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Examining Muslim Passengers' Satisfaction on Perceived Value of Islamic Cruises

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Abstract

Although there has been much research on Islamic perspectives within tourism, knowledge related to Islamic cruise tourism is less represented within the related literature. Due to the demand for Islamic cruises, it is very important to illustrate several features and the characteristics of hospitality services that come within the Islamic context. Therefore, this study aims to investigate cruise passengers' perceived values and satisfaction and test the moderator of religiosity as a neglected variable to establish the relationship within a potential tourism sector. Data for this study were gathered through self-administered questionnaires on 106 Muslim passengers who had experience with cruise services. SPSS was performed to analyze the proposed hypotheses. Findings showed that perceived values have a positive effect towards Muslim passengers' satisfaction. Religiosity has been found not significant moderator of the relationship between Islamic physical attributes and Islamic non-physical attributes and Muslim passenger satisfaction. This implies that there is a need for key players in cruise tourism especially the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC), cruise managers and operators to focus on these factors in the pursuit of more competitive advantage and long-term profits.

Keywords: Cruise Tourism, Islamic Cruise, Perceived Value, Satisfaction, Islamic Religiosity

Introduction

Malaysia has taken an opportunity in introducing Islamic hotels and Islamic tourism as another form of tourist services in an initiative to become an Islamic Tourism hub. In some way, the Islamic concept provides services and facilities that cater to the needs of more than a billion Muslims to easily engage their culture in the practice of Islam (Karim et al., 2017; Pitra & Albattat, 2021; Sulaiman et al., 2021). Recently, it has been perceived that there is an increasing interest and demand for Islamic hospitality and services in Malaysia by many countries, especially from the Middle East and Southeast Asia (Patwary et al., 2018; Yahaya et al., 2020). Due to the rising number of Muslim tourists, the demand for Muslim-friendly services is increasing. Besides good services and excellent physical facilities of the accommodation, cruises were the fastest-growing sector of the travel industry (Giese, 2020). Malaysia is one of the most attractive cruise destinations in the region and features most of the 'round-the-

world cruise' routes. As Malaysia has several established and fully equipped ports, it can be considered the world's best cruise ship location with an excellent combination of recreational facilities, entertainment, gourmet meals, and exotic destinations (Goh, 2020). Besides this, the Malaysian government is committed to developing cruise tourism by expanding and upgrading the hubs for cruises to fully support the country's transformation into becoming the main cruise tourism destination of the East (Tourism Malaysia, 2017).

The Malaysian government has recognized tourism as one of the key economic areas for growth and suggests cruise tourism as one of the focal areas for development over the next eight years ahead (Tourism Malaysia, 2017). In similarity with other Islamic countries such as Indonesia and Brunei, cruise tourism can be categorized into two types: the ordinary cruise and the Islamic cruise.

Arshad (2017) approximated that more than 1,000 passengers joined the Islamic cruise in 2017. A significant increase in demand was evidenced when compared to the number of passengers in 2016, which had struggled to reach 50% occupancy. However, the subsequent marketing led to overwhelming demand, causing unexpected management problems which led to the cancellation of trips (personal communication: Andalusia Travel & Tours, 2018). Thus, despite the positive demand, the Islamic cruises that make up a specific segment of the market have faced a reverse trend due to overbooking and poor passenger management. The same issue reappeared in 2019 which is before the Covid-19 pandemic arise. Even though there are many efforts towards promoting Islamic tourism through Sharia's-compliant facilities and Halal concepts across all tourism products and services including cruise tourism (Sulaiman et al., 2021), the extent to which the Muslim tourists value these efforts and their satisfaction towards various cruise aspects are yet to be discovered.

Even though previous research on tourists' perceived values and satisfaction in different tourism settings has looked into traditional value dimensions, Islamic value dimensions are still under-represented. The only studies that have considered religiosity in its perceived value dimension were found in other areas such as sociology (Ismail et al., 2021), human resources (Héliot et al., 2020), consumer behaviour (Niazi et al., 2019), and marketing (Preko et al., 2020), but there is lack of research religiosity in tourism industry particularly in cruise tourism (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015) Therefore, this study investigates cruise passengers' perceived values and satisfaction, and tests the moderator of religiosity as the neglected variable to establish the relationship within a potential tourism sector.

Literature Review

Perceived Value

Perceived value is defined as a consumer's perception of the net benefit gained based on the trade-off between relevant benefits and sacrifices as derived from the online shopping process, which is an objective evaluation from personal cognition (Pham et al., 2018). In this study, perceived value can be categorized into two aspects. First, is traditional value, which consists of quality value, value for money, emotional value, and social value. Second, Islamic value consists of Islamic physical attributes and Islamic non-physical attributes. In the hospitality and tourism industry, customer perceived value has recently been an object of interest to many researchers (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015) and this study adapted the perceived value proposed by (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015).

