

# Kuala Lumpur As An Islamic City Tourism Destination: The Influence of Place Attractiveness and Experience Quality on Place Attachment

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARAFMS/v14-i1/19847> DOI:10.6007/IJARAFMS/v14-i1/19847

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**Published Online:** 08 January 2024

## Abstract

Global Islamic tourism is experiencing considerable expansion due to the growing Muslim population. This study specifically addresses the issue of how to build a strong emotional attachment to Kuala Lumpur to ensure that Kuala Lumpur consistently remains the destination of choice among Muslim tourists. This article begins with a systematic review, synthesis, and integration of existing knowledge on the role of place attachment and its theoretical background, emphasising the importance of psychological processes in explaining the relationship between place attractiveness, experience quality and place attachment. This research contributes to knowledge theoretically by arguing that the fusion of Islamic and conventional tourism and the quality of experience in the context of Islamic urban tourism could enhance visitors' emotional attachment. The framework can also serve to stimulate new research can help destination managers address the key conventional issue of Malaysia's long-term competitiveness or sustainability in the Islamic tourism market in general, or Kuala Lumpur in particular, in the Asia-Pacific region.

**Keywords:** Core Destination Attributes, Augmented Destination Attributes, Islamic Destination Attributes, Experience Quality, Place Attachment

## Introduction

The global tourism sector is progressively evolving into a more competitive marketplace. Consequently, international destinations engage in intense competition to formulate strategic marketing plans that enhance the industry's performance and attain notable levels of success in the tourism sector (Bornhorst et al., 2010). The Muslim Travel Index Report (2022) projects that by 2030, there will be 2.3 billion Muslims worldwide, or one-third of the world's population, practicing Islam. In recent years, numerous international destinations have emerged as significant alternative market segments due to the rapid expansion of Islamic tourism (Marlinda et al., 2022). However, the tourism sector is probably going to be most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on the worldwide travel market, which includes Malaysia (Shin et al., 2022). The global travel

industry, which includes Malaysia, is likely to be the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on the tourist sector (Shin et al., 2022). These negative impacts are likely to be felt most acutely in the hotel/accommodation, airline/transportation, restaurant/food, and beverage sectors, including tourist attractions (The Edge Market, 2020). Notwithstanding the setbacks in 2020 and 2021, Malaysia is optimistic that, after COVID-19 is eradicated, Islamic tourism has the potential to generate higher returns for the country's tourism industry.

After the reopening of the country's borders on April 1, 2022, MOTAC promoted Malaysia's tourism products, including Islamic tourism, abroad through a series of working visits. Recognizing the potential of Islamic tourism, the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) will continue to introduce numerous programs to identify opportunities in the Islamic tourism industry. As for the future of tourism, travelers are becoming increasingly tech-savvy and relying on digital applications. The evolving tourism landscape requires a rethinking of tourism and sustainability due to the growing importance of technology and its potential for Islamic travel. In addition, Malaysia has a wide range of Muslim-friendly travel packages for Muslims that allow visitors to experience historical sites, mosque architecture, heritage, gastronomy, nature, art, and culture (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2022). Therefore, Malaysia is in a comfortable position to build a strong bond between the expanding Muslim tourists and the country. A strong bond with a place is undeniable and would lead to repeat visits, higher spending, a longer stay, positive word of mouth, and many other positive behavioral intentions in the market.

## **Literature Review**

### **Place Attachment**

The concept of place attachment has been extensively studied in many fields and applied in tourism research studies to comprehend how people and places interact, as well as how to efficiently manage and market tourism destinations (Dwyer et al. 2019). Place attachment is a positive personal connection between a visitor and a destination, where the tourist appreciates the destination and shows genuine interest in it. This attachment occurs when a destination exceeds the tourist's expectations and there is a favorable psychological relationship between the traveler and the destination. According to Nasir et al. (2020), when tourists have pleasant feelings towards a destination, it is defined as an emotional attachment.

