



## Muslim-Friendly Sustainable Geo-Tourism (MFS-GT): A Qualitative Study Using the Grounded Theory

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### Abstract

Muslim-Friendly Tourism (MFT) and geo-tourism destination have proliferated without implementing adequate synergies, thereby the current research aimed to integrate data on Muslim-Friendly Tourism with sustainability ideas to develop a theory. One of the qualitative designs applied was the grounded theory approach. The Qur'anic verses and Hadith of the prophet dealing with sustainability concerns were analysed. The qualitative analysis of the verses yielded two components constituting a wide conceptual paradigm of Muslim-Friendly Sustainable Geo-Tourism (MFS-GT). These notions contribute to achieving environmental balance and human health development as part of the objectives of Shariah (*Maqasid al-Shariah*). Religious components (Islamic values, culture and norms, and ethics), and sustainable components (the concept of environment, community participation, and socioeconomic) were investigated under MFS-GT. This study provides insights to MFT stakeholders as practitioners, and it can be strategically applied to incorporate the MFT and geo-tourism destination idea as a tool to safeguard the place's sustainability.

**Keywords:** Islamisation, *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*, Muslim-Friendly Tourism, environment, health

### Abstrak

Pelancongan Mesra Muslim (MFT) dan destinasi geo-pelancongan telah berkembang tanpa aplikasi sinergi yang mencukupi. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengintegrasikan data mengenai Pelancongan Mesra Muslim dan konsep kelestarian untuk menjana satu teori. Aplikasi *grounded theory* yang merupakan salah satu reka bentuk kajian kualitatif telah digunakan. Kandungan ayat-ayat al-Qur'an dan hadis Nabi S.A.W yang berkaitan dengan isu kelestarian telah dianalisis. Analisis secara kualitatif terhadap ayat-ayat tersebut berdasarkan dua komponen asas telah membentuk teori Geo-Pelancongan Kelestarian Mesra Muslim (MFS-GT) yang menyeluruh. Teori ini menyumbang untuk mencapai keseimbangan alam sekitar dan pembangunan kesihatan manusia sebagai sebahagian daripada komponen objektif *Syariah* (*Maqasid al-Shariah*). Komponen yang dianalisis di bawah MFS-GT ialah komponen agama (nilai Islam, budaya dan norma, dan etika), dan komponen kelestarian (konsep alam sekitar, penyertaan masyarakat, dan sosioekonomi). Penyelidikan ini memberikan kefahaman kepada pihak berkepentingan MFT sebagai pengamal dan digunakan secara strategik untuk menerapkan konsep MFT dan destinasi geo-pelancongan sebagai alat untuk memastikan kelestarian sesuatu tempat tersebut.

**Kata kunci:** Islamisasi, *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*, Pelancongan Mesra Muslim, alam sekitar, kesihatan

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### Introduction

In Malaysia, the MFT industry has been monitored by the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) since 2009. However, the terminology of the MFT concept is inconsistent among scholars and countries. The word "MFT" is used frequently in Malaysia. In western countries like Dubai and

Egypt, the Islamic term, i.e., Halal is more preferred. Except Tunisia and Kuwait, the preference is similar to Malaysia. In South Korea, “Halal-friendly” is preferably used. Regardless of the variations in definition, basically, MFT aims to provide Muslim-friendly tourism products and services to Muslim travellers in accordance to Islamic perspective (Saffinee et al., 2019). MFT is essential to differentiate between the basis of society to support tourism policy and management following Islamic law. In addition to that, it is also non-Muslims friendly as it helps them to find that the beauty of Islam is accompanied by safety and comfort. Reuters (2015) estimated that in line with human population growth, the global expenses of Muslim consumers on tourism would be worth USD1, 128 million in 2018, which was supposed to increase to USD1,585 million by 2020. The growth created a potential prime market for MFT, halal food, Muslim-friendly accommodation, Islamic tour package, and logistic sector.

Consequently, more cooperation and collaborations are needed among MFT stakeholders. The MFT sector has undergone progressive developments. The progression is due to the world’s 1.8 billion Muslim population (Pew Research Center, 2019). As part of sustainable tourism, the role of geo-tourism is seen as a linkage between the reservation of the geological and the cultural heritage of the local communities (Bujdosó et al., 2015). Geo-tourism, according to National Geographic (2021), is a type of tourism that preserves or promotes a region’s specific geographical character, including its heritage, aesthetics, culture, environment, and citizens’ well-being. Thus, it is important to acquire new knowledge about the embedded geo-tourism components through Islamic perspective.

