

Faith, Comfort, Devotion: Determinants of Tourist Loyalty in Halal Tourism Sector

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DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJAREMS/v14-i4/26570>

Published Online: 20 October 2025

Abstract

Tourist loyalty is a critical determinant of sustainable success in the globally competitive halal tourism sector, directly influencing economic resilience, market reputation, and competitive advantage. This study aims to investigate the direct and indirect influences of social influence, attitude, and service quality on tourist loyalty, with perceived value as a mediating variable, within the Malaysian context. A structured online questionnaire was distributed to target respondents who had experienced halal tourism in Malaysia, utilising a snowball sampling technique. After data screening, 316 clean and complete responses were retained for analysis. The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The hypothesis testing revealed that perceived value is the strongest direct predictor of loyalty. The direct effects of attitude and service quality on loyalty were found to be statistically insignificant, whereas their indirect effects, mediated through perceived value, were significant. Social influence demonstrated both significant direct and indirect effects on loyalty. These results confirm the pivotal mediating role of perceived value, clarifying the psychological mechanisms that underpin loyalty formation. The study suggests future research should explore these relationships in different cultural contexts and incorporate moderating variables such as religiosity. For practitioners, the findings emphasise that strategic efforts must extend beyond basic halal compliance to focus on innovatively

enhancing and communicating the multidimensional value of the tourist experience to cultivate enduring loyalty.

Keywords: Social Influence, Attitude, Service Quality, Perceived Value, Loyalty

Introduction

Tourist loyalty, encompassing repeat visits and fervent advocacy, is the cornerstone of a sustainable and profitable halal tourism sector (Hidayat et al., 2024). This loyalty is paramount as it ensures reduced marketing costs and stable, predictable revenue streams for operators, while simultaneously providing Muslim tourists with trusted, risk-free travel experiences that seamlessly blend essential religious compliance with high-quality recreation and service excellence (Hariyani et al., 2024). The global sector is experiencing robust growth, fueled by an expanding, increasingly affluent Muslim middle class with significant disposable income. Current trends highlight a sophisticated demand that moves beyond mere Shariah-compliance; modern travellers seek personalised, luxury experiences, unique cultural immersion, and are heavily influenced by digital engagement and social media platforms (Benmehdi, 2025; Haninah, 2025). However, a critical problem persists within this booming market: intense competition and a widespread failure to deliver a truly holistic and superior value proposition often result in fleeting, transactional relationships rather than fostering the deep, genuine loyalty that ensures long-term success (Yasin et al., 2025). This pressing industry issue is compounded by a significant research gap identified in the academic literature. While factors influencing initial travel decisions are often studied, there is a notable scarcity of robust empirical research that quantitatively investigates the underlying psychological mechanisms, particularly the central mediating role of perceived value (Afriansyah & Wardi, 2024; Primadona et al., 2025), through which key antecedent factors like social influence, personal attitude, and overall service quality (Rahayu & Candra, 2023; Herman et al., 2025) are cognitively appraised and ultimately translated into concrete loyal behaviour, such as intent to return and willingness to recommend (Abror et al., 2025). Therefore, the significance of this study is multifaceted and extends to all key stakeholders. It provides policymakers and national tourism boards with an evidence-based framework for making informed strategic decisions regarding infrastructure investment and holistic destination branding. It equips the broader halal tourism sector with a validated conceptual model for understanding and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. For individual operators, it offers actionable, practical insights into which specific service attributes to prioritise to maximise customer retention and organic advocacy, moving beyond competing solely on religious compliance. Ultimately, it benefits the tourists themselves by providing a clear roadmap for the industry to elevate its standards, thereby guaranteeing more fulfilling, respectful, and trustworthy travel experiences that truly honour their needs and expectations. This study aims to assess the direct and indirect relationship between social influence, attitude, service quality and tourist loyalty with perceived value as a mediator in the halal tourism sector in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Underpinning Theories