The theory of place attachment, first put forth by Fried in the field of sociology in 1963, according to Hummon (1992), refers to a person's emotional attachment to a community. The field has experienced substantial progress, such as research in environmental psychology Shumaker and Taylor (1983); Altman and Low (1992); Giuliani and Feldman (1993); Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001), human geography Relph (1976); Brown and Raymond (2007), and leisure studies examining the connections between people, natural areas, and vacation destinations (Williams & Vaske, 2003; Kyle & al., 2003). The idea highlights the relationships that occur between individuals and their physical surroundings DeBenedetti (2006) and is driven by place-specific symbolism, hedonism, and social connotations. Indeed, people who have developed a sense of attachment to a place tend to revisit it, seek its proximity, and talk about it with others (Yuksel et al., 2010). During a trip, the places visited on vacation have a symbolic meaning associated with the attitudes and ideas that surround them (Sack, 1992). Research by Yuksel et al (2010) has demonstrated that people form strong bonds with the places they visit.

Place attachment involves "the interplay of affections and emotions, knowledge and beliefs, behaviors, and actions about a place" (Altman & Low 1992). Place attachment is influenced by the duration of the individual-place relationship. There is an assumption that individuals develop a greater understanding and sense of place as their interaction progresses (Xu et al., 2020). Williams argues that attachment to a place consists of at least two dimensions: place dependence and place identification. Place dependence refers to the functional reliance of tourists on their vacation destination. On the other hand, place identification denotes the emotional connection that arises from the tourist attributing a unique significance to the location (Williams & Vaske, 2003).

### **Dimensionality of Place Attachment**

Conventional studies on place attachment have demonstrated the multifaceted nature of this idea. Place identity and place dependence are the two sub-dimensions of place attachment that have been identified by prior research (Hunt, 2008; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004; Williams & Vaske, 2003). Social attachment and affective attachment are two additional dimensions of place attachment that have been identified by some researchers and conceptualised as components of person-place relationships (Kyle et al., 2005; Giuliani, 2003; Low & Altman, 1992).

In the tourism context, place attachment is a multifaceted construct that typically discerns between two or more sub-constructs (Hawke, 2011; Ramkissoon, Smith, and Weiler, 2013; Ramkissoon & Mavondo, 2017). Place attachment can be classified into four distinct categories, namely social attachment, place identity, place dependence, and place affect, according to the research of (Kyle et al., 2004; Ramkissoon et al., 2013). Hosany et al (2017); Kim et al (2017) believe that there are only two rather than four important dimensions for measuring place attachment. These dimensions are place dependence and place identity.

Place identity pertains to the degree to which an individual desire to be associated with a specific location or place. Place identity is considered a cognitive aspect of place attachment and is a more complex dimension of place attachment. According to Tuan (1974), an individual can form an emotional connection to a destination even in the absence of physical proximity, and the identity of a place can exist in a person's life even without a physical connection to the place. Relph (1976) also agreed with Tuan's idea and said that a place's identity can come from people having the same interests and beliefs. He further stated that individuals may feel a sense of attachment to a location for motives apart from its physical features, including national heritage.

In contrast, place dependence has been defined as the functional component of place attachment, where individual goals are achieved through the use of the location. (Raymond et al., 2010; Ujang, 2012). Indeed, the degree of place dependence is proportional to the extent to which a place serves as a functional environment for people to perform their intended activities (McCunn & Gifford, 2014). Consequently, the ability of a place to facilitate certain activities for people largely determines the degree of place dependence.

### **Place Attractiveness**

According to Pierce (1997), the attractiveness of a place is a "pull factor" that influences tourists to choose one destination over another (Lee et al., 2009). Furthermore, the definition of attractiveness includes the perceived ability of a place to provide both satisfaction and positive outcomes to visitors (Mayo and Jarvis, 1981). This definition implies that the more a destination can accommodate the tourists' needs, the more attractive it is. This ability is