The study noted that the quality dimensions can be used to conceptualize perceived service value. Moreover, Li and Shang (2019) highlighted that service quality becomes the indicator for determining customer values, and the value perceptions will be directly influenced by perceived service quality. Studies have been conducted on Muslim tourists from various countries from the context of tourism and have shown a significant influence of quality value on customer satisfaction (Ismail et al., 2021) Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed

H₁ The quality value positively and significantly influences passenger satisfaction.

Perceived value is operationalized in some hospitality and marketing literature with a single-item scale to measure the customer's perceived value in terms of 'value for money' or functional value (Slack et al., 2021). According to El-Adly (2019), the perceived value involves a trade-off between what the customer gets such as quality, benefits, and utilities and what they refuse (e.g., prices, sacrifices, time) to buy and consume a product. Within the general context of Islamic tourism, all Muslims see price subjectively and consider its value as a key variable that influences making decisions or choices (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₂ Price value positively and significantly influences passenger satisfaction.

Emotional Value

Generally, any type of service provided that influences the emotions of customers or tourists towards their satisfaction will encourage the re-intention of using the same services. It is important to better understand the relationship and sense of the link between value and satisfaction (Granados et al., 2021). More recently, An et al (2019) perceived value as positively impacting both future behavioural intentions and behaviours themselves. The study focused on the relationship between customer service quality, perceived value, satisfaction, and post-purchase intention, and found that perceived value has a positive impact towards behavioural intentions and behaviours. Other than that, a few studies on the perceived value of the green hotel concept have been elaborated upon by (Hamid et al., 2017). Perceived value has also been discussed within the aspect of accommodation by (Razli et al., 2017). According to Eid (2015), Muslim tourist's emotional values influence their satisfaction as tourists, and the discussion above, leads to the following hypothesis:

H₃ Emotional value positively and significantly influences passenger satisfaction.

Social Value

Meanwhile, the social interactions within a group on vacation will create more meaningful passenger satisfaction and usually depends on the space of the cruise (Brida et al., 2012). Besides this, past studies on services and social interaction have proved that the customer's affective response is directly related to perceived value (Brida et al., 2012). For the leisure cruise, the service environment will influence the passenger's emotions and behaviour during the cruise. Many studies have found that social value significantly influences customer satisfaction in the tourism industry (Hamid et al., 2017; Razli et al., 2017), therefore the following hypothesis is proposed

H₄ Social value positively and significantly influences passenger satisfaction.

Islamic Physical and Non-Physical Attributes

The studies and discussions on Islamic attributes remain highly limited. In general, the information related to Islamic attributes that could provide insight into this segment requirement would benefit the tourism operators in developing or promoting their services to attract Muslim tourists (Pitra et al., 2021; Sulaiman et al., 2021; Isa et al., 2018). Despite limited studies and discussions on the importance of Islamic attributes, this study adapted the Islamic attributes proposed by Eid and El-Gohary (2015) as one of the dimensions to apply to Islamic cruise tourism in Malaysia. The study by Eid and El-Gohary (2015) states that in the context of consumption, Islamic value dimensions refer to the attributes that have relevance or comply with the rules of Sharia or religious identity. The religious element of Islamic physical attributes and Islamic non-physical attributes may affect consumer satisfaction, especially among Muslim tourists (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015). Islamic physical attributes concern all Islamic attributes that can be seen and touched. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed

H₅ Islamic physical attributes positively and significantly influence passenger satisfaction.

Islamic non-physical attributes refer to all attributes that can be viewed but not necessarily touched directly (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015). Therefore, the following hypotheses are developed

H₆ Islamic non-physical attributes positively and significantly influence passenger satisfaction.

Religiosity

Islamic religiosity refers to an intricate concept and a variegated human phenomenon and seems to cover considerable ground such as behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and experiences (Imran et al., 2017). It should be noted that religiosity is distinct from religion (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015), and has long been acknowledged as an important social force that influences human behaviour. There are many arguments and discussions about the definition of religiosity in the literature (Imran et al., 2017; Bukhari et al., 2021; Pitra, 2021; Sulaiman et al., 2021; Isa et al., 2018), but all the studies claim that religion affects individual behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs.

