

## Article

# Exploring How The Fulfillment Of Muslim Women Travelers' Faith-Based Needs Influences Their Decisions To Travel To Muslim-Minority Countries

Zuraida Meilyani<sup>1</sup>, Andi Dwi Putranto<sup>2</sup>, Ferdial<sup>3</sup>, Risa MM Hutasoit<sup>4</sup>, Rubby Eka Saputra<sup>5,\*</sup><sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup> Program Magister Manajemen Universitas Prasetya Mulya; e-mail@e-mail.com

\* Correspondence: andidwip@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** The purpose of our descriptive research is to gain accurate situations on how the fulfillment of Muslim women travelers' faith-based needs and requirements influences their decisions to travel to Muslim-minority countries. Semi-structured interviews are conducted on selected Muslim women travelers who had recent travel to Muslim-minority countries. In according with the theory of planned behavior, Muslim women traveling are influenced by subjective norms, namely their religion. They will try to follow the rules of their religion and the experience gained in a tourist destination country, however, will be a consideration for coming back again. Based on the description of how Muslim women practice their religion while traveling, provide suggestions for related parties. Countries that are visited by many Muslims need to provide facilities related to worship, both places and also supporting facilities such as clean water. Information about the existence of places of worship, and places that sell halal food needs to be reproduced. This effort also needs to be a concern of travel agents. Information about local cultures, including food, can be included with information on non-halal activities so that Muslims can anticipate them.

**Keywords:** theory of planned behavior; muslim travelers muslim-minority countries

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## 1. Introduction

Women travelers represent one of the fastest-growing segments of the Muslim travel market. They make up approximately 5% of Muslim arrivals worldwide. This equates to approximately 72 million Muslim and female travelers in 2019. Solo and women's group travel increased before COVID and is expected to continue after travel resumes.

Previous research by Mastercard and Crescent Rating found that Muslim women travelers significantly impact travel planning, regardless of which group they belong to. Muslim women travelers influence travel decisions the most when their trips include their families and spouses. In this environment, as daughters, mothers, or family partners, they have almost twice as much influence when planning a trip than when they travel with others.

The Mastercard-Crescent Rating Muslim Women in Travel (MWIT) 2019 report shows unique issues that stakeholders should address. Privacy/modesty is a big concern for Muslim women, so they avoid spaces with clothing restrictions or that don't provide enough privacy. MWIT also prefers amenities that consider their needs such as women-only prayer rooms, child-friendly services, etc. Furthermore, the identity of a Muslim woman carries with it prejudice, which MWIT may need to overcome destinations or facilities. On the web, there is a lack of information available to MWIT to connect with local communities with common interests. Security is another big issue because being identified as a Muslim can attract Islamophobic hate crimes in some areas. As Muslim women actively contribute to society, facilitating their travel needs can further expand their potential. Most women travel with their families and are responsible for planning the trip. Therefore, providers must dive deep into the internal and external incentives of MWIT to effectively realize its potential. Despite the growth of halal tourism, research on it is limited to the Muslim-majority countries such as Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Yousaf and Xiucheng, 2018). For instance, Zailani et al. (2011) examine the factors affecting non-compliance to halal hotels in Malaysia. Duman (2012) studies the value of Islamic tourism from the Turkish perspective. Akyol and Kilinc (2014) discuss halal tourism marketing in Turkey. Henderson (2016) investigates Halal food, certification, and halal tourism in Malaysia. Jaelani (2017) examines the halal tourism industry in Indonesia.

Little attention has been paid to examining halal tourism in Muslim-minority countries and is still in its infancy. For example, Yousaf and Xiucheng's (2018) content analyzes government websites to examine halal culinary strategies of four South East Asian countries, namely, China, Japan, Thailand, and South Korea.

Although more recent research e.g., Adel et al. (2021) verifies Muslims' travel decision-making to non-Islamic destinations and Said et al. (2022) explores Muslim travelers' needs and concerns in Muslim-minority countries, there has never been a comprehensive analysis of how the fulfillment of Muslim women travelers' faith-based needs influences their decisions to travel to Muslim-minority countries.

The research question of this paper is to investigate how the full fulfillment of Muslim women travelers' faith-based needs influences their decisions to travel to Muslim-minority countries. Respondents for this study is the Muslim women travelers who had recent travel to Muslim-minority countries during the past five years, and whose ages are less than 40 years old. We will limit participants to individuals residing and/or working in Jakarta and surrounding areas. The research method used in this paper is semi-structured interviews, which classify needs and requirements into three hierarchical levels: need to have, good to have, and nice to have. The result of this study would be information for travel agents and consideration for Muslim women travelers to choose a destination country.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumers consuming something show certain behaviors. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines consumer behavior as a dynamic interaction of influences and cognitions, behavior, and the environment in which humans exchange aspects of their lives. Consumer behavior is dynamic because the thoughts, feelings, and actions of consumers, consumers in general, are constantly changing. Schiffman & Wisenblit (2015) argues that consumer behavior is the study of consumer actions while searching for, using, and evaluating the goods and services they expect to satisfy their needs.

Approaches to understanding consumer behavior can use the theory of planned behavior. The theory of planned behavior put forward by Ajzen (2002) is used to estimate a person's behavior, in which this theory has the main assumptions for assessing a person's intention to behave, namely attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms. This theory can be used to predict behavior under individual control (perceived behavior control).