reinforced by the specific features of a place that contribute to its attractiveness—such as amenities, services, infrastructure, venue, and transportation systems. As a result, tourists evaluate the attractiveness of a particular place based on the perceived ability of its features to meet their needs (Mayo and Jarvis, 1981). In their first list, Gearing et al (1974) named several characteristics of the attractiveness of a place: historical considerations, social factors, environmental factors, retail and recreational opportunities, food, accommodation, and infrastructure (Khuong & Ha, 2014). Although each component is essential, the importance of each dimension differs depending on the specific destination. According to a comprehensive review of the literature on place attractiveness, four key factors (accessibility, amenities and infrastructure, landscape, and local community) have the potential to induce people to visit and stay in a destination and thus significantly influence the decision to visit, destination attachment, and expected tourist behavior (Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, & Tanner, 2006). Consequently, Reitsamer et al. (2016) believe that the same aspects of a destination's attractiveness play an important role in tourists' cognitive evaluation and the subsequent development of a bond.

Nevertheless, Korstanje (2017) has characterised the concept of an urban tourism destination as a touchstone for a new sort of postmodern lifestyle that has become entrenched in densely populated cities, as locations for urban tourism are highly desirable. Urban tourism is the description of various tourist activities in which the city is the main destination and place of interest (Ariani, 2018). Besides, urban tourism is viewed as a growth-generating strategic endeavor (Androniceanu et al., 2019). It provides a range of benefits that include social, geographical, and economic (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Pearce, 2001). Therefore, urban areas are keen to cultivate this lucrative endeavor. As a result, an abundance of new destinations emerges, intensifying competition between cities (Kresic & Prebezac, 2011).

However, numerous prior efforts have attempted to gather lists of common and significant attributes of destination attractiveness (Gearing et al., 1974; Goodal and Bergsma, 1990; Hou et al., 2005; Hu and Richie, 1993; Kozak and Rimmington, 1998; Laws, 1995; Lew, 1987; Thach and Axinn, 1994). Different dimensions have been employed by various authors to assess the attraction of destinations. A study conducted by Akroush et al. (2016) employed two different dimensions: the physical environment and the characteristics of the people. In contrast to Xu and Zhang (2016), Akroush et al. (2016)'s two-dimensional destination attractiveness suggestion is less comprehensive. These authors expand the measurement of destination attractiveness by using three dimensions instead of two, which include natural attractiveness, cultural attractiveness, and infrastructure.

According to the literature on urban tourism, there are primary and secondary factors that determine attractiveness (Jansen-Verbeke, 1986). In 1986, Jansen-Verbeke proposed a model of urban tourist attractions. The primary components of a city are its most frequented attractions; they consist of tourist resources such as historic districts, residential areas, and special occasions. Secondary components complement these attractions and contribute to the development of tourism in a city by providing tourists with shopping facilities, meeting rooms, accommodation, and transportation. Additional components offered to tourists include an information centre, road signs, parking, and guidebooks. The author lists the most important attractive elements of a city and divides them into three categories: primary, secondary, and supplementary attractions. Afterward, this model was employed by several authors (Law, 1992; Ariani, 2018). However, for the current discussion, the dimensions of place attractiveness, consisting of core attributes, augmented attributes, and Islamic

destination attributes, have been seen as significant influences on tourists' cognitive assessments and the development of their subsequent attachment formation (Thach and Axinn, 1994).

### **Core Destination Attributes**

According to Hu & Ritchie (1993); Thach & Axinn (1994), core attributes and augmented attributes are often used to measure the attractiveness of a place. In a recent study by Chebli et al (2020), two theoretical models by Gearing et al (1974); Jansen-Verbeke (1986) serve as the basis for the main characteristics of destinations. The elements that have the greatest impact on a destination's competitive position are climate, architecture and urban ambience, ethnography and folklore (cultural heritage), professional and event organisations, sports facilities and amenities, historical monuments (world heritage), historical dominance, and public spaces. According to Enright and Newton (2005), the core resources and attractions, which include physiography, culture and history, market connections, activities, special events, and the tourism superstructure, are the most important components of a destination's attractiveness (Vinyals-Mirabent, 2019). Brida et al (2012); Moreno Gil & Ritchie (2009) are among the earlier studies that have looked at specific cultural attractions in urban areas. Brida et al (2012) investigated whether the local cultural heritage of a city can increase its attractiveness. They found that while museums are a valuable source of education and income for the community, entrance fees discourage visitors from returning. Another study found that galleries and museums are not seen as important factors in the competitiveness of the tourist industry (Enright & Newton, 2004). Historic cities in particular have unique "locational" qualities". Historic heritage includes a variety of historical artifacts, including monuments, historic buildings, architectural elements, parks, canals, harbors, and sites of traditional activities, as well as small-scale differences in urban morphology. These morphological and physical features are strong "pull factors" that attract tourists (Ashworth 1984).