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) posits that behavioural intention, a precursor to actual behaviour, is determined by three factors: attitude (positive or negative evaluation of the behaviour), subjective norms (perceived social pressure), and perceived behavioural control. In this study, Social Influence aligns with subjective norms, and Attitude

is a direct construct. TPB provides the foundation for hypothesising their direct effects on Tourist Loyalty (intention to revisit and recommend). Perceived behavioural control, while not a core variable here, informs the model's context. Conversely, Value-Percept Theory (Westbrook & Reilly, 1983) centres on the idea that perceived value is a key mediator between a service's attributes and consumer outcomes. It argues that evaluations of service quality and other factors are cognitively appraised to form a perception of value (get versus give), which in turn drives loyalty. This is particularly salient in halal tourism, where value encompasses both functional and religious dimensions. These theories are synthesised in the proposed model. The TPB establishes the initial direct relationships (e.g., Social Influence → Loyalty). Value-Percept Theory then explains the psychological mechanism through which these factors work: Social Influence, Attitude, and Service Quality are antecedents that shape the tourist's Perceived Value. This value judgment becomes the primary driver of Loyalty, mediating the initial relationships. Thus, the model robustly tests both the direct paths from TPB and the mediating cognitive appraisal process from Value-Percept Theory.

Relationship between Social Influence, Perceived Value & Loyalty

In the context of tourism, social influence, comprising recommendations from family, friends, and online communities, does not directly create tourist loyalty but operates primarily through the critical mediating mechanism of perceived value (Primadona et al., 2025; Garcia et al., 2025). While social endorsements shape travellers' initial perceptions and serve as a precursor to commitment (Jing & Junfeng, 2025), it is the enhancement of perceived functional, emotional, and social value that ultimately translates external influence into loyal behaviour (Qiu et al., 2024). Positive social signals elevate the tourist's anticipated worth of an experience, leading them to believe a highly recommended halal tourism option offers significant value by balancing quality, religious compliance, and overall experience against cost (Meethavornkul & Tumad, 2024). Thus, social influence fosters loyalty not through external pressure alone, but by fundamentally reshaping the tourist's internal valuation of the service. This underscores the importance for operators to not only stimulate positive word-of-mouth but also ensure their services deliver tangible and perceived value that meets or exceeds socially generated expectations (Osman et al., 2025). *Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed for this study:*

H1: There is a relationship between social influence and tourist loyalty in the halal tourism sector.

H2: There is a relationship between social influence and perceived value towards tourist loyalty in the halal tourism sector.

H3: There is a mediating effect of perceived value on the relationship between social influence and tourist loyalty in the halal tourism sector.

Relationship between Attitude, Perceived Value & Loyalty

An individual's positive attitude toward a destination or service is a significant precursor to loyalty in tourism (Zhao et al., 2025), but this relationship is profoundly shaped by the mediating role of perceived value (Afriansyah & Wardi, 2024; Moreno-Manzo et al., 2024). A favourable attitude, formed through beliefs about a destination's appeal, compatibility with personal values, or expected enjoyment, increases the likelihood of repeat visits and recommendations (Osman et al., 2025). However, this link is not automatic; it is strengthened when attitude positively influences the tourist's perception of value (Primadona et al., 2025).

For instance, a positive attitude toward halal tourism may enhance the perceived emotional, social, and functional value of the experience, making tourists feel they receive greater benefits relative to costs (Amtul et al., 2025). It is this enhanced perception of value that ultimately solidifies loyalty, transforming initial interest into committed behaviour. Thus, while attitude motivates engagement, it is the cognitive appraisal of value that acts as the critical psychological mechanism translating positive dispositions into sustained loyalty (Osman et al., 2023). Operators must therefore not only cultivate positive attitudes but also ensure their offerings deliver tangible value that aligns with tourists' expectations. *Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed for this study:*

- H4: There is a relationship between attitude and tourist loyalty in halal tourism sector.*
- H5: There is a relationship between attitude and perceived value towards tourist loyalty in the halal tourism sector.*
- H6: There is a mediating effect of perceived value on the relationship between attitude and tourist loyalty in the halal tourism sector.*

