (P2)

Another added:

"The design really caught my attention. It looks peaceful and unique compared to other buildings." (P4)

Although aesthetics provided an effective visual entry point, the respondents reported that visual appreciation alone was insufficient to maintain their interest. Those experiences which were based on photography or observing architecture were said to be short and two-dimensional, as was expressed in the comment:

"After taking photos, there was nothing much to do." (P4)

These reactions indicate that aesthetic appeal is a prelude to visitation and does not guarantee meaningful interactions. In line with the latest findings on persuasive destination imagery such as Chang et al., 2025, visual beauty can pique curiosity, however, the depth of experience determines whether the visit will be remembered. Aesthetic experiences may be superficial unless they include interpretative or immersive features.

4.3 Immersive and Reflective Experiences

Another key theme was the desire for immersive and reflective experiences. Participants expressed appreciation for mosque environments that felt calm, welcoming, and non-intimidating. Rather than structured or formal programmes, Gen Z visitors valued the freedom to explore at their own pace and engage in quiet reflection.

One participant described this experience as follows: *"I like when the mosque feels peaceful and welcoming. I can sit quietly and think. It makes me feel calm."* (P5)

Another participant added: *"When the environment is relaxed, I feel more connected. I do not feel rushed or uncomfortable."* (P1)

These responses indicate that Gen Z perceives mosque tourism not only as a cultural activity but also as an opportunity for emotional and spiritual reflection. They appreciate calm, welcoming, and non-intrusive environments that allow them to explore at their own pace, contemplate, and emotionally connect with the space.

This aligns with the escapist dimension of the Experience Economy, where visitors immerse themselves in an environment that allows them to momentarily disconnect from everyday routines (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Significantly, immersion was not associated with entertainment or performance but with atmosphere and emotional comfort. This finding is consistent with previous research, such as Augustina et al. (2025), which suggests that mosque tourism experiences that prioritise ambience, inclusivity, and reflective space can enhance Gen Z engagement without compromising religious integrity.

4.4 Digital Relevance, Shareability, and Identity Expression

Digital media played a significant role in shaping Gen Z awareness, expectations, and post-visit engagement with mosque tourism. Participants frequently cited social media as their primary source of information and inspiration for visiting mosques.

One participant noted: "Most of the time I find out about mosques from social media. If people share something interesting, I want to see it myself." (P2)

Beyond influencing visitation decisions, participants also valued experiences that could be meaningfully shared online. Shareability was associated not only with visual content but also with educational value.

As one participant explained: "*If I learn something interesting, I like to share it. It makes the visit feel more valuable.*" (P4)

However, participants were also aware of the need to maintain respect for religious spaces. Digital engagement was viewed positively when it supported learning and awareness rather than self-promotion.

One participant stated: "*Sharing is okay, but it should respect the mosque. It should educate, not just show off.*" (P3)

The participants emphasised that spiritual and reflective motivations influence their tourism

experiences, often intertwined with digital engagement. This finding supports the existing literature, e.g., Al-Romeedy et al. (2025) and Konar et al. (2025), which emphasises the role of digital media as an experiential enhancer. For Gen Z, digital platforms extend the experience beyond the physical visit by enabling reflection, discussion, and the expression of identity, enhancing the meaningfulness and memorability of mosque tourism for this generation.

Notably, there was a nuanced tension between digital shareability and the sanctity of religious space. Although participants appreciated the opportunity to record and share valuable knowledge online, they also demonstrated an understanding of the limits of appropriate behaviour in sacred spaces. This dual awareness is indicative of a particular psychological impulse among Gen Z which is the need to balance the expression of identity with cultural veneration. There is no ethical negotiation in visibility and reverence as there is in conventional leisure tourism and in mosque tourism, there must be ethical negotiation. This observation implies that online interaction in a religious heritage context is not necessarily promotional but identity-forming, mediated by moral consciousness. This subtle dynamic is a unique input to the study of youth motivations in the context of sacred tourism.

4.5 Theoretical Integration: Mapping Motivations to the Experience Economy

The results can be clearly superimposed on the Experience Economy Theory by Pine and Gilmore. Educational and cultural learning corresponds with the field of education, in which active memory improves memorability. The aesthetic attraction is associated with the aesthetic world, where visitors admire the environment's beauty and are relatively inactive.

The escapist realm is associated with immersive and reflective experiences that involve emotional engagement and a sense of disconnection from surrounding routines. It is also important to note that the entertainment world was not given much priority, implying that Gen Z is not interested in performative entertainment in the mosque setting, but rather in reflection.

Digital shareability can expand beyond the initial four realms and prove to be a hybrid experience, enhancing the knowledge and continuing even after the physical visit through digital reflection, narration, and identity expression (Pietroni, 2025). This extension dimension

illustrates how religious tourism experiences are currently taking place simultaneously in both physical and virtual spaces.

This mapping makes the study's theoretical contribution more powerful, as it demonstrates how Experience Economy Theory operates in a unique way in a sacred heritage setting.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper is built on the Experience Economy Theory, which posits that Gen Z is more inclined to judge mosque tourism by its depth of experience rather than its physical qualities. Although aesthetic value in architecture serves as an initial attraction, especially when enhanced by digital presence, the continued interest relies on interpretative significance, affective appeal, and the possibility of reflective immersion. Pictures may arouse interest, yet experience-based content fosters recall and perceived value.

The most important motivational dimension was found to be educational and cultural learning. The participants always gave high priority to interpretive narratives that relate architectural features to historical context, Islamic philosophy, and cultural symbolism. This is an indication of the education component of the Experience Economy Theory, where active cognitive engagement increases the appreciation in the long term. In its turn, aesthetic appreciation, which is equivalent to the aesthetic realm, was not enough to involve it further. The reflective and immersive moods, in line with the escapist world, further reinforced emotional attachment, allowing the person to ponder peacefully in a religious space.

Digital mediation was not a motivating force but a consummate one. Online platforms were found to impact awareness and reflection on the post-visit, as well as the manifestation of identity. Nonetheless, participants showed sensitivity to the sanctity of the religious space, which reveals a negotiated compromise between space-sharing and reverence. This moral contradiction is one of the unique features of youth participation in sacred heritage tourism, and it can add theoretical significance to the study of experiential motivation in religious settings.

In practice, the results indicate that the mosque management committees and tourism authorities need to focus on engaging youth in the interpretive design rather than on architectural display. A positive contribution to meaningful participation without undermining the integrity of religion can be made through story-based

interpretation, even-handed and open-ended forms of engagement, and contemplation of spatial planning. Moreover, strategies of respectful virtual interaction can be used to align youth expression and sacred standards, as well as to have an educational effect beyond the physical visit.

The findings of the study should be interpreted in light of the qualitative nature of the study and the geographical area covered across four mosques in Peninsular Malaysia. Although the findings shed light on critical motivational patterns, they need to be further validated at a larger scale across other typologies of mosques and in other cultural contexts. Future studies that use comparative and mixed-methods designs might also help improve theoretical application and enhance generalizability.

On the whole, this work contributes to research on mosque tourism by shifting the architectural focus from supply-based to visitor-based experiential incentives. It shows that, for Gen Z, architectural beauty is the starting point, and interpretive richness, contemplative immersion, and ethical mediated digital interactions are the sustaining factors. Mosque tourism can attract younger generations through well-thought-out experiential strategies and maintain spiritual sensitivity in an increasingly experience-driven tourism environment.

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Forecasting Hotel Service Indicators in the Khorezm Region, Uzbekistan

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Abstract– Identifying the factors influencing the development of tourism and hotel services in the Khorezm region, examining their interrelationships, and forecasting future trends based on econometric models constitute an urgent research task. In the growth of tourism service volume in the Khorezm region, hotel and similar accommodation services play a decisive role. Accordingly, this study identifies several key determinants affecting regional tourism service volume, including the number of hotels and similar accommodation facilities, bed capacity, the number of accommodated guests, and the number of overnight stays. Based on annual data for the period 2013–2024, a twelve-year dataset was constructed to develop a multi-factor econometric model. The dependent variable is the volume of tourism services in the region (million UZS), while the explanatory variables include: (X1) the number of hotels and similar accommodation facilities, (X2) the number of beds, (X3) the number of accommodated guests, and (X4) the number of overnight stays. In addition, ARIMA models were applied to forecast key tourism and hotel industry indicators for 2025–2028. The results demonstrate a steady upward trend in tourism service volume and hotel infrastructure indicators, confirming the critical role of accommodation capacity in regional tourism development.

Keywords: tourism industry; hotel services; accommodation facilities; ARIMA; econometric forecasting

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Globally, the hotel services market is regarded as a socio-economic phenomenon that directly and indirectly influences the development of the tourism industry and its associated infrastructure. In the context of accelerating globalization, the hospitality industry contributes significantly to foreign currency earnings and employment generation. According to the World Tourism Organization, the hospitality and tourism sector accounts for approximately 9% of global GDP, 5% of total tax revenues, 7% of global investment, and provides employment for more than 230 million people (<https://www.unwto.org/>). In this regard, under the conditions of an innovative economy, the rapid development of hotel services has become an urgent issue.

In the era of globalization, numerous scientific studies are being conducted worldwide to identify the specific characteristics and development trends of the hotel services market, to examine how the hospitality industry contributes to the socio-economic development of regions, and to explore the effective utilization of regional potential based on modern approaches.

In this context, priority research areas include improving the organizational and economic foundations for the development of the regional hotel services market, investigating the specific aspects of service quality assessment in the hospitality industry, forming hotel service clusters to promote the unique hospitality potential of regions, and forecasting regional hospitality industry indicators using multifactor econometric models.

In the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan, the adoption of a dedicated program to make tourism a key driver for job creation in the Khorezm region, as well as the construction of modern hotels and tourist-recreational entertainment complexes, have been put forward as important priorities.

To effectively implement these objectives, priority research areas include improving the organizational and economic mechanisms for developing the regional hotel services market; establishing a virtual association of hotels to facilitate mutual exchange of experience within the hotel services market, forming hotel service clusters to promote the region's unique hospitality potential, assessing the quality of hotel services; and forecasting tourism and hospitality industry indicators in the region using multifactor econometric models.

Hotel services refer to the process of providing accommodation and related services to guests by tourism-oriented hotel enterprises. These services encompass accommodation facilities, food and beverage services, retail services, transport, and sports and leisure sectors. The hotel services market represents the aggregate of enterprises operating in this sector and plays a crucial role in shaping competition, intermediaries, and consumer behavior (Федсов, 2008).

In contemporary research, simulation and econometric modeling techniques are widely applied to analyze hotel service markets. These methods allow for segmentation of consumers by preferences, income levels, and behavioral characteristics (Козлова., Климкина., Швакова., 2014). Seasonality is another defining feature of tourism and hospitality demand, often analyzed using time-series models to capture stochastic and cyclical fluctuations. International experience also highlights the importance of analyzing hotel room availability, pricing dynamics, and demand–supply conditions using empirical approaches. This method makes it possible to test the stochastic nature of seasonality in the hotel services market and to observe seasonal fluctuations (Chang et al., 2019).

In international practice, the availability of different types of hotel room options is analyzed using online hotel booking platforms. In this process, the status of each type of room option is examined through comprehensive empirical analysis. In each region, the demand–supply conditions of room prices are characterized by room availability and average room rates (Aki-Hiro Sato., 2013). In developing countries, qualitative research

approaches are widely used to analyze the demand and supply of services provided by star-rated hotels by monitoring tourist segments and service quality levels (Pardayev, 2013).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Forecasting service indicators in the hotel industry has become an essential component of tourism planning, destination management, and strategic decision-making. Hotel service indicators—such as occupancy rate, average daily rate (ADR), revenue per available room (RevPAR), and tourist arrivals—are widely used to evaluate the performance and sustainability of hospitality businesses. Accurate forecasting of these indicators enables hotel managers and policymakers to anticipate demand fluctuations, optimize resource allocation, and improve service quality.

A substantial body of research has focused on tourism demand forecasting and hotel performance prediction. Early studies by Song Haiyan and Gang Li emphasized the importance of econometric models for forecasting tourism demand. Their work highlights the application of time-series models such as ARIMA, vector autoregression (VAR), and econometric regression models to predict tourist arrivals and accommodation demand. These approaches have been widely adopted in hospitality research because they can capture seasonal patterns and macroeconomic influences on tourism flows.

Another important strand of literature focuses on the application of advanced quantitative methods in hotel demand forecasting. For example, studies by Rob J. Hyndman and George Athanasopoulos demonstrate how modern time-series forecasting techniques—such as exponential smoothing and machine learning models—can significantly improve forecasting accuracy. In the hospitality context, these methods allow researchers to analyze complex relationships between tourism demand, pricing strategies, and external factors such as economic conditions, seasonality, and destination attractiveness.

Research has also explored the relationship between tourism development and regional hotel performance indicators. Scholars such as Chris Ryan and Dimitrios Buhalis highlight that destination competitiveness, infrastructure development, and marketing strategies strongly influence hotel demand patterns. In emerging tourism destinations, forecasting models can help local authorities plan infrastructure investments, develop sustainable

tourism strategies, and support private sector decision-making.

In the context of Central Asia and Uzbekistan, tourism development has gained increasing attention in recent years due to government policies aimed at expanding international tourism and improving hospitality infrastructure. Studies focusing on regional tourism development emphasize the growing importance of historical and cultural destinations such as Khiva and the wider Khorezm Region. These destinations attract both domestic and international visitors, which increases demand for accommodation services and highlights the need for accurate forecasting tools. However, compared with more established tourism markets, empirical research on hotel service forecasting in Uzbekistan remains relatively limited.

Recent studies suggest that combining traditional econometric models with modern data-driven approaches can enhance forecasting performance in tourism and hospitality research. By analyzing historical hotel service indicators and tourism demand patterns, researchers can identify trends and seasonal fluctuations that affect regional hotel markets. For a developing tourism destination such as the Khorezm region, forecasting hotel service indicators is particularly important for improving capacity planning, investment decisions, and service management.

Numerous international scholars, including Kotler, Baumgarten, Berezovaya, McKenzie, Fornell, Riley, and Mojayeva, have examined the formation and development of hotel service markets. Their studies emphasize marketing strategies, service quality, consumer satisfaction, and competitiveness in the hospitality industry (Котлер Ф., Мейкенз Дж., 2002). In Uzbekistan, significant contributions to the study of regional hotel service market development have been made by Pardayev, Egamberdiyev, Ruzmetov, Mirzayev, Rakhimov, Tuxliyev, Matyakubov, Aliyeva, and Abdullayeva. These studies focus primarily on organizational and economic mechanisms, service quality, and efficiency improvement (Pardayev, 2013).

However, the scientific works of the above-mentioned economists have not sufficiently examined the organizational and economic aspects of developing the regional hotel services market, the establishment of hotel service clusters to promote hospitality potential, the formation of effective models of the hotel services market, or the forecasting of hotel industry indicators using multi-factor econometric models. The insufficient study of

the specific characteristics of the hotel services market today underscores the relevance of this research topic and enables the accurate determination of its aim and main objectives.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the evaluation of service quality in hotels. In the first place, we focused on the essence and content of service quality. According to foreign scholars (Lewis & Booms, 2007), service quality is a measure of the extent to which the delivered service meets customers' expectations. Petrick (2004) argues that quality is one of the best indicators of repurchase intention and that it has both a direct and moderate influence on behavioral intentions.

Furthermore, based on the findings of Wetzels and Bloyemer (2008), quality has a direct impact on customers' preferences and their willingness to recommend the service to others.

According to Zeithaml (2009), perceived value refers to the customer's overall assessment of a product's utility based on perceptions of what is received and what is given.

Several studies have been conducted on tourism development and forecasting in Uzbekistan. For instance, Safarov et al. (2022) used ARIMA and ARDL models to forecast the tourism inflow to Uzbekistan, evaluating the impact of factors such as prosperity, infrastructure, safety, and the environment. Their results indicate that tourism inflow experienced significant growth after the pandemic, and high demand is expected in the future.

Research on tourism development in the Khorezm region often focuses on regional clusters and sustainable development. Ruzmetov et al. (2024) proposed mechanisms to improve the formation of tourism-recreational clusters in Khorezm and forecasted the growth of tourist inflow for 2024–2027. To conduct econometric analysis, they employed specialized econometric modeling using the statistical and forecasting software Rwiess 9.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methods

In this study, methods such as systematic analysis, economic statistical analysis, econometric modeling, and forecasting were employed to examine the tourism and hotel service indicators of the region. The research is based on both quantitative and qualitative approaches, primarily utilizing advanced econometric and time series models to model and forecast tourism demand indicators. This choice reflects the evolution of tourism forecasting

techniques, which have progressed from simple static regressions to dynamic and hybrid models (Song & Witt, 2000; Song et al., 2019).

There is a considerable body of research on econometric modeling and forecasting in the field of tourism, which employs time series, econometric models (such as ARIMA, ARDL, OLS), and other methods to predict tourism demand. This study adopts a quantitative research methodology to analyze and forecast key hotel service indicators in the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan. The analysis is based on secondary data collected from official statistical sources, including regional tourism authorities and national statistical reports. The dataset covers the period from 2015 to 2024 and includes important hotel service indicators such as the number of hotels, number of rooms, tourist arrivals, occupancy rates, and revenues from hotel services.

To identify trends and predict future developments in the hospitality sector, the study applies the **ARIMA model**, a widely used econometric technique for time-series forecasting. The ARIMA approach is particularly suitable for analyzing historical data patterns and generating

reliable short-term forecasts when the data exhibit temporal dependence.