The urban living environment appears to have a considerable influence on the overall attractiveness of a city. Clarke (2003) found that the social and economic diversity of the urban environment has an impact on the diversity of urban lifestyles. Undoubtedly, an appealing atmosphere is crucial to attracting tourists to urban areas (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Matos-Wasem, 2010). Street markets are extremely popular tourist destinations and have the ability to become a symbol of a region. Kikuchi and Ryan (2007) point out that marketplaces with a unique cultural atmosphere are crucial for promoting tourism and maintaining a city's dynamic image, as they provide an additional layer of attraction and diversity. Cultural events and other forms of urban entertainment can be seen as a useful way to provide some level of education to visitors (Hwang & Lee, 2019). Several studies have found that entertainment has an impact on tourist satisfaction (Mikuli and Prebeac, 2011; Xia et al., 2009; Wan and Chan, 2013; Coghlan, 2011). In line with the parameters of this study, climate proves to be an important factor for visitors when choosing an urban destination. In most cases, a pleasant climate refers to a warm environment that influences the variety of tourist activities and the overall competitiveness of the destination's tourism industry (Klenosky, 2002). In recent years, shopping has become an important factor in choosing a destination (Choi et al., 2016).

According to IPK (2007), 75% of Muslim travellers, especially those from the Middle East, attach great importance to shopping (Ariffin & Hashim, 2009) Festivals and events have an important function in attracting tourists to a particular region and serving as an economic stimulus while entertaining and bringing society together (Haarhoff, 2017). According to



Cudny (2013), events lead to an increase in the number of tourists visiting the area and have an impact on a variety of local factors. Exhibitions and convention centres are considered promising growth sectors in some cities when it comes to attracting tourists. Trade fairs, conferences, and exhibitions of various kinds, including the growing popularity of arts and crafts as a tourist attraction, can be either temporary or permanent. Moreover, exhibition halls and conference centres are often seen as essential components of urban tourism (Boivin et al. 2018).

### **Augmented Destination Attributes**

The most important features of a city are not limited to its core attributes. Although the basic attributes of a destination are critical to its success, destinations can develop or produce resources that remain important to the tourist experience to compensate for the perceived disadvantages of natural resources. (Jumanazarov et al., 2020). The enhanced destination attributes are not necessarily for the tourists directly, but they are general attributes or capabilities that can enhance or enrich the tourist experience (Crouch, 2011). In other words, these attributes describe "how" tourism is offered and perceived (Jumanazarov et al., 2020). (Jumanazarov et al., 2020). In addition, the extended dimension includes any physical or functional attributes that have the potential to influence visitors' evaluation of the basic attributes. (Matos-Wasem, 2010).

Another important success factor of urban planning is the ability to offer a unique tourist activity, such as neighborhood excursions, as this can create a more immersive experience. As a result, it may create longer-lasting memories of the visit (Bui & Kiatkawsin, 2020; Gunn, 1997). In addition, a good city tour plays an important role in ensuring that travelers enjoy their stay at a destination. In the context of Islamic tourism, for example, it is noteworthy that the introduction to Islamic elements during sightseeing is considered an educational activity by most travelers. It helps to broaden tourists' knowledge and rediscover Islamic civilization and history. (Kamarudin & Ismail, 2016).