Relationship between Service Quality, Perceived Value & Loyalty

Service quality is a fundamental driver of tourist loyalty (Hallak et al., 2018), yet its influence is primarily indirect, operating through the crucial mediator of perceived value (Gurler, 2025; Riswanda & Millanyani, 2025). High-quality service, encompassing reliability, responsiveness, and compliance with specific needs like halal standards, enhances the tourist's overall evaluation of the experience. However, it is the tourist's perception of value, derived from this quality, that most directly fosters loyalty (Primadona et al., 2025; Qiu et al., 2024). When superior service translates into a strong sense of receiving excellent benefits, functional, emotional, and social, relative to the cost incurred, tourists are far more likely to exhibit loyal behaviours, such as repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth (Osman et al., 2023). Therefore, simply delivering high-quality service is insufficient; it must be consciously framed and experienced as high value by the consumer. This mediated relationship underscores a strategic imperative for tourism operators: investments in service quality must be explicitly linked to and communicated as enhanced value for the customer. Ultimately, perceived value acts as the essential cognitive bridge that transforms a quality service encounter into a compelling reason for long-term commitment. *Hence, the following hypotheses were proposed for this study:*

- H7: There is a relationship between service quality and tourist loyalty in halal tourism sector.*
- H8: There is a relationship between service quality and perceived value towards tourist loyalty in the halal tourism sector.*
- H9: There is a relationship between perceived value and tourist loyalty in halal tourism sector.*
- H10: There is a mediating effect of perceived value on the relationship between service quality and tourist loyalty in the halal tourism sector.*

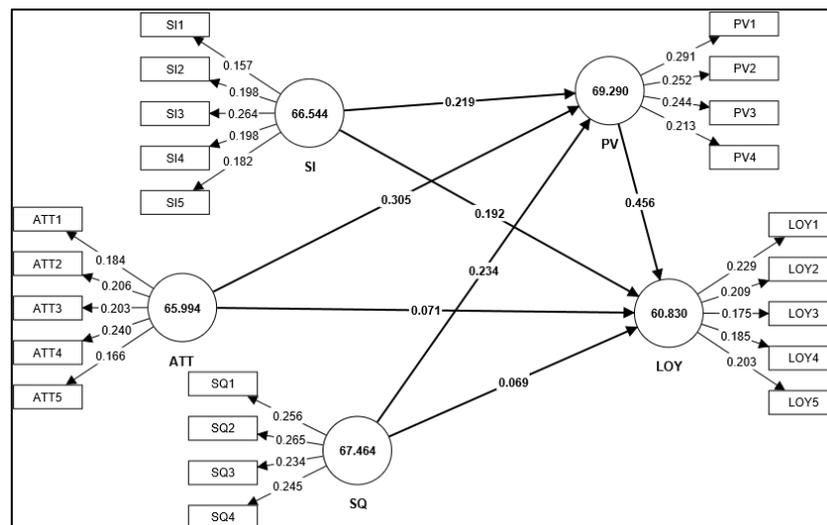


Figure 1: Research Model

Note: SI=Social Influence ATT=Attitude SQ=Service Quality PV=Perceived Value LOY=Loyalty

Methodology

This study aimed to explore muslim tourists' perceptions regarding the direct relationships among social influence, attitude, service quality, and tourist loyalty, with perceived value as a mediator in the Malaysian halal tourism sector. Data were collected through surveys, with reliable measurement items selected after a comprehensive review of existing literature. Given the lack of a complete population list, participants were purposively sampled, and the survey was administered via email. The analysis involved 23 observed variables and 5 latent variables, comprising attitude (measured with five items based on Ajzen, 1991), social influence (assessed using five items from Ajzen, 1991), and service quality (evaluated with four items by Larimian & Sadeghi, 2021). Mediating variables comprised perceived value (measured by four items from Zeithaml, 1988). The dependent variable, tourist loyalty, was gauged using four items as outlined by Cronning et al. (2000). All constructs used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Out of 416 distributed surveys, 329 responses were received, resulting in a 79% response rate, suitable for structural equation modelling (SEM). After screening, 316 responses were deemed valid for further analysis. Data analysis and hypothesis testing were performed using SmartPLS 4 software, following the guidelines of Ringle et al. (2022), enabling detailed evaluation of both measurement and structural models.