The methodological procedure involves several stages. First, descriptive statistical analysis is conducted to examine historical trends in hotel service indicators in the Khorezm region. Second, stationarity of the time series is tested using differencing procedures to ensure the suitability of the data for ARIMA modeling. Third, appropriate ARIMA parameters (p, d, q) are identified through autocorrelation and partial autocorrelation functions. The selected model is then estimated using statistical software, and diagnostic tests are performed to evaluate model adequacy and forecasting accuracy.

The forecasting results provide projections of hotel service indicators for the coming years and help identify potential growth patterns in the regional hospitality sector. These forecasts can assist policymakers, tourism authorities, and hotel managers in planning infrastructure development and improving service capacity to accommodate increasing tourist demand in the Khorezm region. During the research process, the statistical description of factors was examined before constructing a multi-factor econometric model (Table 1).

Table 1. Statistical Description of Factors

	LN(Y)	LN(X ₁)	LN(X ₂)	LN(X ₃)	LN(X ₄)
Mean	8.869693	8.996571	3.520205	1.590620	2.492476
Median	8.960109	8.402259	3.688879	1.842453	2.524928
Maximum	11.79059	13.68948	4.430817	3.784190	3.332205
Minimum	3.995732	8.179480	2.302585	0.593147	1.386294
Std. Dev.	3.944505	2.045770	0.573883	1.361617	0.436990
Skewness - S	-0.22695	1.696145	-0.826527	1.051341	-0.722690
Kurtosis - K	1.484885	4.890067	2.460191	2.790735	4.200505
Jarque-Bera	1.230712	10.05332	1.722783	2.881250	2.353556
Probability	0.489018	0.006561	0.401964	0.236780	0.308270
Sum	125.5149	169.9451	55.32328	25.44992	39.87961
Sum Sq. Dev	105.9011	62.77760	4.840125	16.90545	2.864410
Observations	12	12	12	12	12

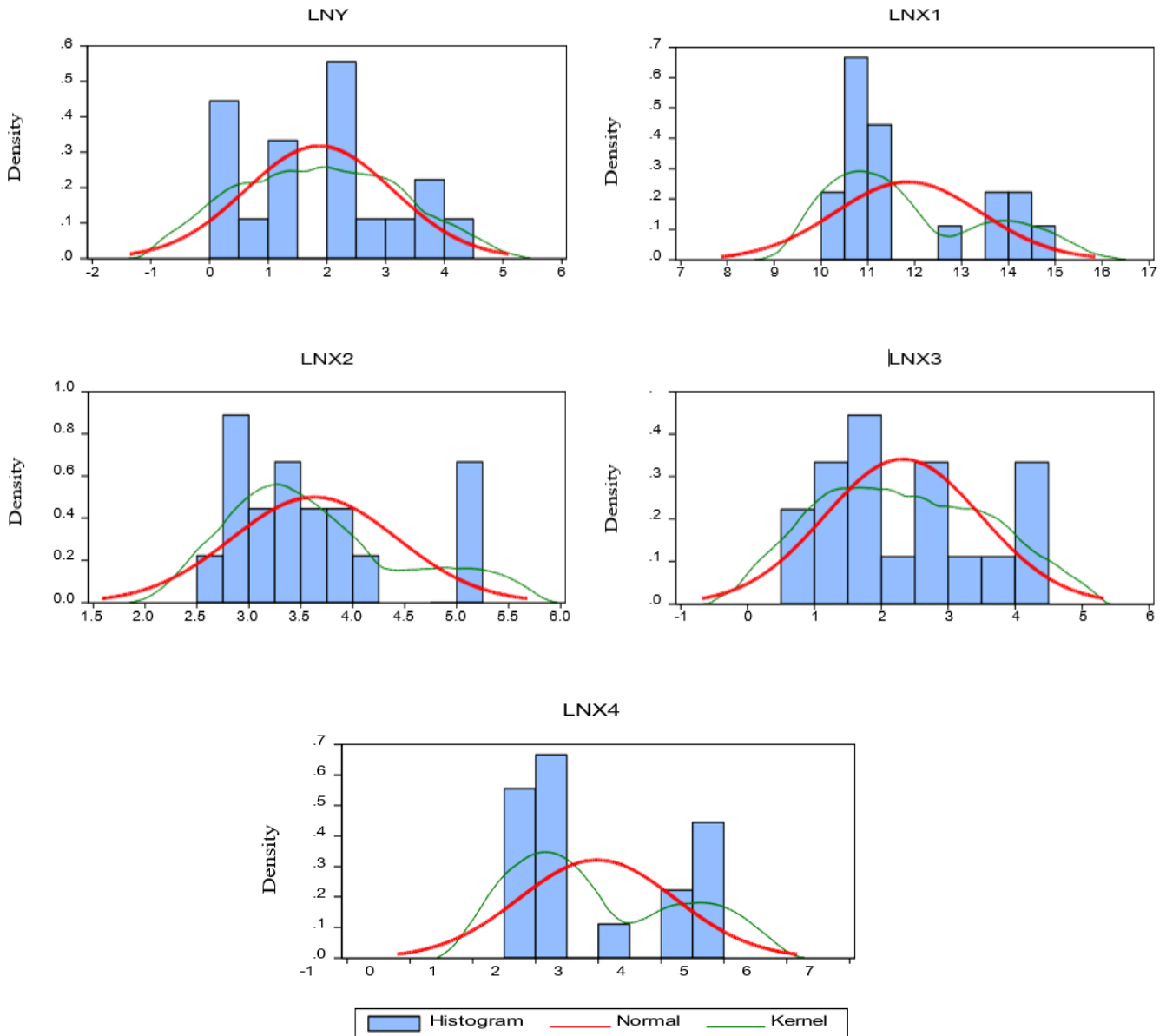
The data presented in Table 1 provide, for each factor, the mean, median, maximum, and minimum values, as well as the standard deviation, which indicates the extent of deviation from the mean. Additionally, the table includes the skewness coefficient (Skewness – S), which shows whether the theoretical distribution curve of each factor is shifted to the right ($S > 0$) or left ($S < 0$) relative to the

normal distribution curve, and the kurtosis coefficient (Kurtosis – K), which indicates whether the curve is more peaked ($K > 0$) or flatter ($K < 0$) compared to the normal distribution. To confirm the conformity of each factor to a normal distribution, the table also provides the Jarque-Bera test (Jarque-Bera) values.

When constructing an econometric model, the conformity of factors to a normal distribution is examined using skewness and kurtosis coefficients as well as the Jarquye-Bera test. The numerical values in Table 1 indicate that the skewness, kurtosis, and Jarquye-Bera test statistics are relatively small, suggesting that the factors can be assumed to be

approximately normally distributed. Conversely, higher values of skewness, kurtosis, and the Jarquye-Bera test in Table 1 indicate a significant deviation of factors from normality. To provide a clearer understanding of this, the normal distribution functions of each factor were also examined (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Graphs of the normal distribution functions of the factors



3.2 Data Collection

The data collection focused on historical time series and macroeconomic indicators affecting tourism and hotel services. The main variables include tourist arrivals (TA), tourism expenditures (TE), hotel occupancy rates, and average length of stay (Song & Witt, 2000; Lim, 1997). The explanatory variables comprise real income (GDP per capita), relative prices (Consumer Price Index adjusted for exchange rates), exchange rates, climate indices, and dummy variables for crises (Smeral, 2010; Kulendran & Witt, 2003).

Based on the studies of the aforementioned scholars, a correlation analysis was conducted during the research process to select factors for a multi-factor econometric model. In this process, pairwise correlation coefficients between factors were calculated and their matrix was determined (Table 2). Table 2 shows that there are strong relationships between the dependent variable (LnY) and the explanatory variables (LnX1, LnX2, LnX3, LnX4), as the pairwise correlation coefficients exceed 0.8.

Table 2. Matrix of pairwise correlation coefficients between factors

	LnY Correlation	LnX1 Correlation	LnX2 Correlation	LnX3 Correlation	LnX4 Correlation
LnY Correlation	1.000000				
LnX1 Correlation	0.836233	1.000000			
t-Statistic	3.689965	-----			
Probability	0.0011	-----			
LnX2 Probability	0.873733	0.560371	1.000000		
t-Statistic	6.782304	2.603292	-----		
Probability	0.0000	0.0507	-----		
LnX3 Correlation	0.858306	0.587913	0.535021	1.000000	
t-Statistic	4.426522	4.927241	4.566063	-----	
Probability	0.0006	0.0002	0.0013	-----	
LnX4 Correlation	0.877800	0.619978	0.516274	0.674262	1.000000
t-Statistic	6.773466	2.654575	8.759844	4.466899	-----
Probability	0.0000	0.0206	0.0000	0.0052	-----

Table 2 also presents the significance and probability of the correlation coefficients. Below each correlation coefficient, the corresponding t-value calculated using the student's t-test and its probability are provided. In econometric analysis, it is generally required that the probability between factors does not exceed 0.05. For instance, the pairwise correlation coefficient between the volume of tourism services (LnY) and the number of hotels and similar accommodation facilities (LnX1) is $r_{(\ln(x_i), \ln(x_j))} = 0.836$, with $t = 3.690$ and $\text{prob} = 0.0011$. This indicates a strong relationship between the two factors, confirms the statistical significance of the correlation, and demonstrates a positive association at the 95% confidence level. Hence, the factors included in the multi-factor econometric model meet the criteria for correlation coefficients based on the student's t-test and associated probabilities.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

To forecast hotel and tourism indicators in the Khorezm region over the medium term, the ARIMA (Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average) model was employed. Box and Jenkins proposed identifying non-stationary series, demonstrating that by taking successive differences, they can be transformed into a stationary form suitable for ARIMA modeling (Rizkya, Indah, Syahputri, Khalida, Sari, Rachida, & Siregar, Ikhsan & Utamingrum, J., 2019).

The Box-Jenkins methodology for fitting an ARIMA model to a specific set of observations consists of four stages:

- 1. Model identification** – the process of selecting the model that best fits the observed real-world process;

2. Model estimation – obtaining estimates of the parameters included in the model using regression methods;

3. Model testing – verifying the adequacy of the model through regression assumptions, tests for the normality of residuals (Jarque-Bera test), autocorrelation of residuals (Durbin-Watson test), tests for the constancy of random variances (e.g., Cochran and Goldfeld-Quandt tests), and the quality of model specification (F-test);

4. Forecasting – using the model for prediction purposes.

Forecasting was carried out using the ARIMA (Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average) model, which is characterized by the

order (p, d, q), where p represents the autoregressive parameter, d the degree of differencing (integration), and q the moving average parameter. The general form of the ARIMA model is as follows:

$$Y_t = \alpha + \beta_1 Y_{t-1} + \dots + \beta_p Y_{t-p} + \epsilon_t + \mu_1 \epsilon_{t-1} + \dots + \mu_q \epsilon_{t-q} \tag{1.1}$$

In the ARIMA (Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average) model, it is first necessary to develop a separate ARIMA model for each indicator of the hotel and tourism sector. Based on calculations using the available statistical data, ARIMA models were constructed to forecast the main indicators of the region’s tourism sector (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of the ARIMA models for forecasting the main indicators of the region’s tourism sector

Dependent Variable: D(LNY,1)				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0.223632	0.068393	3.26980831	0.0067
MA(1)	-0.889999	0.093213	-9.5480137	0.0443
R-squared	84.84001	Mean dependent var		0.211739
Adjusted R-squared	83.98002	S.D. dependent var		0.683718
S.E. of regression	0.530487	Akaike info criterion		1.931651
Sum squared resid	3.376994	Schwarz criterion		2.073261
Log likelihood	-11.48738	Hannan-Quinn criter.		1.930143
F-statistic	5.62794	Durbin-Watson stat		1.898812
Dependent Variable: D(LNX1,2)				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0.277369	0.059098	4.69337372	0.0554
AR(1)	0.465607	0.141637	3.28732605	0.0223
MA(1)	-0.784546	0.082217	-9.5423817	0.0241
R-squared	82.9008	Mean dependent var		0.248795
Adjusted R-squared	80.96465	S.D. dependent var		0.906893
S.E. of regression	0.862042	Akaike info criterion		2.888625
Sum squared resid	8.174286	Schwarz criterion		3.077439
Log likelihood	-17.66469	Hannan-Quinn criter.		2.886614
F-statistic	1.498232	Durbin-Watson stat		1.993166
Dependent Variable: D(LNX2,2)				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.

C	0.157134	0.032389	4.85146192	0.0341
AR(1)	-0.077192	0.036341	-2.1241023	0.0362
R-squared	73.63176	Mean dependent var		0.156945

Adjusted R-squared	71.82389	S.D. dependent var		0.209221
S.E. of regression	0.225222	Akaike info criterion		0.033797
Sum squared resid	0.608701	Schwarz criterion		0.175407
Log likelihood	2.746521	Hannan-Quinn criter.		0.032289
F-statistic	0.040657	Durbin-Watson stat		2.010797

Dependent Variable: D(LNX3,1)

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0,201984	0,065759	3,07157956	0.0097
AR(1)	-0,052055	0,022244	-2,3401816	0.0486
R-squared	75.3528	Mean dependent var		0.200817
Adjusted R-squared	74.3282	S.D. dependent var		0.216753
S.E. of regression	0.233795	Akaike info criterion		0.10829
Sum squared resid	0.655919	Schwarz criterion		0.2499
Log likelihood	2.187824	Hannan-Quinn criter.		0.106782
F-statistic	0.01671	Durbin-Watson stat		1.94873

Dependent Variable: D(LNX4,1)

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0,212563	0,053956	3,93956187	0.0149
AR(1)	-0,203382	0,086333	-2,3557852	0.0365

The determination coefficients, standard errors, F-Fisher, t-Student, Akaike, and Schwarz criteria presented in Figure 3 indicate the statistical significance and adequacy of all the developed models. The calculation results based on these models justify their full applicability for forecasting hotel and tourism indicators in the Khorezm region.

During the study, forecast values of the Khorezm region’s hotel and tourism indicators for 2025–2028 were developed. Table 4 presents the forecasted values of the volume of tourism services in Khorezm for 2025–2028, based on an ARIMA (0,1,1) model.

Table 4. Forecasted values of tourism service volume in the Khorezm region based on the ARIMA (0,1,1) Model

Years	Forecasted values (million UZS)	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval	Growth Rate Compared to the Previous Year (%)
2025	87660,69	1,66	(87579; 87759)	114
2026	101686,39	1,55	(101505; 101745)	115
2027	118957,21	1,61	(118779; 119119)	116
2028	139770,31	1,57	(139539; 139979)	116

According to the forecast results presented in Table 4, the volume of tourism services in the Khorezm region is expected to reach 139,770.31 million UZS by 2028, nearly doubling compared to

2024. Additionally, using an ARIMA (1,2,1) model, the projected values for the number of hotels and similar accommodation facilities for 2025–2028 were forecasted (Table 5).

Table 5. Forecasted values of the number of hotels and accommodation facilities in the Khorezm region for 2025–2028 based on the ARIMA (1,2,1) model

Years	Forecasted values (million UZS)	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval	Growth Rate Compared to the Previous Year (%)
2025	277	1,68	(275,77; 280,64)	109
2026	309	1,55	(306,88; 312,57)	108
2027	337	1,60	(334,71; 341,14)	108
2028	368	1,57	(365,39; 372,09)	108

According to the forecast data presented in Table 5, the number of hotels and similar accommodation facilities operating in the Khorezm region is expected to reach 368 by 2028, representing a 1.5-fold increase compared to 2024.

During the research process, based on an ARIMA (1,2,1) model, the projected values of the number of beds in hotels and similar accommodation facilities in the Khorezm region for the period 2025–2028 were forecasted (Table 6)

Table 6. Forecasted values of the number of beds in hotels in the Khorezm region for 2025–2028 based on the ARIMA (1,2,1) model

Years	Forecasted values (million UZS)	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval	Growth Rate Compared to the Previous Year (%)
2025	7875	1.98	(7780.2; 7986.5)	126
2026	8842	1.26	(8650.7; 8970.6)	121
2027	10419	1.44	(10210.5;10650.2)	117
2028	12179	1.61	(11940.1;12430.7)	116

According to the forecast data presented in Table 6, the number of beds in hotels and similar accommodation facilities operating in the Khorezm region is expected to reach 12,179 by 2028, representing a 2.2-fold increase compared to 2024.

accommodated in hotels in the Khorezm region for the period 2025-2028 were forecasted (Table 7). According to the forecast results, the number of guests accommodated in hotels operating in the Khorezm region is expected to reach 444,079 by 2028, representing a 2.2-fold increase compared to 2024.

Based on an ARIMA (1,1,1) model, the projected values of the number of guests

Table 7. Forecasted values of the number of guests accommodated in hotels in the Khorezm Region for 2025–2028 based on the ARIMA (1,1,1) model

Years	Forecasted values	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval	Growth Rate Compared to the Previous Year (%)
2025	240595	1.68	(235640.48; 245653.24)	121
2026	295932	1.82	(293652.06; 295652.38)	122
2027	361039	1.73	(357120.64; 365210.47)	121
2028	444079	1.87	(439540.31; 448960.74)	122

During the research process, based on an ARIMA (1,1,1) model, the projected values of the number of overnight stays (person-days) in hotels in the

Khorezm region for the period 2025–2028 were forecasted (Table 8)

Table 8. Forecasted values of the number of overnight stays (person-days) in hotels in the Khorezm Region for 2025–2028 based on the ARIMA (1,1,1) model

Years	Forecasted values	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval	Growth Rate Compared to the Previous Year (%)
2025	375955	1.78	(365210,7; 380728,8)	122
2026	462424	1.42	(445655,6; 478652,2)	121
2027	568779	1.60	(552940,3; 583620,7)	121
2028	699599	1.67	(682150,1; 716980,4)	120

According to the forecast results presented in Table 8, the number of overnight stays in hotels in the Khorezm region is expected to reach 699,599 person-days by 2028, representing a 2.3-fold increase compared to 2024.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The results of this study confirm that forecasting tourism and hotel service indicators in the Khorezm region using the ARIMA econometric model provides valuable insights for strategic planning and regional tourism development. Based on historical data for 2013–2024, the econometric analysis revealed a strong relationship between tourism service volume and key accommodation indicators, including the number of hotels, bed capacity, the number of accommodated guests, and the number of overnight stays. The forecasting results indicate a stable upward trend in all major tourism indicators for the period 2025–2028. In particular, the volume of tourism services is expected to increase significantly, while the number of hotels, available beds, and tourist accommodations will continue to expand in response to growing demand.