Based on previous research, Gunn (1997) found that the best qualities of destinations include pedestrian-friendly areas, parks and gardens, and public spaces linked to urban design components. Furthermore, tourism infrastructure is an important concern for visitors as it forms the basic framework for development systems such as cities. According to Bajs (2011); Ramchander et al (2006), tourism-related infrastructure consists primarily of electricity supply, water supply, and sewerage; transportation networks, terminals, and means of communication; security for tourists; postal and other telecommunication services (telephone, email, internet access); health services; specific tourist infrastructure (information offices, signage, walking tours, and city guides); and public spaces, parks, and gardens (Giambona & Grassini, 2020). Furthermore, accessibility is the degree to which a particular good, service, or place is easily accessible, reachable, approachable, or usable. The accessibility of a city seems to play an important role in attracting visitors. The availability of a wide range of facilities and additional services that meet the needs of visitors is crucial to the success of any destination. Tourist facilities are not the only factors that contribute to the attractiveness of an urban destination. Rather, the most important factors that influence visitors' satisfaction with the destination are the cleanliness and hygiene of the city (Merrilees et al., 2009; Alegre and Garau, 2010). In addition, the most important features of a destination that contribute to visitor enjoyment are the friendliness and hospitality of the residents (Kozak, 2001; Yoon and Uysal, 2005). (Kozak, 2001; Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Similarly, the

gastronomic offer of a destination is crucial for its enjoyment and attractiveness (Kim and colleagues, 2010; Hui and colleagues, 2007).

### **Islamic Destination Attributes**

Undoubtedly, religious identity appears to play an important role in shaping consumption experiences, including hospitality and tourism choices, among Muslim tourists (Eid, 2013). In the context of tourism, religion can influence tourists' choice of destination and product preferences (Weidenfeld and Ron, 2008). According to Poria et al (2003), the effects of religious belief on behaviour have two main sources. The first is the explicit and clear guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour or practices. Examples of this are the religious rules that prohibit Muslims from eating pork or Hindus from eating beef. The second means by which behaviour is influenced is the fact that religion shapes the culture, attitudes, and values of society. This is confirmed by Grigg (1995), whose research demonstrates the influence of religion and religiosity on dietary habits. Further evidence can be found in Essoo and Dibb (2004), who demonstrate the influence of religion on consumer behaviour based on the differences in consumer spending between Muslims and Hindus. When it comes to the relationship between tourism and religion, particularly Islam, the lack of literature is even more apparent, especially in relation to Islamic religious attributes and their impact on the needs of tourists in general and Muslim tourists in particular. The few available studies tend to focus on the needs of Muslim pilgrims (when travelling to Mecca for the Hajj) (Ahmed et al., 2006; Memish, 2007; Shafi et al., 2008) and not on the needs of tourists.

The Muslim tourism segment is currently considered the marketer's target market. Religion is an important factor when deciding on a destination. Therefore, it is very important that Islamic features are present at the destination (Rahayu, 2018). Muslims engaging directly and indirectly with the teachings of Islam influence their decisions regarding vacation and travel plans (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010; Bazazo et al., 2017). Planning in the Muslim tourist market should be done in accordance with Sharia law, which governs all matters related to tourism activities (Battour et al., 2011).

Islamic attractions are needed to fulfill Muslim activities. According to Stephenson (2014), Muslim tourism products represent the Islamic attributes of the local culture, including architecture, history, and norms, which can be utilized to expand Islamic hospitality on a larger scale. It is also known that Islamic art galleries and museums are an important pillar for tourist attractions due to their historical appeal and heritage links. Din (1989) reported that Muslims travel to historical Islamic sites to relax and learn about the history of Islam. Similarly, Hu & Ritchie (1993) found that museums influence the attractiveness of a destination and the vacation experience of visitors. Islamic architecture is one of the most attractive and influential architectures in the world (Hayaty & Monikhi, 2015). In addition, there is an endless variety of halal and Islamic products that can be found throughout the city, such as Muslim souvenirs (Battour, 2018). These mementos are given as gifts to friends and relatives when they return home. They also serve as a reminder of the place they have visited (COMCEC, 2016).