Data Analysis

Respondents' profile

Based on the respondent profile data, the sample exhibits a relatively balanced gender distribution, with females slightly outnumbering males (51.9% compared to 48.1%), suggesting the findings are representative of both genders. In terms of age, the cohort is predominantly middle-aged and older, with the largest group being 41–50 years old (38.0%), followed closely by those aged 51–60 (28.8%) and those under 30 (27.8%), while respondents over 60 are a small minority (5.4%); this indicates the study effectively captures the perspectives of the economically active and travel-prone demographic. The educational background is highly skewed, with an overwhelming majority holding a postgraduate degree (77.5%), far surpassing those with undergraduate (9.2%), secondary (5.7%), or primary school

(7.6%) qualifications, highlighting a sample with high educational attainment. Income levels are concentrated in the middle bracket (RM4,851 – RM10,970) for 56.6% of respondents, with nearly a third (29.4%) in the lowest income group (< RM4,850) and a smaller proportion (13.9%) in the highest (> RM10,971), reflecting a sample with moderate income levels overall. Finally, an overwhelming majority (93.0%) would recommend the destination to others, indicating exceptionally high satisfaction and strong potential for positive word-of-mouth promotion among the surveyed tourists.

Common Method Bias

Based on the variance inflation factors (VIFs) presented in Table 1, the analysis indicates that common method bias (CMB) does not pose a significant threat to the validity of this study's findings. This assessment follows the rigorous approach recommended by Kock & Lynn (2012) and Kock (2015), who propose that a VIF value greater than 3.3 is a clear indicator of pathological collinearity, potentially signifying CMB. As demonstrated in the table, all calculated VIF values for the relationships between the constructs, Loyalty (LOY), Social Influence (SI), Attitude (ATT), Service Quality (SQ), and Perceived Value (PV), are substantially below this conservative threshold. The highest recorded VIF is 1.932, which is well within the acceptable limit. Therefore, since no VIF value exceeds 3.3, it can be confidently concluded that the model is free from the deleterious effects of common method variance, and the results can be considered robust for interpretation and drawing substantive conclusions.

Table 1

Common Method Bias

	LOY	SI	ATT	SQ	PV
LOY		1.690	1.739	1.733	1.419
SI	1.833		1.449	1.876	1.881
ATT	1.932	1.484		1.920	1.848
SQ	1.296	1.292	1.291		1.253
PV	1.565	1.912	1.833	1.848	

Constructs Reliability and Validity

Based on the results presented in Table 2, the measurement model demonstrates strong evidence of both reliability and convergent validity, as per the thresholds recommended by Hair et al. (2019). All constructs exhibit good internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeding the acceptable limit of 0.7; specifically, values range from 0.785 (Attitude) to 0.856 (Service Quality) for CA, and from 0.787 (Attitude) to 0.873 (Social Influence) for CR, indicating highly reliable scales. Furthermore, all item loadings are above the critical value of 0.6, with most exceeding 0.7, which confirms that the indicators are well-represented by their respective constructs. Convergent validity is also firmly established, as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct surpasses the required minimum of 0.5, ranging from 0.539 (Attitude) to 0.699 (Service Quality), confirming that each latent construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators on average. Although the AVE for Attitude is slightly lower than others, it remains acceptable, and the overall results confirm that the constructs are both reliable and valid for further analysis in the structural model. The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios, as presented in Table 3, provide strong evidence for discriminant validity among all constructs, in accordance with the criterion recommended by Henseler et al. (2015). All recorded values are substantially below

the conservative threshold of 0.90, with the highest ratio being 0.786 between Social Influence (SI) and Attitude (ATT). This confirms that each construct in the model is empirically distinct and that the measurement items do not inappropriately correlate across different constructs, thereby supporting the integrity of the study's theoretical framework.