These results highlight the critical role of accommodation infrastructure in supporting the sustainable development of tourism in the Khorezm region. The expansion of hotel capacity and improvement of service quality will be essential for maintaining competitiveness and meeting the needs of both domestic and international tourists.

To achieve the projected growth targets for 2025–2028, several practical measures should be implemented. First, it is advisable to improve the quality of services provided by hotels and similar accommodation facilities in accordance with

international standards. At the same time, affordable and comfortable lodging options should be developed for students, young travelers, and middle-income tourists through the expansion of hostels, family hotels, and campgrounds.

Second, the development of alternative accommodation models such as home-stay facilities should be encouraged in tourism neighborhoods such as Beshmergan in the Shovot district, G'ovuk in the Khiva district, and the Qalajiq fortress tourism area of the Bog'ot district. These initiatives would not only increase accommodation capacity but also promote community-based tourism and support local economic development.

Third, it is important to enhance the region's tourism attractiveness by developing eco-tourism infrastructure. The construction of glamping sites, eco mini-hotels, and campgrounds in the Khorezm National Nature Park located in the districts of Urgench, Khonqa, Khiva, Yangibozor, and Khazorasp would diversify tourism products and attract new visitor segments. In addition, the establishment of traditional yurts and tent accommodations in culturally significant areas such as Eshonravot, Qorako'l, the Qalajiq tourism complex, and the Ucho'choq massif could provide authentic tourism experiences while preserving national cultural heritage.

Overall, the study confirms that the development of the tourism sector in the Khorezm region is closely linked to the expansion and modernization of hotel infrastructure. Therefore, strengthening investment policies, encouraging public-private partnerships, and attracting both domestic and foreign investment into the hospitality sector is crucial for achieving sustainable growth.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The analysis is based on a relatively limited time series dataset and focuses primarily on traditional econometric forecasting methods. Future research could expand the dataset, incorporate additional explanatory variables such as tourism demand factors, pricing dynamics, and macroeconomic indicators, and apply advanced

forecasting techniques such as machine learning or hybrid models to improve prediction accuracy.

In conclusion, the forecasting results obtained in this research can serve as a useful analytical tool for policymakers, tourism authorities, and hotel managers when designing strategic development plans for the tourism and hospitality sector in the Khorezm region.

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Driven by Fandom: How Fan Motivation Shapes K-Pop Concert Experiences in Malaysia

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Abstract– K-pop concert tourism has grown rapidly in Malaysia, yet the psychological mechanisms shaping fans' concert experiences remain insufficiently understood. Hence, this study examines the influence of fan motivation on the fan experience in K-pop concert tourism in Malaysia, specifically whether it significantly affects the experience. Following the Stimulus Organism Response (S O R) framework, fan motivation is theorised as an inner psychological condition that influences the experiential reactions of fans attending concerts. The survey was a quantitative, cross-sectional study of 298 K-pop concert attendees in Malaysia. Analysis was performed in SPSS, and reliability testing and simple linear regression were used to examine the relationship between fan motivation (independent variable) and fan experience (dependent variable). The results show a strong, positive correlation between the variables ($R = 0.707$), and fan motivation accounts for 49.9% of the variance in fan experience ($R^2 = 0.499$). Regression findings also confirm a strong positive influence of fan motivation on fan experience ($B = 1.033$, $p < 0.001$). It concludes that fan motivation is a central factor in shaping the concert experience and offers guidance on maximising K-pop concert tourism in Malaysia.

Keywords: K-Pop concert tourism, fan motivation, fan experience, S-O-R theory, Malaysia

1.0 INTRODUCTION

K-pop concert tourism has become increasingly popular in recent years, with fans travelling both

domestically and internationally to see their favourite artists live. In addition to entertainment, K-pop concerts have become experiential tourism products that integrate music, emotional experiences, and destination-specific content. Even countries such as South Korea, Japan, Thailand, and Malaysia have begun to include large-scale concerts in their event tourism plans to promote destination image, boost local economies, and encourage repeat visits (Lee et al., 2023). In Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur is now a significant venue for K-pop concerts, with major groups including BTS, BLACKPINK, and TWICE, cementing it as a centre of concert tourism in the region.

The growth of K-pop concert tourism in Asia is rapidly growing, but empirical studies on psychological processes that influence the experiences of fans are scarce. Existing literature on K-pop events is more inclined towards the fan culture, the impact of celebrity and less on the psychological factors that shape the way fans perceive their concert experience (Jenol and Pazil, 2020; Lee et al., 2023). Specifically, the relationship between fan motivation as a psychological factor and the fan experience in K-pop concert tourism has not been adequately studied, particularly in the new concert tourism destinations like Malaysia. This restriction leaves a knowledge gap about the motivational aspects of the experiential results of concert-goers.

To fill this gap, the paper analyzes whether fan motivation has a major impact on fan experience among K-pop concert tourism in Malaysia. Fan motivation is conceptualised within the framework of the Stimulus-Organism-Response

(S-O-R) (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974) as the organismic psychological condition determining the experience of the fans in the concert setting. The study adds to the existing knowledge on psychological processes that affect music tourism experiences by empirically investigating this relationship.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies have also increasingly recognised K-pop concerts as experiential tourism products, where consumption is not the sole focus but is embedded in emotional, social, and cultural experiences. K-pop concerts offer high-stimulus settings through live performances, crowd interaction, stage effects, and fan activities, which together influence fans' perceptions and judgments of the experience. Such concert conditions are external stimuli that trigger internal psychological processes among fans, including emotional attachment, excitement, and a sense of social belonging, which ultimately shape their concert experience. Since K-pop concerts have become a source of great interest for fans both within and outside the country, it is imperative to understand how these stimuli can be translated into valuable experiences in the evolution of sustainable concert tourism.

In this context, fan motivation is an important factor in how people perceive and experience concert environments. Passionate followers will be more likely to become emotionally involved, tolerate inconveniences, and rate concerts positively. However, even with the increased popularity of K-pop concert tourism, scant empirical studies have investigated the psychological processes that shape how fan motivation influences the fan experience, especially by applying well-established behavioural theories.

2.1 Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory accounts for the impact of environmental stimuli on an individual's inner psychological state, which, in turn, determines behavioural and experiential outcomes. In the S-O-R model, the external environmental conditions (stimulus S) are the internal response (O), which includes emotional and cognitive reactions, and the response (R). This theory has found broad application in tourism and event studies to explain how the experiential environment affects visitor satisfaction and quality of experience. Within the framework of K-pop concert tourism, environmental stimuli which trigger psychological responses among fans can be

the concert environment including live performances, stage design, and crowd atmosphere. In this context, fan motivation is the organismic aspect, which is the internal emotional and social motivators that influence the meanings and experiences of the fans with the concert setting. Such internal states in turn affect the fan experience which is the result of the response. The S-O-R framework will thus be helpful in describing the impact of psychological motivations on experiential judgments in live concert environments.

The relevance of the S-O-R model to the exploration of experiential outcomes in events is supported by prior research. According to Ayuni and Dewi (2023), emotionally and socially motivated concertgoers reported much higher levels of satisfaction, indicating that motivation is the key element in the experience evaluation process. On the same note, Morante et al. (2025) emphasised internal motivation, particularly emotional attachment and fandom affiliation, as a potent factor in shaping fans' perceptions and enjoyment of live concerts. These results support the appropriateness of the S-O-R theory for analysing the relationship between fan motivation and fan experience in K-pop concert tourism.

2.2 Fan Motivations and Experiences Attending K-pop Concerts

Previous research shows that fan motivation would be a key factor in determining engagement and experiences in K-pop related activities. The emotional attachment to idols, the escape process of everyday life, socializing with other fans, and the enjoyment of live performance are often the motivational factors that drive fans to attend concerts (Jenol and Pazil, 2020; Lee et al., 2023). These inspirations affect the perception of the fans within the concert setting and lead to the increased enjoyment, satisfaction, and recollections at the live concerts.

The studies of emotional and social motivation in influencing concert experiences have also been found to be an important part of empirical research. Concerts usually serve not just as entertainment but also help fans feel connected to idols more emotionally and communicate with other members of the fan community (Roslan, 2024; Putri and Setiawan, 2025). These motivations add depth to concerts making them more of an experience tourism product as opposed to just an entertainment product.

Pramesathi (2025) also examines the relationship between K-pop concerts, emotional attachment, and celebrity worship using Cultivation Theory in a quantitative study. The study used purposive sampling and employed descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis to examine the impact of concert attendance and emotional attachment on celebrity worship among fans. It was discovered that K-pop concerts are effective factors of emotional arousal. Which motivates fans to visit live performances to receive firsthand contact with their idols. Through activities such as fan chanting, light sticks, and stage interaction, fans tend to become more emotionally attached to idols and, in turn, turn concerts into more than mere shows, making them memorable.

Muhammad et al. (2025) investigated how performance expectancy affects the behavioural intention of K-pop fans to use social media, based on an observational, qualitative research design grounded in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). The patterns of thematic analysis were used to conduct the study through non-participant observation, which showed that fans are also active social media users, using it to shape their expectations and motivations before attending K-pop-related events, such as concerts. The fans thought that social media served as a powerful means to access real-time information, organise the fandom, and build anticipation for the concerts, which, in turn, indirectly reinforced their desire to attend live concerts. This emphasises that performance expectancy, especially the perceived usefulness of social media in facilitating fan engagement in fandom activities, is an important factor driving fans' motivational drive for concert-related behaviour.

Moreover, the results showed that the emotional intensity of K-pop concerts, including euphoria, excitement, and post-concert emotions, does not remain confined to the concert event itself but also extends to fans' experiences through online interactions. The discourse on social media about concert preparation, dress codes, fan chants, and collective emotional commentary helps build collective meaning and identity within the fandom. These mediated interactions online strengthen fans' emotional attachment, deepen parasocial relationships with idols, and make the concert experience more engaging. All in all, the research recommends that fan motivation and experience at K-pop concerts cannot be attributed solely to physical attendance, but are greatly influenced by

pre- and post-concert social media interaction, which enhances emotional involvement and satisfaction amongst fans.

Putri and Setiawan (2025) investigated consumer motivation in the decision to attend NCT concerts among K-pop fans in Indonesia within a qualitative research design that included a series of in-depth interviews and data source and method triangulation. The study found that consumer motivation is a blend of rational and emotional factors that affect ticket purchase decisions. Financial planning, budgeting, and weighing the value of the concert against its cost were rational motivations. The results, however, showed that the emotional motivations were more dominant, especially the psychological need to be entertained, to derive self-fulfilment and emotional satisfaction, and social motivations such as the need to be recognised, to belong to the fan group, and to sustain a preferred self-image in the fandom society.

Moreover, the research emphasised that attending K-pop concerts is viewed by the audience not only as a form of entertainment; it is also an emotionally significant event that helps foster personal well-being and form social identity. Attending concerts was characterised as a form of emotional therapy and relief, as it enabled fans to forget their everyday problems and become more emotionally connected to idols and fellow fans. Such experiences also foster a sense of community and a long-term desire to be part of the fandom, making the concert experience even more fulfilling. Comprehensively, the research shows that fan motivation, especially emotional and social motivations, plays a major role in shaping the decision to attend K-pop concerts and the experiential outcomes for fans during and after the concerts.

2.3 Gaps in Existing Research

Though the S-O-R framework has been widely used in tourism and consumer behaviour studies, its application in K-pop concert tourism is less common, especially among the Malaysian population. The literature on K-pop concerts so far has centred chiefly on fan culture, the influence of celebrities, and the destination brand, but has placed little emphasis on the psychological processes that mediate between motivation and experiential consequences. Consequently, the contribution of fan motivation as an organismic factor to fan experience has not been fully investigated.

Even though past research has been associated with motivation to satisfaction in tourism and event settings, there is scarcity of research that has been conducted concerning how fan motivation directs fan experience in K-pop concert tourism. This gap needs to be addressed in order to comprehend the role of psychological motivations in determining experiential results in concert tourism. This paper thus uses the S-O-R framework to analyze how fan motivation affects fan experience of K-pop concert tourism in Malaysia.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative design to cross-sectionally investigate the role of fan motivation in the fan experience of K-pop concert tourism. The quantitative method was considered suitable, as it facilitates statistical examination of the correlation between variables and hypothesis-based research in tourism and event research. Using K-pop concert attendees in Malaysia as the study’s population, they must have attended at least one K-pop concert. This population was selected because attending K-pop concerts offers fans relevant experiential experiences shaping their motivations and general experiences at concerts. Using convenience

sampling, this study reached K-pop supporters through online platforms and fan groups. The respondents were identified through social media, where the K-pop fans are active. This methodology is suitable for fan-based tourism research, whose target population is determined not by geographic boundaries but by shared interests and experiences.\

A structured online questionnaire was adapted and adopted from past scholars to collect data and comprised three major sections (see Table 1). While Part A collected respondents' demographic data, Part B assessed fan motivation using seven items (FM1 to FM7) that represented emotional relationship, escapism, social interaction, performance quality, cultural interest, and sense of belonging, as well as travel motivation. Part C measured a dependent variable (fan experience) using 10 items (FE1-FE10) based on event management, value of money, memorability, safety, facilities, destination image, and tourism experiences. All measurements employed a five-point Likert scale that included strongly disagree and strongly agree. Content validity of the measurement items was ensured by relevance to prior research on event tourism and fan experience.

Table 1: Structure Questionnaire

PART	ITEMS NAME	LABEL	SOURCES
PART B: FAN MOTIVATION	FM1	I attend concerts to feel connected to my favourite K-pop artist.	Adopt: (Ayuningtyas et al., 2024)
	FM2	I attend K-pop concerts to escape from my daily routines.	Adapt: (Jenol & Pazil, 2020)
	FM3	I enjoy sharing concert experiences with other fans.	Adapt: (Nabila & Tresna, 2024)
	FM4	I am motivated to attend concerts because of the high-quality performances.	Adapt: (Lee et al., 2023)
	FM5	I am motivated to attend concerts to learn more about Korean culture.	Adopt: (Lee et al., 2023)
	FM6	I feel a strong sense of belonging when I support my favourite artist.	Adopt: (Ayuningtyas et al., 2024)
	FM7	I am encouraged by K-pop concerts to travel to new places.	Adapt: (Lee et al., 2023)
PART	ITEMS NAME	LABEL	SOURCES
PART C: FAN EXPERIENCE	FE1	The concert was well-managed and organised.	Adopt: (Lee et al., 2023)
	FE2	The concert was worth the money.	Adapt: (Lee et al., 2023)

FE3	The concert left me with pleasant memories.	Adopt: (Ayuningtyas et al., 2024)
FE4	The crowd control was satisfactory.	Adapt: (Purwantari, 2024)
FE5	The seating arrangement was satisfactory.	Adapt: (Purwantari, 2024)
FE6	The concert staff ensured the audience's safety throughout the event.	Adapt: (Purwantari, 2024)
FE7	The facilities at the concert venue met my expectations.	Adapt: (Dewi et al., 2024)
FE8	The concert encouraged visitors to visit nearby tourist attractions.	Adapt: (Lee et al., 2023)
FE9	The K-pop concert enhanced the host city's image as a tourism destination.	Adapt: (Lee et al., 2023)
FE10	The concert travel experience motivated exploration of other destinations.	Adapt: (Lee et al., 2023)

The data obtained were analysed using SPSS. To determine the internal consistency of the measurement scales, a reliability analysis was done. The impact of fans' motivation on their experience was then investigated using simple linear regression. Statistical significance was determined at the $p < 0.05$ level.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability Analysis

The reliability analysis used Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement items for fan motivation and fan experience. Alpha values exceeding 0.70 are considered acceptable levels of reliability for Likert-type scales (Hair et al., 2019). As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the findings reveal that the fan motivation construct (7 items) scored a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.852, which is considered good. In contrast, the fan experience construct (10 items) obtained a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.928, meaning excellent reliability. These results affirm that all the measurement items are consistent and reliable and can therefore be used in the future to infer and form the relationship between fan motivation and fan experience in K-pop concert tourism.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.852	7

Figure 1: Reliability Test for Fan Motivation (Independent Variable)

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.928	10

Figure 2: Reliability Test for Fan Experience (Dependent Variable)

4.2 Demographic Profile

As shown in Table 2, most respondents (83.2%) reported being active K-pop fans, indicating high levels of activity within fan communities (fan clubs and online platforms). Regarding concert attendance, most respondents attended one to two K-pop concerts (45.3%), followed by three to five concerts (31.5%), suggesting moderate but regular attendance at live K-pop performances.

In terms of favourite K-pop artists, SEVENTEEN was the most desired group (29.5%), followed by NCT (18.1%) and EXO (9.7%), although a significant number of respondents (23.6%) also liked other K-pop artists. Funding-wise, over half of the respondents (54.7%) said they saved specifically for a concert, while only 33.9% used regular income or allowances, indicating a considerable financial investment in attending concerts.