### **Experience Quality**

Over the past decade, the idea of quality of experience has undoubtedly gained traction in the travel and hospitality industries (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Bialski, 2006; Pearce, 2012; GMTI 2022). The Marketing Science Institute (2020) views the tourist experience as one of the most

important research topics in the coming years, even though it is becoming increasingly complex to capture the experience throughout the journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Therefore, a deeper understanding of experiences can improve performance in the tourism industry (Chen and Chen, 2010). However, despite its importance, the quality of experiences has been neglected in the tourism industry (Liu et al., 2017). Recent research has explored the idea of experience quality as good memories that visitors develop after directly experiencing important activities and events (Vada et al. 2019). Pleasant holiday experiences can directly create a positive mood and lead to well-being (Hills & Argyle, 1998; Sirgy et al., 2011). In addition, according to Nawijn (2011), people can still have great experiences on holiday even after the trip has ended. Consequently, vacations can have a positive impact on satisfaction both in the long term (e.g., one year) and in the short term. This can be seen in outcome indicators such as happiness or life satisfaction (Kroesen & Handy, 2014).

### **Dimensionality of Experience Quality**

Otto and Ritchie (1996) developed the first quantitative scale for service experience, which included four dimensions: recognition, hedonism, involvement, and peace of mind. These four aspects can be found in various sectors, including hotels, travel companies, airlines, amusement parks, tour operators, and attractions. Later, Astrapellos et al (2010) used this scale to investigate service quality in outdoor activities in Greece. In this new setting, the scale proved to be perfectly consistent. In addition, Astrapellos et al (2010) found some statistical differences between the genders of the respondents: women scored higher on hedonism, while men scored higher on engagement and peace of mind.

Chen and Chen (2010) applied Otto and Ritchie's (1996) scale to Taiwanese cultural tourism and found that only three dimensions are applicable in this context: educational experience, peace of mind, and engagement. They therefore recommended that the scale be modified in future research to better reflect the context of cultural tourism. Currently, there is no consensus among researchers on the dimensions of customer experience quality (Hussein et al. 2018). Scholars state that customer experience quality consists of a few elements. For instance, Wu and Ai (2016) claim that the critical components of quality of experience in the golf sector include interaction, physical experience, outcome, and access. Andersson and Mossberg (2004) suggest that the elements of the restaurant experience include the food, service, atmosphere, and décor in the context of the restaurant sector. Wu et al. (2016) identified several variables for the quality of the hospital experience, including interaction quality, physical quality, outcome quality, administrative quality, and subjective enjoyment. Quality of experience is generally defined as attraction, intellectual challenge, and arousal of visitor interest (Murray, Foley, & Lynch, 2010). The subjective nature of the concept of "quality of experience" makes it a difficult facet of the tourism industry to define. Furthermore, it is difficult to examine and measure all individual experiences, as these elements are not actual products and services but merely memories (Murray et al. 2010).

### **Key Concepts: Place Attractiveness and Place Attachment**

A previous study by several researchers found that place attractiveness has a significant impact on place attachment (Xu & Zhang, 2016; Song et al., 2017). Tsai (2011); Lee (2001); Lee and Allen (1999) considered place attractiveness as a precondition for place attachment. In general, a review of the literature has shown that place attachment is strengthened when the visitor feels physically or psychologically attracted to the particular features or characteristics of a destination (Hou et al., 2005; Lee, 2001).



In terms of the core attributes of destinations, Cheng et al (2013) emphasise that destinations possess a strong core resources that can promote stronger tourist attachment to the destination and attract a larger number of visitors. In addition, the most important source of influence on loyalty to a place is the core attribute of the attractiveness of the destination, which is particularly reflected in the identification with the place. In line with the findings of Warzecha and Lime (2001); Lee (2001), these results support the notion that destination attractiveness serves as an antecedent variable in predicting place attachment. Place attachment is significantly influenced by the main characteristics of the destination, especially the urban environment. People tend to develop a greater desire to associate with a specific attraction whose ambience and attributes are perceived as more attractive (Sonnenfeld, 1968; Wohlwill, 1983).