Table 2
Constructs Reliability and Validity & Items Loadings

Construct	Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Attitude	ATT1	0.798	0.785	0.787	0.539
	ATT2	0.701			
	ATT3	0.772			
	ATT4	0.699			
	ATT5	0.692			
Loyalty	LOY1	0.787	0.837	0.840	0.605
	LOY2	0.820			
	LOY3	0.785			
	LOY4	0.732			
	LOY5	0.761			
Perceived Value	PV1	0.810	0.805	0.811	0.630
	PV2	0.795			
	PV3	0.812			
	PV4	0.755			
Social Influence	SI1	0.762	0.850	0.873	0.626
	SI2	0.804			
	SI3	0.845			
	SI4	0.842			
	SI5	0.692			
Service Quality	SQ1	0.868	0.856	0.857	0.699
	SQ2	0.854			
	SQ3	0.853			
	SQ4	0.766			

Table 3
Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratios

	ATT	LOY	PV	SI
LOY	0.565			
PV	0.662	0.747		
SI	0.786	0.569	0.590	
SQ	0.460	0.431	0.519	0.431

Structural Model

This study evaluated the structural model by applying analytical procedures put forward by Hair et al. (2017), with a specific focus on interpreting path coefficients (β) and coefficients of determination (R^2). The analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares (PLS) and incorporated 5,000 bootstrap samples to assess the statistical significance of the path coefficients. As shown in Table 4, the outcomes of the hypothesis tests, including beta values, t-statistics, and p-values, are presented, offering substantial insight into both the strength and statistical relevance of the proposed variable relationships. The results indicate a

combination of supported and unsupported hypotheses within the conceptual model. The testing of Hypothesis 1 (H1) shows a significant direct effect of Social Influence on Loyalty ($\beta=0.192$, $t=3.000$, $p=0.003$), leading to its acceptance. H2, proposing Social Influence affects Perceived Value, is also supported ($\beta=0.219$, $t=3.189$, $p=0.001$). The mediation path in H3 (SI \rightarrow PV \rightarrow LOY) is significant ($\beta=0.100$, $t=2.999$, $p=0.003$), confirming Perceived Value is a partial mediator. Conversely, H4, testing the direct effect of Attitude on Loyalty, is rejected due to insignificance ($\beta=0.071$, $t=1.113$, $p=0.266$). However, H5, stating Attitude affects Perceived Value, is strongly supported ($\beta=0.305$, $t=4.426$, $p=0.000$). This relationship enables the significant mediation in H6 (ATT \rightarrow PV \rightarrow LOY: $\beta=0.139$, $t=3.957$, $p=0.000$), indicating full mediation. Similarly, the direct effect of Service Quality on Loyalty (H7) is rejected ($\beta=0.069$, $t=1.313$, $p=0.189$), but its effect on Perceived Value (H8) is significant ($\beta=0.234$, $t=4.162$, $p=0.000$). This leads to the significant mediation path in H10 (SQ \rightarrow PV \rightarrow LOY: $\beta=0.107$, $t=3.572$, $p=0.000$), confirming full mediation. Finally, H9, which posits the direct effect of Perceived Value on Loyalty, is strongly accepted ($\beta=0.456$, $t=8.505$, $p=0.000$), establishing it as the strongest direct predictor and core mediator in the model.