Table 2: Demographic Profile

Demographic	Questions Items	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Are you identified as an active K-pop fan (e.g., member of fan clubs, online communities, fan pages)?	Yes	248	83.2
	No	50	16.8
	Total	298	100
How many K-pop concerts have you attended (in any country)?	1-2	135	45.3
	3-5	94	31.5
	6-10	33	11.1
	More than 10	36	12.1
	Total	298	100
What is your favourite K-pop group or artist?	BLACPINK	8	2.7
	SEVENTEEN	88	29.5
	TWICE	13	4.4
	DAY6	14	4.7
	STRAY KIDS	4	1.3
	EXO	29	9.7
	NCT	54	18.1
	TREASURE	18	6
	Other	62	23.6
	Total	298	100
How do you usually fund your concert attendance?	I save money specifically for concerts.	163	54.7
	I use my regular income or allowance.	101	33.9
	I received it as a gift or sponsorship (e.g., from parents, friends, or a fan club giveaway)	27	9.1
	Other	7	2.3
	Total	298	100
Gender	Female	279	93.6
	Male	19	6.4
	Total	298	100
Age	18-28 (Gen Z)	244	81.9
	29-44 (Gen Y)	52	17.4
	45-60 (Gen X)	2	0.7
	Total	298	100

Nationality	Malaysian	290	97.3
	Non-Malaysian	8	2.7
	Total	298	100
Level of education	High school	31	10.4
	Diploma	55	18.5
	Bachelor’s degree	199	66.8
	Master’s degree	9	3
	PhD	2	0.7
	Other	2	0.6
	Total	298	100
Occupation	Student	131	44
	Office worker	98	32.9
	Professional	38	12.8
	Self-employed	19	6.4
	Other	12	3.9
		Total	298

Most of the sample consisted of females (93.6%). It was dominated by individuals aged 18-28 (81.9%), suggesting that K-pop concert tourism is especially trendy among members of Generation Z. The majority of respondents were Malaysian (97.3%). Most of them had a bachelor's degree (66.8%). Students were the largest occupational group (44.0%), followed by office workers (32.9%), indicating high individual engagement among

young adults and early-career people in K-pop concert tourism.

4.3 Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Fan Motivation on Fan Experience

This section presents the results of the simple linear regression analysis (refer to Figures 3, 4, and 5) examining the effect of fan motivation on fan experience in K-pop concert tourism in Malaysia

Model Summary^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.707 ^a	.499	.497	4.94929
a. Predictors: (Constant), TOTALB				
b. Dependent Variable: TOTALC				

Figure 3: Model Summary

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7226.106	1	7226.106	294.998	<.001 ^b
	Residual	7250.662	296	24.495		
	Total	14476.768	297			

a. Dependent Variable: TOTALC
 b. Predictors: (Constant), TOTALB

Figure 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7226.106	1	7226.106	294.998	<.001 ^b
	Residual	7250.662	296	24.495		
	Total	14476.768	297			

a. Dependent Variable: TOTALC
 b. Predictors: (Constant), TOTALB

Figure 5: Coefficients (Effect of Fan Motivation on Fan Experience)

The analysis used simple linear regression to test the hypothesis that fan motivation has a significant effect on fan experience in K-pop concert tourism in Malaysia, in line with this study's research question. Fan experience was considered the dependent variable, and fan motivation the independent variable. The findings give a strong, positive association between fan motivation and fan experience ($R = 0.707$). The coefficient of determination indicates that fan motivation explains 49.9 per cent of the variance in fan experience ($R^2 = 0.499$), suggesting it can be an important explanatory variable in determining concert experience among K-pop fans.

The regression model was declared statistically relevant, indicating that fan motivation is a significant predictor of fan experience ($p < 0.001$). The regression coefficients also support this relationship through analysis. According to Table 4.9, fan motivation positively influences fan experience to a significant degree ($B = 1.033, 0.707, t = 17.175, p < 0.001$). This means that for every additional unit of fan motivation, the fan experience increases by an average of 1.033 units. In general, the results are strong empirical indicators that the

motivation of fans significantly affects the fan experience within the framework of K-pop concert tourism in Malaysia, thereby answering the research question and supporting the suggested relationship in this study.

5.0 DISCUSSION

This paper sought to analyse how far fan motivation can affect the fan experience in K-pop concert tourism in Malaysia. The results based on the S-O-R school of thought provide strong empirical support for the hypothesis that fan motivation (organism) influences fans' experience (response). Based on the simple linear regression analysis, the effect of fan motivation on fan experience is substantial and statistically significant ($R = 0.707, R^2 = 0.499, p < 0.001$). This suggests that K-pop fan motivation among Malaysians, especially, accounts for almost half of the variance in the fan experience, making it a significant psychological mechanism that influences fans' perceptions and evaluations of concerts. Emotionally engaged idol fans, socially bonded fans, and those who are highly driven by performance quality and escapism report more favourable, enjoyable, and salient concert experiences. The findings aligned with the S-O-R

theory, which posits that internal organismic conditions are crucial in converting external stimuli into experiential outcomes (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Within the framework of K-pop concert tourism, concert stimuli, live performances, stage effects, and crowd atmosphere trigger fans' internal motivational states, which subsequently influence their overall experience. Such a mechanism is also supported by the high regression coefficient ($B = 1.033$), which indicates that the greater the motivation, the stronger the experiential reactions of concert attendees.

The results indicate that the concert experience among K-pop fans is strongly shaped by who the fans are and what motivates them. The dominance of female, Generation Z, and early-career respondents suggests a group that is emotionally expressive, digitally connected, and deeply immersed in fandom culture. For this cohort, K-pop concerts function as meaningful social and emotional events rather than passive entertainment. The strong positive relationship between fan motivation and fan experience shows that highly motivated fans are more likely to perceive concerts as immersive, memorable, and emotionally rewarding.

Motivations such as idol attachment, fandom identity, and social connection heighten anticipation and engagement during the event. The high explanatory power of fan motivation further confirms that internal psychological drivers play a central role in shaping concert experiences, particularly among young audiences. The findings also align with prior empirical research on music and event tourism. Ayuni and Dewi (2023) found that emotionally and socially driven fans expressed greater satisfaction and pleasure during concerts. Besides, Morante et al. (2025) found that emotional attachment and fandom affiliation were key factors in positive concert experiences. On the same note, Lee et al. (2023) noted that concerts are experiential products in tourism, where motivation can enhance not only pleasure but also perceptions of destinations.

The current research builds on these results and examines the explanatory value of fan motivation in a Malaysian case of K-pop concert tourism. Generally, the results affirm that fan motivation is a decisive factor in determining the fan experience and justify the relevance of the S-O-R framework in elaborating on experiential outcomes in K-pop concert tourism. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on music tourism by showing that motivation is a

strong predictor of tourism and provides valuable evidence that psychological processes play a significant role in the formation of meaningful and immersive concert experiences in Malaysia.

Importantly, this research will be an addition to the emerging body of empirical research on music tourism, as it seeks to explore the psychological role of fan motivation in music concert experience in the Malaysian setting. Although some past research has been mostly related to bigger K-pop destinations (like South Korea and Japan), very little empirical research has examined how fan motivation influences experience results in smaller concert tourism destinations in Southeast Asia (Jenol and Pazil, 2020; Lee et al., 2023). The results thus supplement the literature by showing that fan motivation is a significant psychological process that has shaped fan experience among the Malaysian K-pop concertgoers. This understanding enhances the relevance of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model in modeling the experiential reactions in a modern music tourism environment (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974).

6.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper examines how fan motivation affects the fan experience in K-pop concert tourism in Malaysia, using the S-O-R framework. The findings give a strong empirical support that fan motivation is a strong and positive predictor of fan experience among K-pop concertgoers in Malaysia. The findings also show that emotionally, socially, and performance-oriented fans are more likely to experience concerts as fun, worthwhile, and memorable tourism experiences. Since fan motivation accounts for almost half of the variance in fan experience, the research confirms its role as an important psychological process that influences outcomes in concert-based tourism.

Theoretically, this research paper contributes to the literature on music and event tourism by extending the S-O-R model to K-pop concert tourism in a Malaysian setting. Although many prior studies have focused on either motivation or satisfaction in a single study, this study empirically depicts the organismic nature of fan motivation in the process of transforming concert stimuli into experiential reactions. The results support the notion that key internal motivation states determine the transformation of concerts into both entertainment events and experience tourism products.

Regarding practical implications, the findings indicate that concert organisers and other tourism sector stakeholders should focus on mechanisms that boost fans' motivation to enhance overall concert experiences. The focus on high-quality performances, valuable artist-fan interaction, effective event management, and possibilities of social interaction among fans can substantially increase the perceived value of concerts. By incorporating destination-related factors, such as the proximity of attractions and city branding, into concert planning, concert organisers can increase experiential reactions and facilitate repeat attendance among fans, thereby further boosting the development of concert tourism in Malaysia.

On the whole, the paper outlines the significance of researching fan motivation as an engine of experiential outcomes in K-pop concert tourism in Malaysia. By cross-linking event design and tourism planning with fans' motivational requirements, stakeholders can develop more in-depth, fulfilling, and sustainable experiences in concert tourism, further consolidating Malaysia's position as a competitive destination in the international music tourism sector. This study

empirically demonstrates that fan motivation is a central driver of K-pop concert experiences among Malaysian audiences.

This study has a number of limitations despite its contributions. Convenience sampling could also restrict the extrapolation of the results to the entire population of K-pop concert-goers. Moreover, the research uses simple linear regression to investigate the correlation between fan motivation and fan experience. Future studies can further develop this model by applying structural equation modelling (SEM) to test more complicated associations like mediating or moderating relationships among psychological and experiential elements of concert tourism.

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Exploring the Relationship Between Last-Mile Connectivity and Visit Intention Among Rail Tourists

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Abstract– This study examines the relationship between last-mile connectivity and visit intention among rail tourists by investigating the significance of transport accessibility in influencing tourists' awareness and intention to visit nearby attractions around Electric Train Service (ETS) railway stations in Malaysia. A quantitative research design was employed using a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms to ETS passengers aged 18 years and above. The questionnaire consisted of six-point Likert-scale items and open-ended questions to capture respondents' perceptions and experiences regarding transport accessibility and attraction visibility. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics in IBM SPSS Statistics version 27, while content analysis was applied to the open-ended responses to identify common themes. The findings indicate that respondents generally agree that convenient and clearly available transport options, including feeder services, e-hailing availability, and clear route information, contribute to greater awareness of nearby attractions and increase tourists' intention to explore areas beyond the railway station. However, the study is limited to selected ETS stations in Peninsular Malaysia and relies on self-reported perceptions, which may not fully represent actual visitation behaviour. Despite these limitations, the study provides useful insights for railway operators and tourism stakeholders by highlighting the importance of improving last-mile connectivity and transport information visibility to strengthen the role of ETS stations as effective tourism gateways in Malaysia.

Keywords: Intention to visit; Railway tourism; Transport accessibility; Tourist awareness; Intention to visit; Electric Train Services

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Railway tourism has emerged as one of the most rapidly expanding segments of transport-based tourism, largely influenced by travellers' growing interest in scenic journeys, travel convenience, and environmentally sustainable transport modes. In Malaysia, the development of railway transportation dates back to the late nineteenth century, beginning with the construction of the first railway line in 1885, linking Taiping and Port Weld to support the tin mining industry.

Since then, the railway system has progressively expanded throughout Peninsular Malaysia, connecting major towns and playing a significant role in facilitating trade, mobility, and socio-economic development (Masirin et al., 2017). Ongoing improvements to the rail network culminated in the introduction of the Electric Train Service (ETS) in 2010, a major advancement in domestic rail transport. The ETS reflects increasing demand for faster, safer, and more reliable intercity travel, linking key tourism destinations such as Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Butterworth, and Padang Besar. The steady growth in passenger numbers further indicates a strong preference for modern railway travel.

However, the arrival of a passenger at an ETS station does not automatically translate into a visit to local attractions. While the ETS successfully bridges the distance between major hubs, the "last-mile" connectivity, the final journey from the station to a specific tourist site, remains a critical factor. Research suggests that, even when a destination is close, its perceived accessibility depends heavily on the availability of secondary transport options upon arrival. According to Jamei et al. (2022), perceived accessibility is

fundamentally driven by 'trip coordination,' which refers to how seamlessly different segments of a journey, such as the transition from an ETS train to a local shuttle are integrated. When these segments are well coordinated, they reduce travel uncertainty, thereby making attractions feel more reachable to tourists.

Moreover, the visibility of transport services at railway stations functions beyond basic mobility, acting as an important informational signal for tourists. Public transport is an essential element of the tourism industry, as it enables tourists to move easily within a destination and access attractions and tourism facilities (Truong & Shimizu, 2017, cited in Akhuan et al., 2024). For many rail tourists, the sight of dedicated shuttles, prominent e-hailing pick-up points, or local transit maps serves as on-site promotion. When these options are absent or unclear, a "knowledge gap" is created. Tourists may be aware of the city they have arrived in, but remain largely unaware of specific nearby attractions simply because they cannot visualise a seamless way to reach them. Consequently, there is a need to explore how the immediate environment of the ETS station, specifically the availability and visibility of transport, shapes a tourist's awareness of local attraction spots and ultimately influences their intention to step off the platform and into the local tourism economy.

The objective of this study is to explore the relationship among transport accessibility, tourist awareness and intention to visit nearby attractions around ETS stations. This study aims to determine whether transport accessibility to attractions increases tourists' awareness and intention to visit when clear transportation options are provided. The findings have suggested ways to improve the current transportation options.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies indicate that the availability of transport options upon arrival at a destination, whether by train or other modes, helps tourists visualise nearby attractions and enhances their awareness of them. Samková and Navrátil (2023) emphasise that public transport systems are essential to tourism development, as they facilitate visitor mobility and improve access to attractions within a destination. In this context, the presence of clear, visible transportation options implicitly signals to visitors that attractions are nearby and provides practical guidance on how to reach them using available transport services. Furthermore, the

availability of multiple, easily accessible transport modes helps tourists navigate unfamiliar urban environments and increases their confidence when exploring new destinations (Vovk et al., 2024). From this, it can be seen that the availability of existing and planned transport services is essential in enhancing the visibility of attractions and increasing tourists' awareness.

2.1 Tourist Awareness

Recent tourism studies highlight the importance of transport accessibility in shaping tourists' awareness of a destination and influencing their behavioural intentions. Transport accessibility allows them to travel conveniently between transportation hubs and nearby attractions, which can significantly affect their willingness to explore a destination. According to Milman and Pizam (1995, as cited in Ervina & Octaviany, 2022), destination awareness refers to whether individuals have heard about a tourist destination or which destination first comes to mind when planning a trip. Therefore, when tourists perceive that attraction are easily accessible from transport nodes, they are more likely to include these places in their travel plans.

2.2 Visit Intention

Transport accessibility is an important factor in tourism because tourists rely on available transportation to reach their destinations. When transportation options are readily available, tourists are more likely to develop a stronger intention to visit a destination due to the perceived convenience of travel. So, accessibility that affects tourists is not only destination accessibility but real accessibility which also really needs to be analysed because it can affect the intention to visit tourists if the accessibility standards are met (Apollo, 2017, as cited in Napitupulu et al., 2021). Accessible transportation options such as shuttle services, buses, and ride-hailing services improve tourists' mobility and reduce uncertainty when travelling in unfamiliar environments. As a result, tourists tend to show stronger intention to visit nearby attractions when reliable transport connections are available. In the context of railway tourism, effective last-mile connectivity plays a crucial role in linking railway stations to surrounding attractions, thereby enhancing tourists' awareness and encouraging visitation.

2.3 Destination Image Theory

Destination Image Theory suggests that tourists' perceptions of a destination are shaped by

information encountered before and during travel. Tourists' decision-making processes and behavioural intentions are directly influenced by destination image (Castro et al., 2007, as cited in Khasawneh & Alfandi, 2019). Elements such as transport accessibility and mobility services contribute to the formation of tourists' cognitive image, particularly their awareness of nearby attractions. In railway tourism settings, visible and accessible transport options at stations act as informational cues that help tourists recognise surrounding attractions and understand how to reach them. According to Khasawneh and Alfandi (2019), the conditional dimension of destination image includes factors such as affordable travel and accessibility to the destination and neighbouring countries. This suggests that accessibility plays an important role in shaping a positive destination image. Improved transport accessibility can therefore enhance tourists' awareness of attractions and support their intention to visit these locations, highlighting its significance in shaping destination image formation and tourist engagement.

2.4 Gaps in Existing Research

Although transport accessibility has long been recognised as a critical component of tourism development, much of the existing research has focused on infrastructure provision, spatial connectivity, and technical measurements of accessibility rather than tourists' perceptions and experiences. Coppola et al. (2020) note that accessibility studies often emphasise planning tools and the performance of transport systems, while paying limited attention to how accessibility is perceived and utilised by tourists on the ground. As a result, there remains a gap between accessibility theory and an understanding of how transport availability influences tourists' behavioural engagement with destinations.

Furthermore, the tourism accessibility literature indicates that although accessibility and sustainable tourism have gained increasing scholarly attention, the direct relationship between transport availability and specific tourist outcomes, such as awareness of attractions and intention to visit, remains underexplored. Korbiel et al. (2025) argue that more empirical research is needed to understand how accessibility influences tourists' behaviour and decision-making processes. In particular, limited studies have examined whether tourists value the availability of transport options to nearby attractions and how such availability shapes their awareness and willingness to explore

destinations, especially within railway tourism contexts.

This gap highlights the need for studies investigating tourists' perceptions of transport options at arrival points and their role in enhancing awareness and the intention to visit nearby attractions.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This study aims to explore how transport accessibility to attractions, particularly when transportation options are clearly provided, relates to tourists' awareness and intention to visit. To achieve this objective, a quantitative research design is adopted using survey data that include both structured and open-ended questions. Descriptive analysis is applied to the survey items, while content analysis is used to analyse open-ended responses to explore suggestions related to transport options.