To summarise this literature review, many arguments and discussions from different perspectives of religiosity have been done in many studies. Religiosity becomes the main factor or key in influencing others' attitudes and behaviour (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015). Therefore, in this study, religiosity becomes the moderating effect that influences passenger satisfaction through perceived value. Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are developed:

H_{5a} Islamic religiosity moderates the relationship between Islamic physical attributes and passenger satisfaction.

H_{6a} Islamic religiosity moderates the relationship between Islamic non-physical attributes and passenger satisfaction.

Passenger Satisfaction

Passenger satisfaction is the starting point to build guest loyalty or guest retention, which is essential in promoting long-term business success that helps to keep customers and collect CLV (customer lifetime value). Satisfaction promotes more profitable business in the industry, specifically when passengers are satisfied with the services and products. Moreover, passenger satisfaction has been regarded as one of the most significant sections of the transportation industry. Another definition considers satisfaction as the response to the accumulated satisfactory evaluations of a product or service (El-Adly, 2019; Mai & Cuong, 2021; Han et al., 2019) described customer loyalty as the interest or willingness of an individual to engage in a particular behaviour, whereas both repurchase intention and recommendation intention are essential elements of customer behavioural intention. One study regarding passenger satisfaction within the cruise industry analysed two different perspectives of passenger satisfaction on board and passenger satisfaction in a port facility. The same study revealed that the service environment is fundamental for passenger satisfaction (Manzano & Valpuesta, 2018; Guo et al., 2021). In the cruise industry, passenger satisfaction has been analysed into two different contexts passenger satisfaction on board, and passenger satisfaction in the port facilities (Brida et al., 2012). Most instances of passenger satisfaction are influenced by service quality.

Methods

This study adapted the previous framework introduced by (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015). Population and sampling were based on the estimated number of cruise passengers on a cruise ship per trip (1,500 passengers per trip), with the Islamic cruises sailing three times a year. The sample size was based on Tabachnick and Fidell's (2013) formula, '50 + 8M', where 'M' is the number of variables. Due to the unavailability of the sampling frame, a non-probability sampling technique was chosen with the use of snowball sampling to reach a small, specialised population. A total of 106 questionnaires measuring perceived value, passenger satisfaction, and Islamic religiosity were distributed amongst cruise passengers in Malaysia. The quantitative data were collected and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Results

Demographic Profile

Table 1

Summary of Demographic Profile for Respondents

Items	Description	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Female	64	60.4
	Male	42	39.6
Nationality	Malaysian	106	100
	Non-Malaysian	0	0
Age	51 years old and above	58	54.7
	41-50	23	21.7
	31-40	16	15.1
	21-30	9	9
Occupation	Employed	48	45.3
	Unemployed	44	41.5
	Retired	14	13.2
Monthly Income	RM 1,000-RM 3,000	15	14.2
	RM 3,001-RM 6,000	36	34
	RM 6,001 and above	41	38.7
	Unemployed but sponsored	14	13.2
Duration of the Cruise	4 Days 3 nights	77	72.6
	5 Days 4 nights	29	27.4
Travel Partner	Family	55	51.9
	Friend	43	40.6
	Alone	8	7.5
Source of Cruise Information	Social media	35	33
	Introduced by a friend	32	30.2
	Travel agent	16	15.1
	Television	11	10.4
	MATTA Fair/ promotion	6	6.6
	Printed form	5	4.7

Table 1 summarises the demographic profile of respondents who were Islamic cruise passengers. The majority (60.4%) were female, and respondents were Malaysian, with 54.7% of the cruise passengers being 51 years old and above. In the occupation categories, most passengers were either still employed (45.3%), retired (41.5%), or unemployed (13.2%). With regards to occupation, the majority of respondents received a monthly income of above RM 6,000 (38.7%), as they were employed, and the retirees were on a pension scheme. Meanwhile, a group comprising unemployed housewives made up the segments that were possibly enjoying a sponsored trip by their spouse or children. The largest preference for the cruise package from passengers was the four days and three nights package (72.6%), followed by the five days and four nights package (27.4%). The findings show that most of the respondents preferred to travel with family (51.9%) rather than with friends or alone. Besides this, 33% of the Islamic cruise passengers discovered the information about the cruise from

social media, with the rest from travel agents, television, the MATTA Fair, printed advertisements, and word-of-mouth.