Ujang (2010) has pointed out that the physical characteristics of a destination have a significant influence on the degree of attachment that might be developed to that destination. Specifically, the essential components of a destination that exert a significant influence on destination attachment are the tangible aspects, the types of activities that can be practiced within the boundaries of the destination, and the perceived images of the destination. In terms of the enhanced attributes of a destination, research has also demonstrated that a place with appealing leisure facilities can increase visitor attachment to the place. (Moore & Graefe, 1994; Lee & Allen, 1999).

Religion can have a significant impact on how people interact with their surroundings and the place itself through the design of cities, neighborhoods, houses, and sacred structures (Ithnan & Ariffin, 2020). The characteristics of a place have a considerable influence on the emotions experienced and expressed, which strengthens the believer's attachment to the place and their faith. According to a study by Stedman (2003), the tangible attributes of a destination do not have a direct influence on the formation of a feeling for the place. Rather, it is the symbolic connotations (Islamic spirituality) that promote an emotional attachment to the destination. Mazumdar & Mazumdar (2004) claimed that a place or destination can play a crucial role in a religion and that a religion can promote the growth of place attachment—a process whereby a person's religious identity becomes associated with places that are important to that religion. In the context of religion, places help believers find themselves and develop their identity by creating a psychological bond between them and the place. According to this view, attachment to a place represents the substructure of a believer's self-identification.

Religious institutions endow sacred sites a symbolic value that not only distinguishes them from other places but also creates bonds through their attractive physical layout or architectural design. According to a model of attachment to religious places developed by Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004), the physical attributes of a place - such as its sights, sounds and sacred buildings and structures — are among the factors that determine a person's attachment to a particular place. In other words, the characteristics of a destination can enhance a person's spirituality, devotion or commitment to that place.

### **The Mediating Roles of Experience Quality on The Relationships Between Place Attractiveness and Place Attachment**

The concept of "place attractiveness" is often considered in the literature as a possible precursor to "place attachment" (Lee, 2001; Hou et al., 2005). In the context of island tourism, Cheng et al (2013) found that stronger place attachment is correlated with higher destination attractiveness compared to island tourism. Although there is a consensus in tourism research

that experience quality has an impact on consumer place attachment (Cheng et al., 2012; Loureiro, 2014), there is no direct study in the literature to date that focuses on the role of experience quality as a mediator to explain the underlying process between place attractiveness and place attachment. Moon and Han (2018) found that experience quality in tourism is not only an important determinant of destination satisfaction but also acts as a mediator between destination attributes and satisfaction. An earlier study by Cole and Scott (2004) showed that quality of experience mediates the relationship between service quality and satisfaction. In this study, service quality was operationalized as the ambience, amenities, and comfort of the place, which are closely related to the construct of place attractiveness in the present discussion. In the context of Islamic destinations, Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004) argued that the characteristics of a religious destination significantly influence the emotional experience of visitors, which in turn helps to connect the visitor to both the destination and the religion itself. Notable studies by Ringel and Finkelstein (1991) and Guest and Lee (1983) assert that attachment and satisfaction are two distinct but related concepts.

Although place attachment is generally related to the attractiveness of place, very few studies have examined the potential impact of integrated tourism experiences on each dimension of attachment to place in the context of Islamic urban tourism, leaving us with a limited understanding of the relationships between them.

### Conclusion

This research argues that experiences that are memorable or of high value evoke an equally intense curiosity in which attachment expands. To develop an attachment to a place requires a combination of Islamic and conventional tourism as well as the quality of the experience in the context of Islamic urban tourism. As mentioned earlier, this point brought up the fact that a sense of place is a subset of place attachment. Thus, place attachment is a pleasant feeling that a person feels for a particular place when that person's sense of place is maintained as an overall view of the place during the connection between place and person.

### Acknowledgement

Authors would like to express their special thanks to Prof. Azmi Ahmad Ariffin for his support and his valuable guidance during the planning and the development of the research.

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