3.2 Population

The study population consists of ETS passengers aged 18 years and above, including both Malaysian and non-Malaysian tourists who have used ETS services at least once. This population is selected because individuals with first-hand experience of the ETS journey and station environment are best positioned to evaluate transport accessibility and its influence on their awareness and intention to visit nearby attractions. Previous research highlights that transport services are experienced directly within the physical environment and that understanding user perception requires capturing customers' actual journey experiences rather than hypothetical evaluations (Van Hagen & Bron, 2014). As ETS passengers interact with station facilities, signage, and available transport options during their journey, their responses provide more accurate and meaningful insights into how transport accessibility at ETS stations shapes tourist awareness and behavioural intention.

3.3 Sampling

This study employs convenience sampling to select respondents who are easily accessible and willing to participate in the study. The target respondents are ETS passengers aged 18 or older who have experience using ETS services. Convenience sampling is appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect data efficiently from passengers who are available at the time of the survey distribution. These respondents are able to

Table 1 Research Instrument Items

Aspects/Item	Item Wording	Source (Adopted/Adapted)
Transport Accessibility Factors	Easy access to transportation increases my intention to visit nearby attractions.	Zolotarev et al. (2023) Samková and Navrátil (2023) Iamtrakul et al. (2025a)
	Convenient transport options at the station increase my awareness of nearby attractions.	
	When transport options are easily available, I am more likely to notice attractions around the station.	
	Knowing that transport is accessible makes me more interested in visiting nearby attractions.	
	Open-ended: 27. What could be improved about the transport options to make it easier for you to get to nearby attractions?	

Responses to the Likert-scale items were measured using a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). The six-point scale was deliberately selected to avoid a neutral response option and to encourage respondents to express a clear level of agreement or disagreement. This approach helps improve response clarity and enhance measurement precision, as removing a neutral midpoint promotes more decisive responses (Nattapong, 2023).

In addition to the Likert-scale items, the questionnaire included open-ended questions to gather tourists' views and perceptions of the visibility of attractions around ETS stations. The use of open-ended questions enables respondents to tell their opinions in their own words, offering more detail and insights through closed-ended questions. This approach is supported by Hansen and Świdarska (2023), who highlight that open-ended question enhance the richness of survey data by uncovering the perceptions and lived experiences. Furthermore, several questionnaire items were adapted and refined from previous studies to ensure alignment with the research objectives and the study's overall focus.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected survey data were processed and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, were conducted to describe the data and to identify key patterns

aligned with the research objectives. Furthermore, content analysis was employed to interpret the open-ended responses and to capture respondents' perspectives on transportation options.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability analysis

For the descriptive analysis, the research instrument's internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. This measure assesses the extent to which the questionnaire items reliably measure the same underlying construct. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 or above is widely accepted as indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Therefore, values exceeding this number suggest that the instrument demonstrates reliability. All items have shown achieved scores above 0.70, with a mean of 0.889 for the questionnaire items. Table 2 summarises the reliability results.

Table 2 Alpha Cronbach Value

Aspects	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Section E- Transport Accessibility Factors	4	0.889

According to the table, the aspect consists of four items. However, it should be noted that the original questionnaire contained five items. The final item in most sections was designed as an open-

ended question and was therefore excluded from the reliability analysis, as Cronbach's Alpha is applicable only to Likert-scale items. The open-ended responses are discussed separately in a later section of this chapter.

4.2 Demographic Profile

As shown in Table 4.1 and supported by the SPSS output, the majority of respondents are female

(71.6%), while male respondents account for 28.4%. Most respondents fall within the 18–28 age group (62.7%), followed by those aged 29–44 (24.5%), indicating that ETS services are particularly popular among students and young professionals. The sample is predominantly Malaysian (96.1%), with most respondents being occasional travellers (58.3%) or first-time users (35.3%).

Table 3 Demographic Profile

Demographic	Questions Items	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Age	18 – 28	128	62.7
	29 – 44	50	24.5
	45-60	24	11.8
	61-79	2	1.0
	Total	204	100
Gender	Male	58	28.4
	Female	146	71.6
	Total	204	100
Nationality	Malaysian	196	96.1
	Non-Malaysian	8	3.9
	Total	204	100
How often do you travel using the ETS?	First Time	72	35.3
	Occasionally	119	58.3
	Weekly	0	0.0
	Monthly	13	6.4
	Total	204	100
What is the main purpose of your travel using ETS?	Travelling	108	52.9
	Business (work)	13	6.4
	Visiting Family or Friends	40	19.6
	Study (Education)	43	21.1
	Total	204	100
Which ETS station is your usual drop-off point?	Kuala Lumpur (KL Sentral)	66	32.4
	Gemas	20	9.8
	Ipoh	42	20.6
	Butterworth	41	20.1
	Padang Besar	35	17.2
	Total	204	100

Why did you choose ETS as your mode of transportation?	It is comfortable and convenient to travel by train.	154	75.5
	Travel time is faster than with other transport modes.	160	78.4
	The ticket price is affordable.	63	30.9
	ETS stations are easily accessible from my location.	92	45.1
	It offers safety and reliability.	110	90
	I prefer ETS because of its clean and modern facilities.	90	44.1
	It is an environmentally friendly way to travel.	115	56.4
	Recommended by family or friends.	64	31.4

Leisure travel is the most common purpose of travel (52.9%), followed by study or education (21.1%) and visiting family or friends (19.6%). Major destinations reported include Kuala Lumpur/KL Sentral, Ipoh, and Butterworth, reflecting the ETS's role in connecting key urban centres. When selecting ETS, respondents most frequently cited time efficiency (78.4%), comfort and convenience (75.5%), and safety and reliability (53.9%). In contrast, ticket affordability was the least influential factor (30.9%), suggesting that passengers prioritise speed and comfort over cost when choosing ETS services.

4.3 Analysis of Transport Accessibility

The descriptive analysis in this study examines respondents' perceptions of the availability, convenience, and ease of access to transport options from ETS stations to nearby tourism attractions. It also explores how transport accessibility aligns with tourists' awareness of surrounding attractions and their intention to visit these attractions. The results for this aspect are presented using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, as summarised in Table 4.

Table 4 Mean and Standard Deviation

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Easy access to transportation increases my intention to visit nearby attractions.	4.96	0.853
Convenient transport options at the station increase my awareness of nearby attractions.	5.16	0.811
When transport options are easily available, I am more likely to notice attractions around the station.	4.81	0.923
Knowing that transport is accessible makes me more interested in visiting nearby attractions.	5.06	0.921

Note: 6 points Likert's scale, ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Slightly Disagree, 4=Slightly Agree, 5=Agree, 6=Strongly Agree

The findings for transport accessibility factors indicate a very high level of agreement among respondents across all four items, reflecting strong positive perceptions toward the role of transport accessibility in supporting tourist awareness and intention to visit nearby attractions

around ETS stations. All mean scores are above 5.30 on a six-point Likert scale, indicating that respondents generally agree or strongly agree with the statements about transport accessibility. The statement "Easy transport access increases my intention to travel to nearby attractions" recorded

the highest mean score ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 0.796$). This result indicates that respondents strongly perceive ease of transport access as an important consideration that encourages them to visit attractions located near ETS stations. The relatively low standard deviation suggests a high level of consistency in respondents' views.

Similarly, the item related to convenient transport options at the station, increasing awareness of nearby attractions, recorded a high mean score ($M = 5.34$, $SD = 0.817$). This suggests that respondents agree that convenient transport services increase their awareness of attractions around the station. The moderate standard deviation indicates that while most respondents share this perception, there is a slight variation in individual responses.

4.4 Open-Ended Responses

The open-ended questions were analysed using a content analysis approach to identify recurring patterns in respondents' suggestions and perceptions regarding the visibility of tourism attractions near ETS railway stations. The analysis revealed themes related to transport accessibility, which together influence tourist awareness and intention to visit the attractions.

4.4.1 Transport Accessibility and Ease of Movement

Transport accessibility emerged as a key theme shaping visitors' awareness of and interest in nearby attractions. A total of 58 respondents (28.4%) proposed improvements to feeder transport services, e-hailing availability, clearer route information, and increased public transport frequency. This finding suggests that more than one-quarter of respondents view transport accessibility as an important factor in accessing nearby attractions. The responses further indicate that when transport options are perceived as convenient and easily accessible, nearby attractions are seen as more attainable, thereby enhancing visitors' awareness and their inclination to explore areas beyond the station vicinity.

Several respondents provided specific suggestions to "improve transport accessibility, such as offering clearer wayfinding to buses and taxis, more frequent and reliable feeder services, safer and better-lit walking routes, smoother integration with e-hailing services, and affordable last-mile options such as shuttle vans or bicycle rentals." Others also emphasised the need for more frequent public transport options, clearer routes,

and easily accessible e-hailing services to facilitate travel to nearby attractions. In addition, respondents highlighted the importance of "improving bus services and strengthening collaboration with e-hailing companies to promote attractions near ETS stations." Overall, these responses indicate that visitors agree that transport accessibility is an important factor influencing both their awareness of nearby attractions and their decision to visit them.

5.0 DISCUSSIONS

Transport accessibility emerged as one of the most influential factors shaping tourists' awareness of and intention to visit attractions located near ETS railway stations. The findings suggest that when transport connections are perceived as easy, clear, and convenient, nearby attractions are viewed as more reachable, reducing psychological and physical barriers to exploration. This reinforces the idea that accessibility does not merely function as a logistical component of travel, but also as an informational and perceptual cue that shapes how tourists interpret the surrounding destination environment.

From a cognitive perspective, accessible transport options such as feeder buses, e-hailing services, and clearly marked routes help tourists visualise how to reach nearby attractions from the station. This visualisation process is important, as tourists are more likely to consider visiting attractions when they can clearly imagine the journey involved. In this sense, transport accessibility supports the cognitive dimension of destination image formation by translating abstract attraction awareness into a practical and achievable travel plan. When such transport options are absent or unclear, attractions may be perceived as distant or difficult to access, even if they are geographically close.

The findings also indicate that transport accessibility influences tourists' intention to visit by reducing perceived travel effort and uncertainty. Easy access to transport services increases tourists' confidence, particularly for first-time visitors or those unfamiliar with the area, encouraging them to explore beyond the station area. This suggests that perceived ease of movement and control over travel choices strengthen behavioural intention. In the context of ETS stations, transport accessibility therefore acts as a facilitator that bridges awareness and actual visitation intention.

However, the open-ended responses reveal that despite generally positive perceptions,

shortcomings in transport accessibility remain. Some respondents highlighted limited feeder transport services, unclear route information, and insufficient integration between ETS stations and local transport systems. These issues suggest that while transport accessibility plays a supportive role, its effectiveness depends heavily on coordination, visibility, and clarity. Poorly communicated or infrequent transport options may weaken tourists' confidence and reduce the likelihood of visiting nearby attractions, reinforcing the perception of ETS stations as transit points rather than tourism gateways.

Overall, the discussion highlights that transport accessibility is not only a physical infrastructure issue but also a critical component of tourism communication and experience design. Enhancing last-mile connectivity, improving the visibility of transport options within station environments, and integrating transport information with digital platforms could significantly strengthen tourists' awareness and intention to explore surrounding attractions. By addressing these aspects, ETS stations can better function as gateways that encourage tourism dispersion and engagement with nearby destinations, rather than serving solely as nodes for intercity travel.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the findings indicate that transport accessibility plays a crucial role in enhancing tourists' awareness of and intention to visit nearby attractions around ETS stations. Easy and convenient access to feeder transport services, effective last-mile connectivity, and clear transport information at stations encourage tourists to explore surrounding destinations beyond the station area, underscoring the importance of transport

accessibility as a supporting element in railway-based tourism planning.

However, this study is subject to several limitations, including its focus on selected ETS stations along major intercity routes in Peninsular Malaysia and its reliance on questionnaire-based, self-reported perceptions, which may not fully capture actual visitation behaviour or deeper motivational factors. In addition, the predominance of Malaysian respondents may limit the generalisability of the findings to international tourists who may face different awareness and wayfinding challenges.

Future research could address these limitations by incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews, conducting comparative studies across different rail systems (e.g., ETS, MRT, and LRT), applying longitudinal designs to assess changes following transport or any improvements, and including a larger proportion of international tourists. Despite these limitations, this study contributes valuable insights into how transport accessibility shapes tourists' awareness and intention to visit nearby attractions, offering practical implications for KTMB, tourism stakeholders, and station planners seeking to enhance the overall travel and tourism experience at ETS stations.

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Culinary Identity and Intercultural Exchange in Hoi An and Da Nang

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Abstract– The Vietnamese food culture is a rich intercultural crossbreed of tradition, identity, and exchange. In this context, two of the culinary centers of Central Vietnam, Hoi An and Da Nang, are areas of the country that represent specific cultural, historical, and social characteristics, while also adapting to the modern demands of globalization and tourism. This research focuses on the food culture of Hoi An and Da Nang, examining culinary identity through specialty dishes, eating venues, and cultural values, as well as the influence of intercultural exchange on the cuisines of these cities. The qualitative approach involves reviewing the literature, analyzing secondary data, and conducting a case study, which allows for exploring the issue of how local gastronomy is also a cultural heritage and a sustainable tourism development tool. These results indicate the opposite but complementary nature of the tradition-oriented cuisine of Hoi An and the dynamic and modern cuisine of Da Nang. Meanwhile, the research also addresses the issue of commercialization, preserving culture, and environmental sustainability, and presents the solution on how culinary culture can be developed as a sustainable resource in the contemporary setting. The study adds to the wider scope of investigation of Vietnamese culinary culture and contributes to the insights into the way food may be used to facilitate cultural identity, tourism development, and international exchange.

Keywords: Culinary Culture; Da Nang; Destination Image; Hoi An; Tourism Branding.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Culinary tourism in Vietnam has demonstrated significant potential for economic growth and cultural branding. According to the Vietnam National Authority of Tourism (2023), local gastronomy is a key driver of tourist satisfaction and enhances Vietnam's global tourism profile. Within this context, Hoi An and Da Nang serve as representative destinations in Central Vietnam, offering unique yet complementary culinary experiences (Tran & Nguyen, 2018).

Hoi An, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1999, serves as a historical reflection of the cultural exchange between Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, and Western merchants (UNESCO, 2023). This blended heritage is manifest in its iconic cuisine, featuring dishes such as cao lau, mi Quang, and "white rose" dumplings (Avieli, 2013). In contrast, Da Nang offers a contemporary coastal environment characterized by a thriving seafood culture and a rapidly expanding hospitality sector, cementing its status as a premier culinary destination (Danang Fantasticity, 2025).

The gastronomic culture of these two destinations has become central to their tourism identity (Quan & Wang, 2004). Guided food tours, culinary festivals, and street markets have emerged as vital instruments for promoting local culture to both domestic and international travelers (VN News, 2023). However, despite this increased awareness, empirical evidence regarding the direct impact of culinary culture on tourist motivation, satisfaction, and destination branding in Hoi An and Da Nang remains limited (Tran & Nguyen, 2018).

Further research into this relationship is essential to foster sustainable tourism growth and preserve the cultural heritage of Vietnam and other Southeast Asian destinations (Rostow, 1996).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of culinary tourism, as discussed by Cohen and Avieli (2004), provides the theoretical foundation for this study, illustrating how local cuisine functions simultaneously as a pull factor and a potential barrier to the tourist experience (Ellis et al., 2018). This framework emphasizes the pivotal role of local gastronomy in shaping destination image, driving tourist motivation, and facilitating cultural interaction (Park & Widyanta, 2022). Consequently, this lens has been widely applied in tourism scholarship to examine the intricate relationships between culinary practices, perceived authenticity, and overall visitor satisfaction (Bell & Valentine, 1997; Avieli, 2013). Despite the region's cultural diversity and significant tourist appeal, the literature on Central Vietnam—specifically Hoi An and Da Nang—remains relatively under-researched. Current scholars continue to focus disproportionately on the primary hubs of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (Tran, 2000; Avieli, 2013).

Despite their geographical proximity, Hoi An and Da Nang represent distinct yet interdependent gastronomic spheres; while the former is deeply rooted in tradition and heritage, the latter embodies modernity and innovation (Tran & Nguyen, 2018). However, the intersections, boundaries, and mutual influences between these two culinary cultures remain largely unexplored. Existing literature tends to treat them as isolated phenomena—either as a site of preserved heritage (Hoi An) or as a model of urban gastronomic development (Da Nang)—failing to account for the simultaneous impact of intercultural exchange, tourism dynamics, and modernization (Tuong, 2012).

Furthermore, although culinary tourism is a primary driver of regional economic growth, there is a dearth of empirical research examining the negotiation between authenticity and commercialization. Specifically, how local culinary practices adapt to shifts in regional identity and tourist perception remains under-examined (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Ellis et al., 2018). The absence of a comparative, context-sensitive analysis of Hoi An and Da Nang leaves a significant gap in our understanding of how local food cultures evolve under the pressures of globalization and cross-cultural interaction (Hansen et al., 2024).

2.1 Vietnamese culinary culture

Vietnamese cuisine is commonly known as one of the most diversified and culturally enriched cuisines in the world (Avieli, 2011). The culture of Vietnamese cuisine is based on the philosophy of balance: yin and yang, freshness and complexity, not only the consumption of food, but identity, history, and community. Northern parts and their mild tastes, central provinces and their elegance and intensity, and southern areas and their abundance and sweetness, the Vietnamese gastronomy is characterized by geographic variety and cultural pluralism (Khuong & Van Nga, 2018). Central Vietnam, with its time-honored status as an intersection of cultures, has a central place in the national mosaic of Vietnam as far as the general culinary tradition is concerned (VinWonders, 2024).