Table 4

Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypotheses	Beta	T-statistics	P-values	2.50%	97.50%	Decision
H1: SI \rightarrow LOY	0.192	3.000	0.003	0.059	0.312	Accepted
H2: SI \rightarrow PV	0.219	3.189	0.001	0.084	0.351	Accepted
H3: SI \rightarrow PV \rightarrow LOY	0.100	2.999	0.003	0.039	0.170	Accepted
H4: ATT \rightarrow LOY	0.071	1.113	0.266	-0.055	0.193	Rejected
H5: ATT \rightarrow PV	0.305	4.426	0.000	0.165	0.431	Accepted
H6: ATT \rightarrow PV \rightarrow LOY	0.139	3.957	0.000	0.076	0.214	Accepted
H7: SQ \rightarrow LOY	0.069	1.313	0.189	-0.030	0.174	Rejected
H8: SQ \rightarrow PV	0.234	4.162	0.000	0.127	0.343	Accepted
H9: PV \rightarrow LOY	0.456	8.505	0.000	0.344	0.554	Accepted
H10: SQ \rightarrow PV \rightarrow LOY	0.107	3.572	0.000	0.055	0.172	Accepted

Note: significant $p < 0.05$,

Effect Sizes (f^2)

The effect sizes (f^2) presented in Table 5, interpreted using Cohen's (1992) guidelines, reveal meaningful insights into the predictive strength of the independent variables. Perceived Value (PV) exerts a large effect on Loyalty (LOY) ($f^2 = 0.230$), confirming its role as a powerful direct predictor. The effects of Social Influence (SI), Attitude (ATT), and Service Quality (SQ) on the mediator, PV, are all small (ranging from $f^2 = 0.042$ to 0.082), indicating modest but significant contributions. Conversely, their direct effects on LOY are negligible (all $f^2 < 0.04$), reinforcing the conclusion that their influence is almost entirely mediated through Perceived Value.

Table 5

Effect Sizes (f^2)

	LOY	PV
ATT	0.005	0.082
PV	0.230	
SI	0.035	0.042
SQ	0.006	0.073

PLSpredicts

Following the PLSpredict procedure recommended by Shmueli et al. (2016, 2019) to assess the model's out-of-sample predictive power, the analysis reveals strong predictive validity. As shown in Table 6, all indicators for both Loyalty (LOY) and Perceived Value (PV) possess positive Q^2 predict values, confirming that the PLS-SEM model has predictive relevance. Crucially, for all nine indicators, the PLS-RMSE values are smaller than their corresponding LM-RMSE benchmarks. The negative values in the PLS-LM column confirm this superior performance, indicating that the PLS model generates lower prediction errors than a simple linear model. This result provides strong evidence that the theoretical model is not only explanatory but also possesses a high degree of predictive accuracy for the manifest variables.

Table 6

PLSpredicts

	Q^2 predict	PLS-RMSE	LM-RMSE	PLS-LM
LOY1	0.222	0.629	0.629	0.000
LOY2	0.176	0.632	0.646	-0.014
LOY3	0.116	0.682	0.684	-0.002
LOY4	0.15	0.688	0.709	-0.021
LOY5	0.188	0.617	0.633	-0.016
PV1	0.288	0.615	0.621	-0.006
PV2	0.215	0.618	0.627	-0.009
PV3	0.237	0.671	0.688	-0.017
PV4	0.143	0.726	0.736	-0.010

Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT)

The results of the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT), following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2022) and Lienggaard et al. (2021), provide robust evidence for the model's out-of-sample predictive power. As shown in Table 7, the average loss difference is negative for both the Loyalty (LOY: -0.086) and Perceived Value (PV: -0.121) constructs, as well as for the overall model (-0.102). This indicates that the PLS-SEM model generates lower prediction errors compared to a simple benchmark. Furthermore, the highly significant t-values and p-values ($p = 0.000$ for all) confirm that this superior predictive performance is statistically significant. Therefore, the model demonstrates not only explanatory power but also a strong and statistically significant capacity for accurate prediction.