Despite the many studies on MFT (Jais & Marzuki, 2018; Jamaludin et al., 2018a; Jamaludin et al., 2019; Mokhtar et al., 2019; Cuesta-valiño & Bolifa, 2020; Abdul Halim et al., 2020; Harun et al., 2018; Saffinee et al., 2019), Muslim-Friendly Sustainable (MFS) is not well understood. This tourism has been linked to unsustainability problems and non-compliance with *Shariah*, including pollution (Cockburn et al., 2018), destruction (Akhir, 2018; Hidayat &

Priatna, 2018), and lack of framework guidelines to maintain religious performance. While evidence has supported the MFT concept as an effective alternative to the tourism industry, its sustainability in the area of MFT has yet to be explored. To better understand the problem that occurs, Muslim-Friendly Sustainable Geo-Tourism (MFS-GT) concepts seek to achieve environmental balance and human health development as part of *Maqasid al-Shariah*. Therefore, this paper aimed to generate a framework on MFT, sustainability, and geo-tourism.

This article is separated into five sections. The first section of the paper is an introduction, the second section is a review of the literature, and the third section discusses the strategy used in this study. The fourth part highlights the findings and the discussion is in the last part of the paper.

## **Literature Review**

### **Muslim-Friendly Tourism**

MFT has many principles underlying the concepts. Some stated that MFT’s basic principle is based on good intention (Nazjmi et al., 2019; Rahman & Laderlah, 2018). It ensures that the travel is for a useful purpose as the main principle. The others stated that MFT should increase faith and knowledge, and promote life quality (Nurrachmi, 2019). Akhir (2018) and Vargas-Sánchez and Moral-Moral (2018) revealed that MFT is sustained when each tourism stakeholder follows the roles and characteristics of a man of Allah The Almighty (*Khalifah*) and monitors *Maqasid al-Shari’ah*. Saffinee (2017) agreed that limited freedom with good moral values (*akhlaq*), practising social justice, and upholding public interest (*maslahah*) are vital. Therefore, this study managed to immerse principles specifically concerning MFT. The critical principles are having good intentions, connecting with Allah The Almighty, seeking knowledge, upholding *Maqasid al-Shari’ah*, reflecting (*muhasabah*) to Allah’s creations, and pondering on the beauty of nature. A good *Khalifah* who performs duties and does well in the world can be considered to possess the characteristics of a good slave to Allah The Almighty.

## Geo-Tourism Destination

For several decades, geo-tourism has been recognised as one of the concepts where the destinations mostly focus on geological sites as the main attraction for tourism. It contributes to the interdisciplinary incorporation of the tourism sector into the protection and understanding of abiotic nature characteristics within the geo-sites of the general public and the consideration of connected cultural issues (Islam et al., 2018; Leask, 2016) that brings benefits to nature. A recent report by the Institute of European Environmental Policy (Brink et al., 2016) exhibited the benefits of nature and biodiversity protection. For example, improved air quality, direct health benefits, healthier lifestyles and nature experience, social benefits (i.e., volunteering, employment, and management), and public spaces' quality which can reduce tension. Consequently, geo-tourism related-benefits have become the main reason these destinations were chosen (Prendivoy & Valley, 2018). Nearly 10 billion people have visited global geo-tourism national parks every year and travellers who visit protected areas generate more than approximately \$600 billion in tourism dollars annually (Hetter, 2015). Thus, the environment within geo-tourism destinations needs to be conserved. It can mitigate and minimise the impact of tourism for the current and future generation.

### *Maqasid al-Shariah*

The realisation of values promotes creation in Islamic legal theory that illustrates social rights and well-being for mankind. *Maqasid al-Shariah* is the Islamic development point. That is to say, *Maqasid al-Shariah* must be observed. Al-Alyubi (1998) stated i) the importance of the *Maqasid al-Shariah* and the *maslahah* (public interest) they want to preserve; ii) the value they want to preserve through that goal, and iii) the overall value of that preservation. This means that the public interest can be divided into three phases under its importance based on strengths and priorities; (i) *Dharuriyyat* (necessities), which represents the security of five core values, faith, existence, mind, lineage, and property. The majority of Islamic expertises said that religion conservation is the most relevant while the other four are associated with human rights. In

contrast, religion is the right of Allah (Mohammad & Ali, 2016). ii. *Hajiyyat* (needs), i.e., halal food (clean, healthy, and lawful) and iii. *Tahsiniyyat* (refinement), that provides perfect and comfortable life, allowing an individual's life to be safely facilitated, but not to *Dharuriyyat* level. It harmonises the state of a person and society with ethics in order to preserve integrity. The *Dharuriyyat* and *Hajiyyat* have to be complemented. Anything that may cause damage is also seen as *Tahsiniyyat*, for example. In the context of local Muslims, they must strive to live by the Islamic law (*Shariah*) through attitude and behaviour. Islam shows virtue and righteousness, and it also emphasises on the value of balancing the fulfilment of material and religious needs (Mansouri, 2014). In other words, *Shariah* governs everyday activities, but in the end, allows devotees to gain merits and use of divine reality (Poonawala, 2015).