2.2 In the cultural and tourism map of Central Vietnam

Although food is commonly accepted as one of the most important elements of destination branding and tourist experience (Cohen and Avieli, 2004; Ellis et al., 2018), little empirical investigation is done to explain how the culinary culture mediates the dichotomy between authenticity and commercialization in Central Vietnam. Hoi An and Da Nang are situated in the Quang Nam province and are neighboring the East Sea, and they present a perfect blend of modernity and traditional aspects (Huynh et al., 2020). Hoi An, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is an ancient trading post, where Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, and Western cultures used to meet, leaving impressive traces in the local cuisines (Bui et al., 2020). On the contrary, Da Nang has developed into a contemporary sea city and a major tourist attraction location with millions of national and international tourists visiting it annually (Holladay et al., 2020). The two places have utilized their culinary culture as an asset of cultural representation, economic growth, and tourism branding.

2.3 In both domestic and international contexts

The foodie attraction of Hoi An and Da Nang is not just in their popular foods but also in how these foods are used to show the culture and shared values of the people. The example of cao lau, mi Quang, and Hoi An chicken rice are products of a centuries-long local adaptation and intercultural impact, whereas the reason behind Da Nang's openness, dynamism, and creativity is the culture of seafood and street food (Avieli, 2013). With the ever-growing tourism, the culinary traditions of Hoi An

and Da Nang are increasingly becoming cultural products with a global brand name, and this leads to intercultural discourse as well as raising some issues of sustainability and authenticity.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This research employs a qualitative approach to explore the culinary identity, intercultural exchange, and development of Hoi An and Da Nang within a contemporary context. This methodology facilitates the systematic gathering and analysis of secondary sources, ensuring a comprehensive examination of culinary peculiarities, historical factors, tourism impacts, and modernization trends. The research focuses on the following key areas:

- Regional culinary identity and the distinguishing characteristics of Central Vietnamese cuisine;
- The historical influence of foreign cuisines on local dishes;
- The impact of tourism on culinary heritage and perceived authenticity;
- Strategic approaches to balancing modernization with tradition;
- The adaptation of local food culture to urban and global trends.

The qualitative design ensures that the data gathered is rich, contextualized, and reflective of the complex interplay between culinary practices and cultural perceptions.

3.2 Population and sampling Framework

This research did not involve direct participants; instead, it utilized a secondary data analysis approach, synthesizing structured information and expert insights gathered from various online repositories. These sources included peer-reviewed academic publications, official government tourism portals, and specialized culinary media focusing on the gastronomy of Hoi An and Da Nang. To ensure data integrity and credibility, all information—including specific inquiries and responses retrieved—was systematically cross-referenced and attributed to its original source. By aggregating data from these diverse digital platforms, the study constructs a comprehensive and reliable portrayal of the local culinary landscape.

3.3 Data collection

Data for this study were systematically retrieved from a range of credible digital sources, including peer-reviewed academic articles, official tourism

promotion platforms, and authoritative culinary guides. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. How the distinctive ingredients and techniques (e.g., shrimp paste, chili, local herbs) shape the culinary identity of Hoi An and Da Nang.
2. Historical foreign influences (Chinese, Japanese, French) and their reflections in modern cuisine.
3. Effects of international tourism on the commodification of culinary heritage.
4. Strategies implemented by local authorities and communities to preserve authentic culinary traditions.
5. Adaptation of local food culture to modern lifestyles and global trends (fusion cuisine, delivery apps, cafe culture).

3.4 Instrument

To ensure systematic analysis, the data were organized into a structured matrix comprising the following categories: Question, Response, Key Detail, and Source Reference. This tabular format provides a transparent audit trail for all retrieved information, facilitating a rigorous content analysis of recurring patterns within the culinary cultures of Hoi An and Da Nang.

- Flavor perception and identity markers (spicy/salty taste, herbs, seafood emphasis)
- Recognition of foreign culinary influences (Cao Lầu, Bánh Mì, Com Gà)
- Awareness of tourism-driven commodification of traditional dishes
- Perceptions of modernization and adaptation to urban lifestyles (fusion cuisine, digital ordering, cafe culture)
- Satisfaction with culinary authenticity and quality

The format ensured broad accessibility and convenience for respondents, while standardizing responses for qualitative analysis

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The information was grouped into five research questions and answers that concerned the culinary culture of Central Vietnam and its connection to tourism development in Hoi An and Da Nang. Both themes bring to the fore the influence of historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors on the development of the regional food identity and its contribution to tourism.

Q1: What are the unique products and cooking methods of Central Vietnam, including using Shrimp paste, chili, and Vietnamese herbs, that contribute to the popularity of the specific culinary traditions of Hoi An and Da Nang?

1. Flavor Intensity: Central Vietnamese cuisine is much spicier and saltier than the North, and generally less sweet than the South, which prefers coconut milk and sugar, which forms a strong, more outspoken palate.
2. Fermented Products: Due to the extensive use of fermented shrimp paste (mam) and fish sauce, they give the Northern cooking of the area a distinctive pungency and richness uncommon to everyday cooking elsewhere, forming a regional aroma.
3. Minimal Broth and Noodles: Northern Pho Dishes such as Mi Quang traditionally make use of copious, clear, and complex broths, whereas Central noodle dishes (e.g., Mi Quang) use minimal, concentrated, and concise broth (sauce-like), which is a significant technical distinction.
4. Influence of Local Herbs: The use of fresh herbs, especially those of Tra Que Vegetable Village, is an aspect of the food identity, which gives a fresh, aromatic appearance to the rich and spicy primary ingredients.
5. Coastal Specialization: The coastal position implies the focus on fresh seafood and specialty rice products (banh) manufactured using the local milled grains, as the culinary identity is directly linked with the local immediate geography and environment.

Q2: What are the most significant historical foreign influences (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, French) on the core dishes of Hoi An and Da Nang, and how are these influences currently reflected in the local food scene?

Content analysis of question 1:

1. Japanese & Chinese Noodle Influence: Cao Lầu noodles are a key example, with the process often cited as having Japanese (soba) influence for its unique texture, while the accompanying pork and broth show clear Chinese seasoning techniques. Cao Lầu exemplifies combined Japanese (noodle) and Chinese (pork/broth) techniques.
2. Chinese Diaspora: The Hoi An Chicken Rice (Com Gà) is often linked to the cuisine of the

Chinese diaspora, using methods like poaching the chicken and preparing the rice with chicken fat and turmeric, demonstrating a clear cultural import. Chinese techniques influenced staple dishes like Com Gà.

3. French Colonial Legacy: The French introduction of the baguette is the most enduring mark, leading to the Bánh Mì, a perfect fusion of French bread with local Vietnamese fillings, pate, and herbs. The French baguette led to the iconic Bánh Mì fusion sandwich.
4. Modern Pan-Asian & Western Fusion: The modern Da Nang/Hoi An scene reflects current exchange, with a proliferation of Korean, Japanese, and Western fusion restaurants, directly catering to the major source markets of international tourists. Current fusion restaurants adapt to the tastes of modern tourist markets (Korea, Japan, and the West).
5. Culinary Skills Transfer: The establishment of cooking schools, often run by local chefs, involves the transfer and adaptation of traditional Vietnamese cooking techniques to foreign tourists, promoting cultural exchange through education. Cooking classes facilitate the transfer of local techniques to foreigners.

Q3: To what extent has the rapid growth of international tourism, particularly in Hoi An, led to the commodification or “invention” of culinary heritage, and how does this affect the authentic food consumption of the local community?

Content analysis of question 1:

1. Invented Culinary Heritage: Certain dishes like White Rose dumplings and Cao Lầu have been heavily commodified and simplified by tourist-focused restaurants, leading to a version that is specifically tailored for the tourist palate. Simplification and heavy promotion of a few dishes for tourists.
2. Dual Food Systems: A dual food system exists: one for tourists (restaurants featuring “Local Specialties”) and an “unapproachable” heritage for locals (less-known street stalls, home cooking) who avoid the tourist-centric venues. Locals often eat different dishes in non-tourist-focused venues.
3. Economic Pressure and Displacement: The commercial pressures from tourism have

caused some traditional food sellers to relocate or sell to tourist-facing businesses, sometimes raising ingredient costs for local consumers. Commercial pressure drives up costs and causes the displacement of local vendors.

4. **Tailored Authenticity:** Hosts adapt by providing “tailored authenticity,” which means creating a safe, clean, and comfortable experience for foreign tourists while attempting to maintain the 'look' of traditional dishes. Hosts adapt food preparation for tourist comfort and safety standards.
5. **Income Generation for Communities:** Culinary activities, particularly at sites like the Tra Que Vegetable Village, create stable livelihoods and diversified income for local farmers and residents by integrating agricultural heritage with tourism. Tourism creates direct income for traditional food/agriculture communities.

Q4: What specific strategies are local authorities and communities in Da Nang and Hoi An implementing to balance modernization and the pressure of globalization with the need to preserve authentic culinary traditions and food safety standards?

1. **Tourism Restructuring & Branding:** Da Nang has a long-term plan (e.g., until 2025/2030) to restructure its tourism industry, explicitly branding its cuisine as a unique tourism product to drive economic growth while preserving regional authenticity. Official city plans focus on promoting and preserving cuisine as a unique asset.
2. **Community-Based Heritage Preservation:** Hoi An focuses on developing community-based tourism in suburban areas, like the Tra Que Vegetable Village and Thanh Ha Pottery Village, to preserve both agricultural and food-related craft heritage. Tra Que Village uses tourism to sustain traditional farming and food practices.
3. **Documentation and Digitalization:** There are efforts to digitize and document Hoi An's heritage, which implicitly includes the documentation of traditional recipes and culinary practices to safeguard them against cultural dilution. Digital projects are being used to document heritage, including food culture.
4. **Stakeholder Collaboration for Safety:** Local authorities recognize the need for cooperation

between food producers, chefs, and local enterprises to uphold quality and food safety standards to ensure the sustainability and consumer trust of the culinary product. Local authorities are strengthening networks to ensure food safety and quality.

5. **Culinary Events and Promotion:** The Da Nang Tourism Promotion Centre actively organizes food festivals and competitions and uses modern platforms (YouTube, TikTok) to promote the city's famous dishes, focusing attention on local tradition. Food festivals and digital campaigns promote traditional dishes and local expertise.

Q5: How is the local food culture in Da Nang, a rapidly urbanizing metropolitan area, adapting to modern Vietnamese lifestyles and global food trends (e.g., fusion cuisine, food delivery, coffee culture) while still maintaining its core traditional characteristics?

1. **Coexistence of Food Systems:** The traditional, vibrant street food system exists side by side with the growth of the modern malls, large restaurants, and international franchises, which can provide both the traditional and new global cuisines to the inhabitants of the city.
2. **Fusion Cuisine Acceptance:** The cosmopolitan character of the city permits the fusion cuisine (e.g., modern Vietnamese/Western, or Korean/Japanese-inspired), which represents the preferences of the young and fast-growing urban population and the high concentration of expatriates.
3. **Digital Adaptation:** Traditional dishes and local eateries are increasingly available on food delivery apps, showing how traditional food culture adapts its distribution methods to modern urban lifestyles and convenience demands. Food delivery apps are used to distribute traditional local dishes.
4. **Flourishing Cafe Culture:** The historical French influence on coffee has evolved into a highly dynamic and modern cafe culture, which is a primary social and leisure activity for young Vietnamese professionals in Da Nang. French-influenced coffee culture is now a major modern urban social activity.
5. **Retail Market Diversification:** Rapid urbanization and tourism have created a stronger market for diverse F&B products, including imported items, reflecting a growing

consumer base with exposure to international food trends and higher spending power. Growing demand for imported food and beverage products due to urbanization.

Overall, the findings indicate that:

- The focus on bravery in flavors and fermented elements, and the balance of herbs are the main culinary specifics of Central Vietnam.
- The exchange of cultures in the past has resulted in a stratified cultural identity that is still evident in local cuisine.
- Heritage has been commercialized by tourism, yet it has brought about new sources of income and familiarity around the world.
- Local governments use combined mechanisms of preservation, which combine cultural protection and economic promotion.
- The case of modernization in Da Nang is a case of adaptation with no cultural erasure and shows the strength of the Vietnamese culinary identity against globalization.

5.0 DISCUSSION

The results identify several key themes regarding the culinary identity and tourism development of Hoi An and Da Nang:

- **Distinct Regional Identity:** Central Vietnamese cuisine maintains a formidable identity that distinguishes it from Northern and Southern traditions. This is characterized by a preference for pungent flavors, shrimp paste, fresh aromatics, and highly concentrated broths.
- **Historical Culinary Syncretism:** Cross-cultural influences are deeply embedded in iconic local dishes. This legacy is evident in the Japanese-influenced *cao lau*, Chinese-inspired *com ga*, and the French-influenced *banh mi*. Furthermore, modern tourism continues to introduce new fusion styles into the region.
- **Evolution of the Food Landscape:** Tourism has significantly reshaped the local food culture, leading to the re-engineering of traditional dishes to accommodate international palates. In Hoi An, this has resulted in a bifurcated food system where dedicated tourist-centric offerings co-exist alongside authentic local practices.
- **Institutional Heritage Preservation:** Local authorities are actively safeguarding culinary heritage through policy implementation,

gastronomic festivals, vocational training, and digital documentation, all while strategically promoting tourism growth.

- **Modern Adaptability:** Da Nang demonstrates a high capacity for modern adaptation. While digital delivery platforms, specialty cafes, and international trends are flourishing, they complement rather than displace the city's resilient traditional street food culture.

6.0 CONCLUSION

In summary, the gastronomic cultures of Hoi An and Da Nang function as dynamic systems shaped by tradition, history, geography, and the contemporary pressures of tourism. While the influx of tourism offers significant opportunities for economic growth and internationalization, it simultaneously poses a challenge to the authenticity and sustainability of local culinary practices. These findings underscore a critical need for strategic equilibrium between cultural preservation and modernization. By treating gastronomy as both a cultural heritage and an economic asset, local authorities and communities can develop frameworks that safeguard the identity, quality, and long-term viability of the region's food culture.

This study contributes to the scholarship on Vietnamese culinary heritage by examining the identities of Hoi An and Da Nang through the lens of intercultural exchange and urban transformation. While previous research has often focused narrowly on the historical development of Hoi An or the general role of food in tourism, this paper offers a comparative analysis that reveals how local traditions, migration, trade history, and globalization intersect. By situating food within broader socio-cultural and economic interactions, this research demonstrates that culinary identity is not a static relic, but a continuously negotiated process. This integrated approach provides a deeper understanding of how Central Vietnamese cuisines function as both potent cultural symbols and evolving platforms for global engagement.

7.0 STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study relies predominantly on qualitative secondary data sourced from online publications, reports, and websites; consequently, it may not fully capture the diverse perspectives of all stakeholders. Geographically, the research is confined to Hoi An and Da Nang, and thus the findings may not be generalizable to the broader Vietnamese culinary landscape. Furthermore, as the study did not involve

primary data collection—such as direct interviews, surveys, or field observations—the results should be considered preliminary. Future research should employ mixed-methods approaches, incorporating interviews with chefs, local residents, and tourists to validate and expand upon these findings.

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APPENDICES



Figure 1: *Traditional deconstructed wrap platter in Da Nang. Components include thinly sliced pork belly (protein), green mango (acid), and a variety of regional herbs including banana blossom. This arrangement emphasizes the diner's role in flavor construction.*



Figure 2: *Central-style Bánh Xèo featuring a turmeric-infused rice flour base. The porous, crispy texture is designed to be broken down and wrapped in rice paper, a technique that highlights the region's mastery of rice-based starch products.*



Figure 3: *A comparative display of Kem Bơ (Avocado-Coconut Ice Cream) in Da Nang. This dish exemplifies the regional adaptation of tropical lipids into the dessert palate. The vertical stratification—from the viscous fruit base to the desiccated coconut topping—demonstrates the "textural sequencing" common in Central Vietnamese gastronomy.*



Figure 4: Thick chewy Cao Lầu noodles in Hoi An. Cao Lầu, a signature dish of Hoi An. It is defined by thick, firm noodles treated with local alkaline well-water, served with a concentrated pork reduction and crispy fried dough for textural contrast.

اللغة والسياحة في جنوب شرق آسيا: مقاربة لغوية اجتماعية للخدمات العربية المقدمة للمسافرين المسلمين

Language and Tourism in Southeast Asia: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Arabic Language Services for Muslim Travelers

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المستخلص: هدف هذا البحث إلى بيان العلاقة بين اللغة والسياحة من منظور لغوي اجتماعي، وسعى إلى وصف أبرز التجارب التي ربطت بين اللغة وقطاعات السياحة في دول تستهدف السائح العربي والمسلم، وتتبع أهمية هذا الموضوع من الدور الذي تؤديه اللغة في تحسين تجربة السائح، وتعزيز جاذبية الوجهات السياحية، حيث تمثل اللغة قناة تواصل أساسية تضمن الفهم المتبادل، والاحترام الثقافي، وبناء صورة إيجابية عن الوجهة، وتوصلت نتائج الدراسة أن عددًا من الدول مثل ماليزيا وإندونيسيا قدّمت مبادرات تعليمية وتطبيقات تقنية لدعم اللغة العربية في السياحة، وشملت برامج تدريب مرشدي المساجد، والتعليم المصغر، وبناء مشاهد لغوية متعددة اللغات. كما أظهرت الدراسات أن غياب المحتوى اللغوي في المجال السياحي يضعف جودة التجربة السياحية. يوصي البحث بإجراء دراسات مقارنة لرضا السياح من حيث الخدمات اللغوية، وتطوير أدوات تعليمية رقمية للعاملين في السياحة، وإنشاء معايير دولية لغوية في الوجهات السياحية، بما يساهم في تحقيق سياحة مستدامة تتسم بالتنوع الثقافي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة، السياحة، اللغة العربية لأغراض خاصة، السياحة الإسلامية، المشهد اللغوي، تعليم العربية للسياحة، اللغويات الاجتماعية.