Relationship Between Perceived Value and Satisfaction

Table 2

Linear Regression Analysis for the Relationship between Perceived Value and Satisfaction

Predictor	Model Std. β
Perceived Value	
Quality Value	0.767***
Price Value	0.776***
Emotional Value	0.713***
Social Value	0.440***
Islamic physical attribute	0.608***
Islamic non-physical attribute	0.638***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 2 summarizes the results of the relationship between perceived value and passenger satisfaction. Regression analysis was used in this study to assess the association between the two variables. All the predictors (quality value, price value, emotional value, social value, Islamic physical attribute, and Islamic non-physical attribute) are clearly shown to have a positive significant relationship with passenger satisfaction. Thus, the hypotheses from H₁ to H₆ are supported.

The Moderating Effect of Islamic Religiosity

Table 3

Moderation Effect of Islamic Religiosity

	β	SE	t	p	LL	UL
Islamic religiosity (M)	0.3538**	0.0946	3.7414	0.0003	0.1662	0.5414
Islamic physical attributes (X)	0.4239***	0.0876	4.8388	0.0000	0.2502	0.5977
M x X interaction term	0.0484	0.0935	0.5171	0.6062	-	0.2338
					0.1371	
Islamic religiosity (M)	0.2969*	0.0953	3.1161	0.0024	0.1079	0.4859
Islamic non-physical attributes (X)	0.4716***	0.0906	5.2063	0.0000	0.2919	0.6513
M x X interaction term	0.0410	0.0890	0.4606	0.6461	-	0.2175
					0.1355	

Note: * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3 summarizes the moderation effect of Islamic religiosity towards Islamic physical and non-physical attributes. This analysis was conducted via the PROCESS Macro for SPSS developed by (Hayes, 2013). Hayes provides different types of model templates that show the moderating effect of a variable (M) on the relationship between an independent variable (X) and a dependent variable (Y). It was found that Islamic religiosity did not moderate the

relationship between Islamic physical attributes and satisfaction ($p = 0.6062$), nor Islamic non-physical attributes with satisfaction ($p = 0.6461$).

Discussion

This study theoretically discussed the relationship between traditional value dimension and passenger satisfaction among Islamic cruise passengers in Malaysia. Amongst the factors influencing passenger satisfaction, it was found that quality value has a substantial impact on passenger satisfaction. This is consistent with the previous results of (El-Adly, 2019; Mai et al., 2021; Han et al., 2019).

Price value has been identified as a psychological factor that has an important influence on customer reactions to price value such as satisfaction and price acceptance (Asma et al., 2018). In general, for Malaysian perceptions, the price given must usually be equivalent with the quality and services provided, giving more advantages to the customer. In the context of Islamic cruises, Muslim passengers have considered it as one of the key values that influence their satisfaction.

This is similar to emotional and social values, which were found to influence satisfaction (Granados et al., 2021; An et al., 2019; Hamid et al., 2017; Razli et al., 2017). The findings of this study correspond with previous discoveries. Emotional and social values were found to enhance the self-concept of social passengers and were gained from the cruise package's ability to satisfy the passengers.

Understanding Muslim behaviour should include Islamic values in both aspects of Islamic physical attributes and non-physical attributes. As Islamic values offered by Islamic physical attributes have a significant influence on passenger satisfaction (Pitra et al., 2021; Sulaiman et al., 2021; Isa et al., 2018; Eid et al., 2015) non-physical attributes have become an added factor that increases passenger satisfaction.

Finally, as religiosity is a value that could moderate and influence the behaviour of a Muslim (Imran et al., 2017; Bukhari et al., 2021; Pitra, 2021; Sulaiman et al., 2021), this study has found contradictory results that Islamic religiosity did not moderate the relationship between Islamic value and satisfaction. This explained that despite being highly religious or otherwise, a passenger's satisfaction will be shaped by the values offered by the Islamic cruise package.

Conclusion and Future Research

Several limitations have been faced throughout the study. Firstly, the perceived value of the Islamic cruise investigated in this study was limited in scope. Future researchers may need to widen the scope of investigation by incorporating this perceived value on Islamic cruise specifically from an organizational perspective. Secondly, this study is limited to Muslim passengers. Future research may want to broaden to other religions as their unit of analysis. This might be contributed to different results and findings. The development of cruise tourism creates a win-win situation for the Malaysian government especially the Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC), cruise operators, industry players and cruise passengers. However, all party manages to identify the challenges and most suitable approach and ways to address them by implementing perceived value.

Overall, there is a big opportunity for the Islamic Tourism industry and hospitality in terms of marketing size and income. Specifically, to the cruise industry, it is demonstrated that it will not only benefit the Muslim but be advantageous to non-Muslims as well in future. Hence, it gives a large space for another niche industry, which can generate income for the country, especially Malaysia. In line with the government's mission and vision to be the global Islamic Tourism Hub those certain aspects, need to be improved from time to time and will come into reality.

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