### Method and Framework

A qualitative research design is developed to streamline the framework to obtain a simplified perspective of the whole research. According to Merriam (2009), the qualitative research process begins with a general research question, followed by selecting related research sites or topics. Grounded theory is a qualitative data collecting and analysis strategy. It is a research approach in which theory comes from and is grounded on evidence gathered via systematic social research (Bohm, 2004). The method evaluates the actual data with a phenomenon study and analyses without preconceived hypothesis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The grounded theory idea is to read a textual database and "determine" or label variables using categories, concepts, and properties (Neuman, 2014). The ability to perceive concepts and relationships is termed "sensitivity." It is affected by many things, including the researcher's reading of the literature and techniques designed to enhance sensitivity. The justification for using the grounded theory is that the method requires the validity, reliability, and generalisation of the findings empirically. The principles of validity and reliability are derived from the triangulation process that can be derived from field notes, including notes and diary entries. Coding is the basic mechanism

underlying a theory. The coding aims to provide a research precision, allow the researchers to overcome misunderstandings and assumptions, and create a foundation for meaning of density and sensitivity for the development of theories.

Figure 1 depicts the findings of the study and coding approach that resulted in the MFS-GT framework.

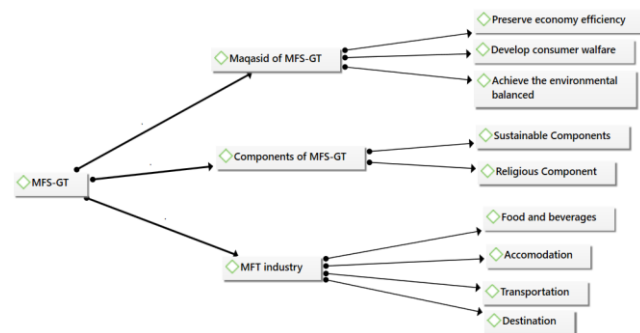


Figure 1 MFS-GT framework, emerging from data

## Discussions

### Muslim-Friendly Sustainable Geo-Tourism (MFS-GT)

From the review of literature on the definitions of MFT, sustainability, and geo-tourism by different scholars and institutions, it was realised that all of these definitions aimed to protect the environment, social, and economy for a better impact in the future. Simultaneously, fulfilling Muslim travellers' needs must be supported. However, literature on the sustainability aspect of MFT products and services at the geo-tourism destinations has not been discussed. Therefore, none of these concepts combine all the aspects together.

Henceforth, promoting Muslim-Friendly Sustainable (MFS) in the tourism development of humankind's social rights and well-being is based on Islamic principles. The term is known as Muslim-Friendly Sustainable Geo-Tourism (MFS-GT). Table 1 was tabulated from this study to define MFS-GT.

Acronym	Concept	Justifications	References
MF	Muslim-friendly	The word "سلم" in the <i>Al-Qur'an</i> is repeated 140 times in 127 verses. Muslim literally means a submitter to Allah. Muslims who believe in six pillars of <i>iman</i> (believes in God, the angels, the God's revealed books, the Messenger, the day of judgement, and the predestination) and five pillars of Islam (testimony of faith, prayers, zakat, fasting, and pilgrimage). Meanwhile, Muslim-friendly term is for the Islamic tourism to entertain Muslim travellers by satisfying the needs in friendliness either in Muslim or non-Muslim tourism	(Battour et al., 2020) (Boğan & Sarıışık, 2019) (COMCEC, 2017)