Abstract: This study examines the relationship between language and tourism in Southeast Asia from a sociolinguistic perspective, with particular attention to Arabic-language services provided to Arab and Muslim travellers. Adopting a scoping literature review approach, the study analyses selected scholarship on three interrelated domains: Arabic for tourism purposes, Islamic tourism and language, and linguistic landscape in tourist destinations. The significance of the topic lies in the fact that language is not merely a means of communication, but also a resource for cultural mediation, destination image construction, and the enhancement of the tourist experience. The review shows that countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia have introduced a range of initiatives to support Arabic in tourism, including training programmes for guides and tourism personnel, micro-credential and digital learning models, mobile tourism applications, and multilingual signage in public tourist spaces. The findings also indicate that insufficient linguistic provision, weak translation, and limited multilingual support may reduce the quality of the tourist experience and affect tourists' sense of inclusion and satisfaction. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the reviewed studies further suggest that Arabic in tourism functions not only as a service language, but also as a marker of identity, religious affiliation, and symbolic hospitality in Muslim-friendly destinations. The study recommends further comparative research on tourists' satisfaction with linguistic services, the development of digital Arabic-support tools for tourism workers, and the establishment of clearer multilingual standards in tourist destinations to promote culturally sustainable tourism.

Keywords: Language, Tourism, Arabic for Specific Purposes (ASP), Islamic Tourism, Linguistic Landscape, Arabic for Tourism, Sociolinguistics.

1. مقدمة

صارت السياحة في العصر الحديث أحد أبرز القطاعات الاقتصادية والثقافية عالميًا، ويرتبط نجاح صناعة السياحة ارتباطًا وثيقًا بعنصر التواصل اللغوي؛ فالتفاعل بين السائح والمجتمع المضيف يعتمد على وجود قدر مناسب من التواصل اللغوي الذي يساهم في الفهم المتبادل، ويؤثر في جودة التجربة السياحية والاندماج الثقافي. (Alfurayh, 2025).

استقبلت السياحة الماليزية في الربع الأول من عام 2024م أكثر من سبعة ملايين سائح، بزيادة قدرها 27.5% مقارنةً بالربع الأول من عام 2023م، ووفقًا لتصريح وزير السياحة الماليزية بذلت الحكومة الماليزية جهودًا لجعل ماليزيا وجهةً سياحيةً مفضلةً على المستويين الإقليمي والدولي، من خلال المشاركة في المعارض السياحية الدولية في الصين، والهند، واليابان، وكوريا، والسعودية، والإمارات وغيرها (Tourism Malaysia, 2025) وقد أثمرت هذه الجهود إلى زيادة ملحوظة في أعداد السياح العرب، إذ يشكّلون شريحة مهمة من إجمالي الزوار القادمين إلى البلاد، ويأتي معظمهم من السعودية، ومصر، والعراق، والإمارات العربية المتحدة (Dunia, 2020).

وقد أظهرت الدراسات مثل (Salleh et al., 2013) أن عوامل الاستقطاب الرئيسة للسياح العرب تشمل الأمن والرفاهية وتوافر الخدمات بأسعار مناسبة، ومع ذلك فإن أحد العوامل في تعزيز تجربة السائح هو التواصل الناجح مع مقدمي الخدمات السياحية، سواء في المطار أو الفندق أو أماكن الترفيه، فمستوى التواصل وجودة الخدمة يحددان بدرجة كبيرة مدى رضا السائح واستعداده للعودة مجددًا أو التوصية بماليزيا كوجهة سياحية مميزة.

تناولت دراسات عديدة تأثير اللغة على تجربة السائح، ومدى استجابة الوجهات السياحية لمتطلبات التنوع اللغوي، فثمة أبحاث رصدت مشاهد لغوية متعددة اللغات في المقاصد السياحية تظهر فيها لغات الزوّار بشكل بارز إلى جانب لغة البلد المضيف (Gu & Bhatt, 2024) وأخرى تناولت إعداد الكوادر البشرية وتدريبها لغويًا للتعامل مع السياح مثل تصميم دورات في العربية للعاملين بقطاع السياحة، كما برزت دراسات تُحلل الخطاب السياحي وترجمته بين اللغات، وأطلقت بعض الدول ذات الأغلبية المسلمة مفهوم "السياحة الإسلامية (الحلال)" الذي يعنى بتوفير منتجات وخدمات سياحية متوافقة مع الثقافة الإسلامية.

تسعى هذه المقالة إلى تقديم قراءة وصفية لأبرز الدراسات اللغوية الاجتماعية ودراسات تعليم العربية لأغراض سياحية، وذلك للخروج بصورة أولية حول واقع التداخل بين اللغة وقطاع السياحة، وأهم النتائج والتحديات.

2. مشكلة البحث

تحدد مشكلة البحث في قصور فهم العلاقة بين اللغة والسياحة وإدارتها في المجالات التي تكون اللغة فيها دور جوهري في نجاح التجربة السياحية، فعلى الرغم من الإدراك العام لأهمية التواصل اللغوي مع السياح، إلا أن هناك دراسات أشارت إلى وجود فجوة بين حاجات القطاع السياحي وبين جاهزية البنية اللغوية فيه، وعلى الرغم من النمو الملحوظ في أعداد الزوار العرب فإنه لم يكن هناك مقررات دراسية، أو برامج تدريبية تعنى بتعليم اللغة العربية ضمن برامج السياحة، مما اضطرت وزارة السياحة الماليزية إلى إطلاق برنامج خاصة تطلب طلابًا ناطقين بالعربية للعمل في الفنادق لسد النقص في الموظفين القادرين على التواصل مع الضيوف العرب.

ومن منظور لغوي اجتماعي، تبرز المشكلة كذلك في أن الحواجز اللغوية قد تحد من تعظيم الاستفادة من النمو السياحي في المملكة العربية السعودية؛ فمع أن المملكة تجاوزت الهدف الأولي المتمثل في استقطاب 100 مليون زائر، وأصبحت تستهدف 150 مليون زائر بحلول عام 2030، فإن الأدبيات تشير إلى استمرار الحاجة إلى تعزيز الجاهزية اللغوية في القطاع السياحي، ولا سيما في التواصل مع السياح الدوليين. وقد بينت بعض الدراسات أن مهارات التواصل بالإنجليزية تمثل حاجة أساسية للعاملين في السياحة السعودية، كما أن التحديات اللغوية والتقنية ما تزال تؤثر في فاعلية الترجمة والدعم اللغوي في السياحة؛ (Alsaawi, 2022; Al-Malki et al., 2022; Saudi Tourism Authority, 2025; Alfurayh, 2025).

ويمكن بلورة مشكلة البحث في السؤال التالي: كيف تناولت الدراسات السابقة العلاقة بين اللغة العربية والسياحة، وما أهم ما تكشف عنها من نقاط قوة أو قصور في تجارب التكامل اللغوي في المجال السياحي؟ وينبثق عن هذا السؤال الرئيس عدد من التساؤلات الفرعية، ما هي أبرز الجهود لتعليم العربية لأغراض سياحية؟ وكيف تبدو المشاهد اللغوية في المقاصد السياحية التي تستهدف العرب والمسلمين؟ وإلى أي مدى نجحت مبادرات السياحة الإسلامية في معالجة الجانب اللغوي؟

3. أهداف الدراسة

1. وصف وتحليل الدراسات السابقة التي تناولت موضوع اللغة والسياحة، مع التركيز على: (أ) العربية لأغراض سياحية، (ب) السياحة الإسلامية واللغة، (ج) المشهد اللغوي في الوجهات السياحية.
2. تقييم التجارب التطبيقية لتعليم اللغة العربية لأغراض سياحية ولتوظيف التقانة اللغوية في دعم القطاع السياحي.
3. اقتراح توجهات بحثية مستقبلية بناءً على الفجوات المعرفية التي تكشفها قراءة الدراسات السابقة، وبما يدعم تطوير سياسات ومبادرات أكثر كفاءة في مجال السياحة اللغوية.

4. منهج البحث

اعتمد هذا المقال على المراجعة الوصفية للدراسات السابقة؛ كونها الأنسب لهذا البحث، حيث تهدف المقالة إلى تحديد المفاهيم الرئيسية والفرعية، فالدراسة تسعى إلى تتبع تناول العلاقة بين اللغة والسياحة في البحوث السابقة، مع التركيز على المقاربة اللغوية الاجتماعية، وتعليم العربية لأغراض سياحية، والسياحة الإسلامية، والمشهد اللغوي في الوجهات السياحية. وقد جرى جمع الدراسات من خلال الرجوع إلى قواعد بيانات ومصادر علمية ذات صلة، مثل Google Scholar، وبعد ذلك صنفت الدراسات المقبولة ضمن محاور موضوعية تمهيداً لتحليلها تحليلاً نوعياً؛ بغرض إبراز الاتجاهات العامة، وأوجه الاتفاق والاختلاف، وما تكشف عنه الأدبيات من ثغرات بحثية في العلاقة بين اللغة والسياحة، (Munn et al., 2018).

4.1 أولاً: تعليم اللغة العربية لأغراض سياحية وحاجات القطاع السياحي

حظي مجال تعليم اللغة العربية لأغراض سياحية باهتمام متزايد خلال العقد الأخيرين، وهذا الاهتمام كان منصباً نحو تحليل الحاجات اللغوية وتطوير برنامج تدريبي للعاملين في القطاع السياحي التي استقصت الحاجة إلى دورات لغة عربية متخصصة للسياحة في ماليزيا، وخلصت هذه الدراسات إلى وجود طلب متصاعد على المهارات اللغوية العربية بين مرشدي السياح والموظفين في المرافق السياحية الماليزية، وفي ظل تزايد أعداد الزوّار العرب، أوصت بتصميم برامج تدريبية تلبّي الحاجات

هدفت دراسة Yunus et al. (2025) إلى بناء تصور لتطبيق التدريس المصغّر (Micro-credential) في دورات اللغة العربية لقطاع السياحة، بحيث تُقدّم وحدات تعليمية قصيرة المدى ومرنة تستهدف مهارات محددة يحتاجها العاملون في المجال .

وهدفت دراسة (Wahyuni & Novra, 2022) إلى إعادة توجيه منهج تعليم العربية باستخدام المدخل التكامل في تدريس اللغة (Whole Language Approach) للطلاب تخصص السياحة، حيث ركزت هذه المقاربة على تعليم اللغة في سياقاتها الشمولية الطبيعية، وقد أظهرت نتائجهم تحسناً في تفاعل الطلاب وفهمهم للمواد السياحية عند اعتماد المدخل التكامل، وطرحت بحوث حديثة نماذج تعليمية تقوم على التقانة والتعلم الذاتي؛ منها تجربة التعلم المصغّر التي قدّمها Jaffar et al (2024) في تدريب مجموعات المجتمعات المحلية في "القرى السياحية" بإندونيسيا على اللغة العربية، واعتمدت التجربة على تطوير مواد تعليمية رقمية قصيرة وبسيطة يمكن لأفراد المجتمع تعلمها عبر هواتفهم الذكية، مما ساعد على رفع مستوى الوعي اللغوي لدى العاملين بالقطاع السياحي، وأكدت النتائج أن التعلم المصغّر أدى إلى اكتسابهم عبارات عربية أساسية لاستقبال السياح والتفاعل معهم.

وهدفت دراسة Ghani et al (2016) إلى فاعلية توظيف مواقع الإنترنت كوسيلة مساعدة لتعليم اللغة للعاملين في السياحة، واحتوى البرنامج دروساً وتمارين تفاعلية باللغتين الماليزية والعربية، بحيث يمارس المتعلمون مواقف سياحية افتراضية كحجز فندق أو استقبال مسافر، وأظهر التقييم الميداني تحسناً ملحوظاً في مهارات المتدربين التواصلية وثقتهم في استخدام التعبيرات العربية الشائعة في مجال عملهم، كما ناقش (Hendra & Rufaidah, 2021) أهمية بناء قوائم مفردات متخصصة بالعربية السياحية بالاعتماد على تحليل متن لغوي لمواقع سياحية عربية، فمن خلال استخراج الكلمات والتعبيرات الأكثر شيوعاً في المحتوى السياحي العربي، ليخرج الباحثان إلى إعداد قائمة مفردات محورية مقترحة لتضمينها في مقررات تعليم العربية للسياحة.

وطرح بحث Amalia et al (2023) الذي هدف إلى تصميم نموذج لتأهيل مرشدي السياح الناطقين بالعربية، وركّز هذا المشروع على إعداد برنامج تدريبي يجمع بين تحسين كفاءة اللغة العربية للمرشدين السياحيين الإندونيسيين وبين تزويدهم بمعرفة ثقافية ودينية تناسب السياح العرب، وقد اشتمل النموذج المقترح على مواد في المحادثة العربية السياحية، وجولات تدريبية ميدانية يتدرب فيها المرشد على تقديم الشرح

بالعربية، بالإضافة إلى تقييمات مستمرة للأداء اللغوي للمرشدين، وخلص الباحثون إلى أن تأهيل المرشد السياحي العربي اللغة يتطلب توافر مهارات ثقافية ومهارات تواصل مع الفئة المستهدفة من السياح العرب.

وتتسع الجهود الحديثة في تلبية الحاجات اللغوية للقطاع السياحي لتشمل رقمنة الإرشاد السياحي، وتنمية كفاية المرشدين، وتحسين البيئة اللغوية المحيطة بالسائح، إلى جانب البرامج التدريبية التقليدية. ففي دراسة Wan Daud et al. (2021) صُمم تطبيق i-Suuyah بوصفه تطبيقًا سياحيًا موجهًا للسياح العرب في ماليزيا، واعتمد العربية لغةً كاملة في عرض المعلومات والخدمات، كما أتاح للمستخدمين الاطلاع على المقاصد السياحية في الولايات الماليزية، والاستفادة من الخرائط الرقمية، والحصول على توصيات للإقامة، وقد أظهرت نتائج التقييم أن التطبيق حقق درجة مرتفعة من قابلية الاستخدام، بما يشير إلى أن دعم العربية في السياحة امتد إلى بناء وسائط رقمية تخفف الحاجز اللغوي وتيسر تجربة السائح العربي، وتكشف دراسة المرشدين التراثيين في السعودية عند Almahri et al. (2025) بُعدًا مكملًا لهذا الاتجاه؛ فظهرت نتائج الدراسة إلى وجود علاقة قوية بين الكفاية اللغوية للمرشدين وقدرتهم على تمثيل الثقافة الإسلامية السعودية تمثيلًا دقيقًا أمام الزوار الدوليين، مع تأكيد الحاجة إلى مزيد من التدريب اللغوي والثقافي والتطوير المهني.

ورغم أن هذه الدراسة لم تنصب مباشرة على تعليم العربية للسياح أو للعاملين مع السياح العرب، فإنها تقدم دلالة مهمة على أن الحاجات اللغوية في القطاع السياحي تمتد إلى الكفايات الثقافية، وشرح المضامين الدينية والتاريخية، وبناء خطاب سياحي قادر على نقل المعنى الحضاري بوضوح. كما بينت دراسة Hasni et al. (2024) في ماليزيا أن اللافتات في المجال السياحي ما يزال مهميًا عليها بالملايوية، مع حضور محدود للإنجليزية والعربية، بما يعكس درجة من التفاوت في الجاهزية اللغوية للوجهة السياحية، وأبرزت دراسة Napu (2024) أن المجال السياحي متعدد اللغات يقوم أيضًا على ممارسات متنوعة في الترجمة، وأن ظهور العربية في اللافتات العامة قد يؤدي وظيفة أخرى مرتبطة بالهوية الدينية والثقافية. ومن ثم، فإن تطوير اللغة العربية لأغراض سياحية ينبغي أن يُفهم بوصفه مشروعًا متكاملًا يجمع بين تدريب الموارد البشرية، وبناء المحتوى الرقمي، وتحسين المشهد اللغوي في المواقع السياحية، وتعزيز الكفاية الثقافية لدى المرشدين والعاملين.

4.2 ثانيًا: السياحة الإسلامية واللغة العربية

برز مفهوم السياحة الإسلامية -الحلال- في السنوات الأخيرة لوصف الأنشطة والخدمات السياحية الموجهة للمسلمين والتي تلتزم بالضوابط الثقافية والدينية، مثل توفر الطعام الحلال وأماكن الصلاة واحترام العادات الاجتماعية، وقد لعبت اللغة العربية دورًا مهمًا في هذا النوع من السياحة بوصفها لغة الدين الإسلامي ولغة شريحة واسعة من السياح المسلمين من الشرق الأوسط، لنجد على ضوء ذلك مجموعة من الدراسات في ماليزيا وإندونيسيا سلطت الضوء على هذا الجانب.

هدفت دراسة Ahmad et al. (2018) إلى بناء نموذج تحليل حاجات خاص باللغة العربية في مجال السياحة الإسلامية في ولاية سلانجور الماليزية، وأظهرت النتائج إلى حاجة لوضع إطار منهجي يحدد المهارات اللغوية والمفردات المطلوبة للعاملين في قطاعات السياحة كالفنادق والمطاعم السياحية لتقديم خدمة رضا السياح، وفي دراسة أخرى نجد أن Azman Bin Che Mat et al. (2009) طور أداة لقياس حاجات اللغة العربية في السياحة الإسلامية واختبروا صلاحيتها وثباتها، وشملت الأداة قائمة بمجالات الاستخدام اللغوي مثل الاستقبال، والإرشاد السياحي، والتسويق السياحي باللغة العربية، وأكدت نتائج التحكيم موثوقية الأداة، مما يتيح اعتمادها لتقييم مدى جاهزية المؤسسات السياحية لسد الفجوة اللغوية.