Table 7

Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT)

	Average loss difference	t-value	p-value
LOY	-0.086	4.209	0.000
PV	-0.121	5.597	0.000
Overall	-0.102	5.56	0.000

Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)

The Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) provides strategic insights by evaluating both the importance (total effect on loyalty) and performance (average latent variable scores) of each construct, as recommended by Ringle and Sarstedt (2016) and Hair et al. (2018). Perceived Value (PV) is the most critical driver of loyalty (importance = 0.456) and also

demonstrates relatively high performance (69.29), indicating it should be maintained as a core strength. Social Influence (SI) shows moderate importance (0.292) and performance (66.54), suggesting steady management. Conversely, Service Quality (SQ) has the lowest importance (0.175) and a mid-range performance (67.46), revealing a key strategic gap. Despite its current decent performance, SQ's weak total effect indicates that improvements here will have a limited impact on loyalty. To enhance Service Quality's impact, operators must not only improve tangible elements like halal certification rigour, facility cleanliness, and prayer space availability but also strategically communicate these improvements to directly elevate Perceived Value, the primary loyalty driver. This could involve integrating quality features into marketing that emphasise value-for-money, spiritual satisfaction, and peace of mind, thereby strengthening the link between service investments and the tourist's value perception.

Table 8

Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)

	Importance	Performance
ATT	0.210	65.994
PV	0.456	69.290
SI	0.292	66.544
SQ	0.175	67.464

Discussion & Conclusion*Discussion*

Based on the empirical findings of this study, the Malaysian halal tourism sector must strategically pivot towards enhancing Perceived Value as the central mechanism for fostering tourist loyalty, given its profound direct impact ($\beta = 0.456$, $p < 0.001$). The results indicate that while Social Influence has a meaningful direct ($\beta = 0.192$, $p = 0.003$) and indirect effect (via PV, $\beta = 0.219$, $p = 0.001$), both Attitude ($\beta = 0.071$, $p = 0.266$) and Service Quality ($\beta = 0.069$, $p = 0.189$) fail to directly influence loyalty. However, their significant indirect effects through Perceived Value (ATT \rightarrow PV: $\beta = 0.305$; SQ \rightarrow PV: $\beta = 0.234$, both $p < 0.001$) reveal that their importance is entirely mediated by the tourist's value perception. This suggests that tourists' loyalty is not driven by service quality or positive attitudes per se, but by how these factors collectively elevate the perceived benefits, such as emotional, social, functional, and spiritual advantages, relative to monetary and non-monetary costs. Consequently, practical strategies must focus on making this value explicit and tangible. To leverage Social Influence, the sector should incentivise and amplify user-generated content and testimonials, particularly through Islamic social media influencers and halal travel platforms, to build trust and signal value to potential tourists. For Service Quality, which showed the weakest total effect, operators must move beyond basic halal compliance and invest in value-forward communication. For example, instead of merely listing "halal food available," marketing should emphasise "curated culinary journeys offering peace of mind and family-friendly dining experiences," thereby linking quality directly to emotional and social value. Training staff to articulate these value propositions during guest interactions can further reinforce this perception. The lack of direct effects for Attitude and Service Quality on loyalty may be attributed to market maturation. As halal services become standardised, tourists may increasingly expect high quality and hold positive attitudes as a baseline, meaning these factors no longer differentiate but instead become prerequisites. Their influence becomes latent, activated only when they

tangibly enhance perceived value. Therefore, strategies should aim to exceed expectations, such as offering unexpected services like Quranic audio guides, personalised prayer kits, or cultural workshops, that transform generic quality and positive impressions into memorable, high-value experiences. Ultimately, the sector should adopt an integrated strategy where investments in service quality, social proof, and attitude formation are consciously channelled through value-enhancing narratives and experiences. By doing so, Malaysia can solidify its position as a leading halal destination, not just through compliance, but through superior and unmistakable value that resonates deeply with the ethical, spiritual, and recreational desires of Muslim travellers, thereby ensuring long-term loyalty and sustainable growth.