S	Sustainable	<p>destinations in line with <i>Maqasid al-Shariah</i>. MFT is able to promote products and services that sustain the environmental balance, socio-economic efficiency, and consumer welfare. The support from religious aspects on Islamic values, culture and norms, and ethics between God, man, and nature are invested in sustainability of the place. Moreover, the state of maintaining nature without destructing the resources is mentioned in the verses of <i>Al-Qur'an</i> and <i>Hadith</i>.</p>	<p>(Nazjmi et al., 2019) (Cockburn et al., 2018; Garrigos-simon &amp; Narangajavana-kaosiri, 2019) (Rashid, 2018)</p>	<p>environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and citizens' well-being. The specific objective of geo-tourism is to promote geodiversity conservation, land-education, and understanding of nature through tourism.</p>
GT	Geo-tourism	<p>Geo-tourism is defined as tourism that preserves or promotes a location's particular geographical identity, including its</p>	<p>(Newsome, Dowling, &amp; Leung, 2012) (Chen, 2020)</p>	<p>Source: Author's source</p> <p>Therefore, the MFS-GT can be deduced as the adaptation of the products and services to the religious and sustainable needs for Muslim segmentation. Hence, there is a need for the countries to become Muslim-friendly destinations by achieving the objective of <i>Shariah (Maqasid al-Shariah)</i>. The motivation of MFS-GT is revealed in The <i>Qur'an</i>, 22:28, which is to see different matters that can bring benefits- "<i>That they may witness benefits for themselves and mention the name of Allah on known days over what He has provided for them...</i>". Moreover, specific motivation is to balance and maintain the needs of the living things and non-living things as the creatures of God. This can be seen in The <i>Qur'an</i> 6:38, "<i>And there is no creature on [or within] the earth or bird that flies with its wings except [that they are] communities like you. We have not neglected in the Register a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered.</i>"</p> <p>Additionally, in order to identify the MFS-GT, data were analysed through literature reviews and grounded theory analysis based on <i>Al-Qur'an</i> and the <i>Hadith</i> as guidance. It shows that the objectives of MFS-GT are to achieve environmental balance (<i>The Qur'an</i> 25:7; 2:143), develop community welfare (<i>The Qur'an</i> 49:10; 25:67; 2:185), and preserve economic efficiency (<i>The Qur'an</i>, 7:85; 22:78). The objectives of MFS-GT are based on <i>maslahah</i> (public interest).</p>

In cases where it is difficult to achieve *maslahah*, the *maslahah* principle is applied to provide exceptions that prohibit actions that may cause *mafsadah*(danger) or allow prohibited actions that may result in more *mafsadah* if prohibited altogether (Winkel et al., 2018). Both approaches are essential to ensure Islamic practices, regardless of time and place. The components of religion and sustainability are identified as the basic components to be detailed. Three core religious elements, namely values, cultural norms, and ethics are identified under the components of MFS-GT. Simultaneously, another three core sustainability components of MFS-GT are environmental sustainability, community participation, and socio-economy sustainability. Each of the components (religious and sustainability) is based on the *Al-Qur'an* and *Hadith*.

### Religious Components

Islam encourages people to travel for recreational purposes to achieve physical, social, and spiritual satisfaction while increasing faith in Allah The Almighty (Akgunduz & Akgunduz, 2010). Härmälä (2014) found that environmental sustainability beliefs and practices are always closely related to beliefs and religion. Religious foundation can be applied in two ways. Firstly, philosophy with religion as a subject and secondly, by training in religion where philosophy is used as an intellectual tool (Zuhdi, 2016).

Islam can provide a universal foundation that exceeds other religions' sustainability approach and meets human needs (Murad, 2010). In Islam, like most religions, religious law includes rules demanding for sustainable development (Haq & Wahab, 2019). The overall environment in geo-tourism has a meaningful relationship and it involves worship, people (human beings), knowledge, representatives (*Khalifah*), *ummah*, and other basic themes of the *Al-Qur'an*. According to al-Aidaros et al., (2013), Siyavooshi (2019), and Noor et al., (2020), beliefs, values, morals, spirituality, and rituals in religion allow Muslims to perform the roles comprehensively. In short, religious components of MFS-GT consist of three elements, which include values, culture and norms, as well as ethics in sustainability based on Islamic

principles (Pakeeza & Chisty, 2010). Table 2 illustrates the religious components in MFS-GT.