ونجد في دراسة Jaffar et al. (2024) التي استعرضت المكونات الرئيسية الواجب توافرها عند تطوير تطبيق ذكي للسياحة الإسلامية يقدم خدمات وإرشادات بالعربية، حيث أسفرت تلك الدراسة إلى إنشاء منصة موحدة للمصطلحات السياحية الإسلامية.

وتؤكد دراسة Azman Bin Che Mat وزملاؤه (2009) هذا الاتجاه من زاوية التطبيق السياحي في ماليزيا؛ حيث أبرزت أن تزايد أعداد السياح العرب، وما يرتبط بهم من قدرة إنفاقية مرتفعة، جعل اللغة العربية عنصرًا مهمًا في تحسين الخدمة السياحية، حتى بادرت الجهات الرسمية إلى الاستعانة بطلاب يجيدون العربية للعمل في الفنادق ذات الخمس نجوم. وكما أشارت الدراسة إلى أن القطاع السياحي الماليزي كان يعاني ضعفًا في إعداد كوادر لغوية متخصصة، مع غياب مقررات عربية موجهة لبرامج السياحة على المستوى الجامعي، فضلًا عن وجود مشكلات في جودة الترجمة العربية في بعض المواد السياحية واللافتات والكتيبات، وهو ما قد يؤثر في صورة الوجهة السياحية ورضا الزوار. وتكشف هذه المعطيات أن العربية في السياحة الإسلامية تسهم أيضًا في بناء الثقة، وتعزيز الملاءمة الثقافية، وتحسين تمثيل الوجهة أمام السائح المسلم.

ومن زاوية علم اللغة الاجتماعي، تقدم دراسة Rastitiati et al. (2024) عن المشهد اللغوي في قرية Pentingsari السياحية في يوجياكارتا دلالة مهمة على أن حضور العربية في المجال السياحي ينبع من الخلفية الثقافية للمجتمع المحلي. فقد رصدت الدراسة حضور العربية إلى

جانِب الإندونيسية والجاوية والإنجليزية، وفسرت ذلك بأن العربية مرتبطة بالثقافة الدينية السائدة في القرية، حيث تظهر ألفاظ مثل Ramadhan وadzan وshalat جزء من الهوية الإسلامية المحلية.

4.3 ثالثاً: المشهد اللغوي في الوجهات السياحية

يقصد بالمشهد اللغوي السياحي اللغة الظاهرة في الأماكن العامة ضمن الأماكن السياحية، مثل لافتات الشوارع والإعلانات وقوائم المطاعم وإرشادات المعالم، وقد جذبت هذه المشاهد اهتمام باحثي علم اللغة الاجتماعي الذين يدرسون تعددية اللغات في الأماكن العامة، ففي دراسة (Gu & Bhatt, 2024) حول المشهد اللغوي فيما يُعرف بـ "العرب" في مدينة بانكوك، فهذا الحي الصغير يحوي تجمعاً للزوار ورجال الأعمال القادمين من الشرق الأوسط، الذي أكسبه لقب "العربية الصغرى" ووسط محيط بوذي ذي أغلبية تايلندية، وتوصل الباحثان أن وجود هذا المجتمع السياحي العربي خلق فسيفساء لغوية في المنطقة.

وفي دراسة (Hasni et al. (2024 عن المشهد اللغوي في Teluk Batik بماليزيا، جرى تحليل 64 لافتة في هذا الموقع السياحي، وكشفت النتائج أن المشهد اللغوي ما يزال خاضعاً لهيمنة واضحة للغة الملايوية، في حين يظهر الإنجليزية حضوراً ثانوياً، في حين جاءت العربية والمالديين في عدد أقل من اللافتات الثنائية اللغة، وهو ما دفع الباحثين إلى وصف هذا المجال بأنه يعاني من عدم مساواة تعددية لغوية. وتفيد هذه النتيجة بأن نجاح الوجهة السياحية تقتضي توفير لافتات أكثر شمولاً من حيث اللغات المستعملة .

وتقدم دراسة (Napu (2024 عن المشهد اللغوي حين تنظر إليه من منظور الترجمة، إذ حلت 123 لافتة ثنائية اللغة في مدينة Gorontalo، وصنفت الممارسات الترجمة إلى: الترجمة الحرفية، والترجمة الحرة، والترجمة الجزئية، واللاترجمية. كما ميزت بين اللافتات الرسمية (top-down) التي تصدرها الجهات الحكومية، واللافتات غير الرسمية (bottom-up) التي تنتجها الجهات التجارية أو الأفراد. وأظهرت الدراسة أن العربية، حين تظهر إلى جانب الإندونيسية والإنجليزية ترمز أيضاً الهوية الدينية في المجال العام. ومن ثم، فإن المشهد اللغوي السياحي ينبغي قراءته بوصفه أداة تتداخل فيه السلطة، والخدمة، والاستقطاب، والهوية .

وتضيف دراسة Rastitiati وآخرين (2024) عن قرية Pentingsari السياحية في يوجياكارتا عنصرًا آخر مهمًا، إذ بينت أن المشهد اللغوي هناك يتسم بـ التعدد اللغوي والتحول بين اللغات (code-switching)، من خلال حضور الإندونيسية، والجاوية، والعربية، والإنجليزية. غير أن الدراسة خلصت إلى أن هذا التعدد يخدم حاجات المجتمع المحلي. كما أوضحت أن بعض الألفاظ العربية الظاهرة في اللافتات، مثل الألفاظ ذات الطابع الديني ترتبط بالخلفية الثقافية للسكان المحليين. وكشفت الدراسة كذلك عن حضور التنظيم الفوقي top-down في بعض اللافتات الموحدة، مثل لافتات المساكن السياحية، بما يدل على تدخل السلطة المحلية في تشكيل صورة القرية بصرياً ولغوياً.

يتبين أن المشهد اللغوي في الوجهات السياحية يعمل بوصفه أداة لبناء صورة الوجهة، وتحديد الفئات المستهدفة، وترميز الهوية الثقافية والدينية. إن حضور العربية في المجال السياحي قد يدل أحياناً على استهداف السائح العربي، وقد يدل أيضاً على حضور الإسلام بوصفه ثقافة محلية.

وترى الدراسات اللغوية الاجتماعية في المشهد اللغوي مؤشراً على قوة اللغة، فحضور لغة ما في لافتات مدينة سياحية يعني الاعتراف بإمكانة الناطقين بها وأهميتهم الاقتصادية. إن ازدياد حضور اللغة العربية في المشاهد السياحية خارج العالم العربي خلال العقد الماضي يعكس تنامي التأثير الاقتصادي للسائح العربي، وبالتالي، نخلص إلى أن اللغة في المشهد السياحي رسالة ضمنية حول الفئة المستهدفة وترحيب المجتمع المحلي بها.

5. مناقشة النتائج:

بعد عرض مجموعة من الدراسات اللغوية الاجتماعية حول اللغة والسياحة، نستخلص عدداً من النتائج والمحاوِر المشتركة التي تبلور فهمنا لهذا المجال، فأول ما يبرز هو اتساع الاعتراف بأهمية اللغة العربية في التجربة السياحية، فبينما كان ينظر سابقاً إلى تعلم لغات السياح على أنه مسألة ثانوية، فقد أثبتت التجارب مثل ماليزيا وإندونيسيا أن تجاهل الحاجز اللغوي قد يحد من استفادة الوجهة من الفوائض السياحية المتاحة، ونجد الآن أن دولاً مثل ماليزيا وإندونيسيا وغيرها قد قطعت خطوات جادة في دمج اللغة العربية ضمن إستراتيجياتها السياحية، سواء عبر مناهج تعليمية متخصصة أو إجراءات تنظيمية كتوظيف مرشدين ناطقين بالعربية، كما تكشف الدراسات عن طبيعة ضرورة توظيف التقانة كاستخدام التعلم الإلكتروني، وتطبيقات الهواتف الذكية، لنؤكد هنا إلى أن التقانة صارت جسراً أساسياً للتواصل مع السائح بلغته.

وتؤكد دراسة (Wan Daud et al. 2021) هذا التحول بأن تقديم المعلومات السياحية بالعربية عبر تطبيق رقمي قابل للاستخدام وهذا يعني أن العربية في السياحة أصبحت جزءاً من البنية التقنية التي تسهم في تقليل الغربة اللغوية وتحسين تجربة السائح العربي منذ مرحلة التخطيط للرحلة وحتى التنقل داخل الوجهة.

كما برز من استعراض الأدبيات أن تعليم اللغة لأغراض سياحية تطور ليصبح حقلاً قائماً بذاته ضمن تعليم اللغات لأغراض خاصة (LSP) إذ باتت تبني المناهج الموجهة للسياحة تبني على أساس دراسات حاجات دقيقة للمواقف التواصلية في القطاع السياحي ونتيجة لذلك أصبحت المادة التعليمية قريبة من حاجات المتعلمين، الذي يزيد من فاعلية التدريب ويختصر الوقت اللازم لإعداد المتعلمين، لكننا نجد في بعض الدراسات تحدياً في تأهيل الكوادر التدريسية لهذا النوع من التعليم المتخصص، إذ يحتاج معلمو اللغة العربية إلى فهم قطاع السياحة ومصطلحاته، وربما التعاون مع خبراء سياحيين لتطوير المحتوى.

وتكشف الأدبيات المتعلقة بالسياحة الإسلامية أن العربية لا تُوظف في هذا المجال بوصفها أداة للتواصل الخدمي فقط، بل بوصفها مورداً ثقافياً. فدراسة (Azman Bin Che Mat et al. 2009) أوضحت أن تزايد السائحين العرب في ماليزيا أوجد طلباً متنامياً على الكفاية العربية في الفنادق والخدمات العامة، وكشف في الوقت نفسه عن قصور في البرامج الأكاديمية السياحية وفي جودة بعض الترجمات العربية في المواد السياحية. وتفيد هذه النتيجة بأن نجاح السياحة الإسلامية يحتاج إلى بنية لغوية على تمثيل الوجهة تمثيلاً ثقافياً ملائماً. وتبين دراسة Rastitiati et al (2024) أن العربية قد تحضر في المشهد السياحي بوصفها علامة على الهوية الدينية للمجتمع المحلي، لا لمجرد خدمة الزوار العرب. وهذا يعني أن العربية في السياحة الإسلامية تؤدي وظيفتين متداخلتين: وظيفة خدمية تيسر التواصل مع السائح المسلم، ووظيفة تعيد إنتاج الانتماء الثقافي والديني في المجال السياحي.

ونجد هذه النتيجة مؤكدة في دراسة (Almahri et al. 2025) حول المرشدين التراثيين في المملكة العربية السعودية؛ إذ بينت أن الكفاية اللغوية ترتبط مباشرةً بقدرة المرشد على تمثيل الثقافة الإسلامية السعودية تمثيلاً دقيقاً أمام الزوار الدوليين، وكشفت أيضاً الحاجة إلى مزيد من التدريب اللغوي والثقافي والتطوير المهني المستمر، وتفيد هذه النتيجة أن تعليم اللغة لأغراض سياحية لا ينبغي أن يقتصر على العبارات الوظيفية أو المفردات المتخصصة، بل يجب أن يشمل أيضاً مهارات الوساطة الثقافية، والقدرة على شرح المرويات التاريخية والدينية، وتكثيف الخطاب السياحي بحسب الخلفية اللغوية والثقافية للزائر، لأن نجاح المبادرات اللغوية في السياحة هو قدرة الفاعل السياحي نفسه على تحويل اللغة إلى أداة للفهم، والتمثيل الحضاري.

وتكشف الدراسات الحديثة أن اللافتات والإرشادات في الوجهات السياحية ليست عنصرًا ثانويًا أو تجميليًا، بل تمثل جزءًا من الجاهزية اللغوية والثقافية للمكان. فدراسة (Hasni et al. 2024) أظهرت أن الموقع السياحي قد يكون ناجحًا من حيث الجذب والزيارة، ومع ذلك يظل مشهده اللغوي غير متوازن، مع هيمنة الملايوية وضعف نسبي في حضور الإنجليزية ومحدودية أكبر للعربية، وهو ما ينعكس على قدرة الوجهة على مخاطبة الزوار من خلفيات لغوية متنوعة. وهذه النتيجة تفيد بأن التعدد اللغوي في السياحة يحتاج إلى تخطيط لغوي يراعي حاجات الجمهور المحلي والدولي معًا.

وتبين دراسة (Napu 2024) أن المشهد اللغوي لا يُقرأ فقط من زاوية توزيع اللغات، بل من زاوية الممارسات التي تنتج هذا المشهد. فاللافتات الرسمية وغير الرسمية، والترجمة الحرفية والحرّة والجزئية، كلها تكشف أن المجال السياحي هو أيضًا مجال ترجمة تتداخل فيه اعتبارات الدولة، والسوق، والهوية.

وتضيف دراسة (Rastitiati et al. 2024) أن المشهد اللغوي السياحي قد يخدم الزائر والمجتمع المحلي في آن واحد؛ إذ قد تظهر العربية والإنجليزية واللغة المحلية ضمن توزيع وظيفي يعبر عن ثقافة سكان المنطقة. كما أن وجود لافتات موحدة للمساكن السياحية تحت إشراف السلطة المحلية يبرز أثر السياسات الفوقية top-down في تشكيل الصورة البصرية واللغوية للوجهة. ومن ثم، فإن تحليل المشهد اللغوي في السياحة ينبغي أن يتجاوز سؤال: ما اللغات الموجودة؟ إلى سؤال أعمق: من الذي يختار هذه اللغات، ولماذا، ولمن توجّه، وما الدلالات الرمزية التي تنتجها.

ويظهر من بعض الدراسات التطبيقية في السياحة الإسلامية أن الدعم اللغوي لا يقف عند حدود اللافتات المادية، بل يمتد إلى المجال الرقمي أيضًا؛ إذ طُوّر تطبيق Tourism-إبنلاث لغات، منها العربية، ليقدّم معلومات عن المساجد، والمتاحف، والمواقع الترفيهية، والخدمات الصحية والإقامة، غير أن تقويم الخبراء أظهر أن كثيرًا من وظائفه ما تزال في طور مبكر وتحتاج إلى مزيد من التطوير. ويعني ذلك أن المشهد اللغوي في السياحة يشمل كذلك البنية الرقمية التي ترافق السائح في تنقله وتشكل تجربته اللغوية خارج اللافتة التقليدية

وبشكل عام فإن النتائج تظهر أن العلاقة بين اللغة والسياحة علاقة تكاملية: فاللغة الجيدة تسهل السياحة، والسياحة بدورها تحفز تعلم اللغات وتفاعلها، وقد أكدت التجارب الواقعية المذكورة في (ماليزيا، وتايلند، وإندونيسيا). فالنمو المضطرد للسياحة العربية في ماليزيا لم يؤدي فقط إلى برامج تدريب عربية للملايو، بل أيضًا زاد من اهتمام بعض السياح بتعلم كلمات ملايوية خلال رحلتهم بفضل احتكاكهم بالمجتمع المحلي بلغتهم، أي أن عملية تبادل ثقافي لغوي حدثت بشكل متزامن، لتكون المبادرات اللغوية في السياحة جسر للتفاهم بين الشعوب يتجاوز البعد الاقتصادي.

6. خاتمة

خلصت هذه القراءة الوصفية إلى أن اللغة ركن أساسي في صناعة السياحة وتجربة السائح، وأن الدراسات اللغوية الاجتماعية قد أغنت فهمنا لهذا الركن وأسهمت في تحسين التجربة السياحية على أرض الواقع، لنصل إلى نتيجة أن الإدراك المبكر بأهمية اللغة العربية في استقطاب السائحين من العالم الإسلامي مكن دولًا مثل ماليزيا وإندونيسيا من اكتساب ميزة تنافسية في سوق السياحة عبر برامج تدريبية وتطوير تطبيقات تفاعلية، وبرز أن الاهتمام بالمشهد اللغوي المتعدد في المواقع السياحية يعزز صورة الترحيب ويثري التجربة الثقافية.

ونؤكد أيضًا على أهمية التبادل الثقافي، فالانتباه إلى لغة السائح واحترامها لا ينفصل عن احترام ثقافته وهويته. وتقديم دليل سائح بالعربية أو عبارة ترحيب بسيطة بلغات مختلفة يحمل رسالة ود وتقارب حضاري.

إن اللغة والسياحة وجهان لعملة واحدة، وعندما تتلاقى الجهود العلمية والتطبيقية لسبر أغوار هذه العلاقة وخدمتها، فإننا نقرب أكثر من سياحة مستدامة، وإنسانية الطابع، تحتفي بالتنوع اللغوي والثقافي، وكما يقال اللغة هي بيت الوجود، ومن الجميل أن يجد السائح بيته اللغوي أينما حلّ وارتحل.

7. توصيات:

استنادًا إلى ما سبق، نقترح عددًا من المحاور للبحوث المستقبلية في مجال اللغة والسياحة:

- إجراء دراسات ميدانية مقارنة لرضا السياح العرب في وجهات آسيوية مقابل وجهات غربية من حيث الخدمات اللغوية المقدمة.
- دراسة تأثير لغة الدعاية السياحية على توقعات السياح
- تطوير معايير دولية أو إرشادات أفضل الممارسات لتعدد اللغات في الوجهات السياحية.
- توسيع نطاق بحوث المشهد اللغوي ليشمل مواقع سياحية جديدة كمدن أوروبا الشرقية وتحليل تأقلم تلك الوجهات لغويًا مع الوافدين.

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