Theoretical Implications

This study offers significant theoretical contributions by refining and integrating the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) and Value-Percept Theory (Westbrook & Reilly, 1983). While TPB posits that attitude and social influence directly affect behavioural intentions, the findings reveal a critical nuance: in halal tourism, these factors do not directly influence loyalty but are fully mediated by perceived value. This extends TPB by introducing perceived value as an essential cognitive mechanism that translates attitudes and social pressures into intentions, particularly in contexts where decisions involve complex evaluations of religious compliance and experiential quality. Similarly, Value-Percept Theory emphasises that service attributes drive perceived value, which then affects outcomes like loyalty. This research reinforces that principle while adding granularity by demonstrating that even affect-laden factors like attitude operate through this value-based appraisal. The emergence of perceived value as the dominant predictor suggests a theoretical refinement: in mature service markets, value perceptions become the primary differentiators of loyalty, while traditional drivers become baseline expectations. This insight encourages a revised model where perceived value is positioned as the central mediator, offering a more nuanced understanding of how cognitive and affective evaluations converge to shape behaviour in experience-driven industries like tourism.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study for the halal tourism sector are profound and multifaceted, directly linking the cultivation of tourist loyalty to tangible strategic outcomes. Firstly, fostering loyalty ensures sustainable economic growth through religiously-compliant repeat business, as trusted Muslim travellers provide a stable revenue stream for halal-certified services, ensuring the long-term viability of the ecosystem and reducing dependency on costly customer acquisition. Secondly, loyal tourists become powerful advocates within close-knit Muslim community networks, where their authentic testimonials on platforms like MuslimPro and within social circles serve as more effective marketing than any paid advertisement, attracting a highly discerning demographic. Thirdly, this loyalty solidifies a destination's reputation, elevating it from merely "Muslim-friendly" to a premier global halal hub that can command premium pricing, enhance brand equity, and attract investments dedicated to developing specialised infrastructure. Fourthly, the economic benefits support community development grounded in Islamic principles, creating ethical employment, funding religious facilities such as mosques and ablution areas, and fostering cultural exchange based on mutual respect. Finally, the imperative to retain loyal, religiously-conscious customers drives sector-wide innovation and elevation of halal standards, compelling operators to exceed basic compliance through advancements like prayer-time

technologies, family-friendly entertainment adhering to Islamic values, and fully shariah-compliant supply chains, thereby raising quality benchmarks across the entire industry and future-proofing its growth.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Future studies should seek to validate and extend these findings by examining the model in diverse cultural and geographical contexts beyond Malaysia to enhance its generalizability. Researchers could also incorporate additional variables, such as the role of religiosity as a moderator, to understand how the strength of religious belief influences the relationship between perceived value and loyalty. Employing longitudinal designs would be beneficial to track how loyalty and perceived value evolve, moving beyond the cross-sectional snapshot provided here. Furthermore, exploring the impact of emerging digital technologies, such as virtual reality previews or AI-powered halal travel assistants, on perceived value and decision-making could offer valuable insights for the modern halal tourism market. Finally, qualitative investigations are needed to uncover the nuanced, experiential factors that define 'value' for Muslim travellers, providing deeper context to the quantitative relationships identified in this study.

Conclusion

This study conclusively establishes that perceived value is the paramount driver of tourist loyalty within the Malaysian halal tourism sector, acting as the critical psychological mechanism that fully mediates the influence of service quality and attitude, and partially mediates social influence. The findings compellingly demonstrate that while factors like service quality and positive attitudes are essential foundational elements, their impact on loyalty is not direct; instead, they are only effective insofar as they successfully elevate the tourist's perceived value of the experience. This underscores a necessary strategic pivot for industry practitioners: moving beyond merely providing halal-compliant services towards explicitly crafting and communicating superior value that encompasses functional, emotional, and social dimensions. By prioritising value creation as the central objective, stakeholders can foster deeper loyalty, ensure sustainable growth, and solidify Malaysia's position as a leader in the competitive global halal tourism market, ultimately transforming religious compliance into a compelling and unforgettable travel experience.

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