Table 2 Religious Components in MFS-GT

	<i>The Qur'an and Hadith</i>	References	Reflection
Islamic Values	( <i>The Qur'an</i> 14:23, 6:32, 12:109)	(Hassan, 2018; Khan & Callanan, 2017; Noor & Shah, 2017). (Kohler & Brondizio, 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing righteous deeds.</li> <li>• Practising world life for enjoyment to the hereafter in fear of Allah.</li> <li>• Observing the previous people to endeavour.</li> <li>• Respecting the local community and the local environment, benefitting local people, and politeness.</li> </ul>
Islamic Culture and Norms	( <i>The Qur'an</i> 7:199)	Kadykalo et al. (2019), (Esfandiar et al., 2019).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning about other cultures can benefit the tourism market while meeting Muslim travellers' needs.</li> <li>• The cultural</li> </ul>

				Table 3 Sustainable Components in MFS-GT				
					<i>Al-Qur'an</i> and <i>Hadith</i>	References	Reflection	
				heritage preserves the cultural landscape from the past to the present and for the future.	Environment Sustainability	( <i>The Qur'an</i> 54:49, 4:65, 26:52) ( <i>Muwatt a'li al-Imam Malik</i> , Book 21, <i>Hadith</i> 971).	Subhan (2017) (Ghera out, 2017).	• The role of the environment is dual by nature, i.e., worshipping the Creator and being of service to humans.
				• Social norms are related to society's cultural, social values, and expectations of individual behaviours.				
Islamic Ethics	( <i>The Qur'an</i> 6:119) <i>Adab Al-Mufrad</i> , Book 14, <i>Hadith</i> 273	(Haq & Wahab, 2019). (Fisol, 2016).	&	• Injecting ethical values and diversity in the preservation of lifestyle.				• Using the resources when necessary and not harming the environment.
				• Encouraging the younger generations to support and develop the environment from a broader perspective.				• Do not destroy inhabited areas.
					Community Participation Sustainability	( <i>The Qur'an</i> 49:10, 9:71) (Al-Bukhari, 2017) (Ghera out, 2017).	Bazazo et al. (2017) and Muneeza et al. (2017).	• Islam encourages

Source: Author's source

### Sustainable Components

MFS-GT components are based on three main components related to sustainability: environmental sustainability, community participants, and socio-economic sustainability. From the Islamic concept, a deep understanding of sustainability can achieve the objective of MFS-GT. Table 3 displays the elaboration of sustainable components in MFS-GT.

<p><i>Sahih Al-Bukhari</i>, 481, (Sahih)</p>	<p>(2019)</p>	<p>knowledge can be emphasised on worship, faith, life, spiritual, material, economic, and spiritual values.</p>			<p>d with the balance principle together from the core of the Islamic teachings on sustainability when the host and local communities participate in their religious beliefs, practices, and commitment.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community needs to fulfil God's duties by granting others' rights.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private rights (<i>huquq al-'ibad</i>) are on the one end and public interest (<i>huquq Allah</i>) is on the other.</li> </ul>	<p>Socioeconomic Sustainability</p>	<p>(<i>The Qur'an</i>, 51:56) 9:103).</p>	<p>(Kaloumaira, 2017) (Al-ahsan &amp; Young, 2017; Singleton et al., 2019).</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principles of unity (<i>tawhîd</i>), human nature (<i>fi'rah</i>), and vicegerent (<i>Khalifah</i>) are combine</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In an Islamic perspective, zakat is at the forefront of addressing poverty and socioeconomic wellbeing. The objective of taking and giving</li> </ul>



Zakat is part of *Tathir* (purification) and *Tazkiyah* (sanctification). perspective views when the integration is involved in the objective of *Shariah*, religious, and sustainable components. The literature review clarifies each of them. The religious components are Islamic values, Islamic culture and norms, and Islamic ethics. At the same time, the sustainable components of MFS-GT are environment, community participation, and socio-economic aspects. Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that MFS-GT can be established. The study provides added values to the MFT industry, specifically for nature tourism destinations. The findings are significant in shaping the Islamic atmosphere of geo-tourism areas.

- Be righteous and honour each other's rights.

Source: Author's source

From these findings, the study can be summarised that:

1. MFS-GT leads to less environmental impact because the industry is usually associated with controlled tourism activities. For example, the itinerary includes visitation to the mosques, provides *halalan-tayyiban* food, and ensures highly hygienic practices.
2. MFS-GT activities incorporate respect for God's creation; thus, less vandalism will occur in the environment because the environment is also God's creation that needs to be preserved.
3. MFS-GT tends to maintain Islamic civilisations and their monuments. The visitation will enhance the appreciation of Islamic architecture and preserve Islamic history and culture.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the above explanation has synthesised the six elements of MFS-GT: values, culture and norms, ethics, environment, community participation, and socioeconomic that are epistemologically constructed from the *Maqasid al-Shariah* perspective. Therefore, the above discussion on the linkages and integration of sustainable geo-tourism, as well as *Maqasid al-Shariah* makes up the fundamentals of MFS-GT. MFS-GT has better performance and improves the understanding of Islamic

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