Said et.al (2020) in their research related to the needs and concerns of Muslim consumers find that Muslim travelers are mostly concerned with the need to perform daily prayers and to find halal food at the point of need, and are willing to conduct extensive research on the destination before their visit. Furthermore, the finding is that Muslim travelers' experiences in these Muslim-minority countries are generally met with their expectations, although further socialization with the locals is needed to induce greater overall satisfaction with the destinations.

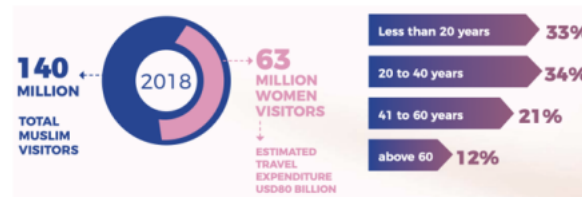
The behavior of Muslim consumers toward traveling was also investigated by Adel et.al (2020). They found that Muslim interviewees indicate the relative importance of reference groups compared to government websites as a source of information. This study concludes with some remarkable results regarding the importance of halal marketing strategies such as halal searchability and availability, halal certification and appraisal, and halal at airports and hotels. It presents an emergent framework that shows the factors affecting visiting a non-Islamic destination regarding halal issues for Muslim travelers.

The conceptual framework of the study is on the process framework of travel decisions proposed by Martin and Woodside (2012). This study conceptualizes Muslim travel decisions and experiences as a process involving many

interrelated decisions and actions over travel. This process begins before the trip, during the trip, and finally after the trip. This framework serves as the basis for developing the interview questions and the guide in explaining the findings is developed based on the Muslim Traveler Faith-Based Needs 2.0 in Global Muslim Travel Index 2022 (Mastercard-Crescent Rating, 2022).

Based on Global Muslim Travel Index 2019 the traveler majority come from age of 20 to 40 with 63% million women visitors. Women travelers represent one of the fastest-growing segments of the Muslim travel market. The Mastercard-Crescent Rating Muslim Women in Travel (MWIT) 2019 report shows unique issues that stakeholders should address. Privacy/modesty is a big concern for Muslim women, so they avoid spaces with clothing restrictions or that do not provide enough privacy.

Figure 1. Global Muslim Travel Index 2019 (Mastercard-Crescent Rating, 2019)



MWIT also prefers amenities that consider their needs such as women-only prayer rooms, child-friendly services, etc. Furthermore, the identity of a Muslim woman carries with it prejudice, which MWIT may need to overcome destinations or facilities. On the web, there is a lack of information available to MWIT to connect with local communities with common interests. Security is another big issue because being identified as a Muslim can attract Islamophobic hate crimes in some areas. references.

## 2. Results

The research was conducted on fifteen Muslim women. Countries visited in the last five years include Asia (Korea, Japan, Thailand, China, Singapore, Hongkong), Europe (Switzerland, England, Netherlands, France, and Germany), as well as Australia and Canada. The description of the results of the interview is divided into three processes: before the trip, during the trip, and after the trip.

### 2.1. Process Before The Trip

The process before the trip is seen from three aspects, namely planning when traveling, main preparations before traveling, and information seeking. The main concern for Muslim women when planning a trip to a destination country is security, for children and families. One of the informants conveyed the safety aspect as a consideration in planning a trip: "Family friendly, kids friendly, which doesn't endanger lives. The main thing is safety." Another informant added regarding the attitude of the local population towards tourists which affects security: "We also consider the acceptance of attitudes towards tourists and their social conditions, especially security issues."

In addition to security, the concern is the ease of worship, i.e., the place and facilities. "We consider the ease of carrying out worship which consists of the availability of places and facilities." Another informant said, "We are still thinking about this, and of course, there are facilities for worship, it is the place and the facilities."

The aspect of halal food is also a consideration in planning a trip. "Traveling means that when it is time to dine, what we consume, what will we find for? Places for restaurants, yes, halal ones." Main preparations for travel include worship equipment, halal food, lodging, airplane tickets, special information before traveling, places of worship, halal food, transportation, tourist attractions, restrictions, and a nursery room.

### 2.2. Process During Trip

The things experienced by the informants during the trip are classified into three levels: need to have, good to have, and nice to have.

#### a. Halal Food Service

Muslim women's experience during the trip was related to obtaining halal food, almost all informants found it difficult to get halal food, especially because of limited information. Even though one can do this by bringing her food, some countries prohibit bringing food from outside. In countries adjacent to Indonesia, halal food is easy to get because there are many Muslim communities.

#### b. Prayer Facilities

In some countries, it is difficult to find prayer facilities, so one has to go back to the hotel or find a place that is quite proper for praying. In some countries, there are universal prayer rooms in public areas.

#### c. Water-friendly Washrooms

All informants experienced difficulties in the availability of clean flowing water in public areas. Some countries even forbid people to bring their water. Some informants only found clean water at the hotel. Travel destination countries in Asia, relatively provide adequate amounts of water.

#### d. Islamophobia

All informants did not experience Islamophobia.

#### e. Ramadan Services Facilities

Muslim women who travel during Ramadan did not get special Ramadan facilities, so they have to look for them themselves.

#### f. Local Muslim Experiences

The experience of meeting the Muslim community, most of whom came from Indonesia, then attended a recitation event. Meetings with fellow Muslims especially when visiting the mosque to pray. The Muslim community in the country carries out many religious ceremonies for the local population.

#### g. Social Impact Activities

Some of the activities the informants participated in were sermons with the Muslim community, fundraising to provide iftar meals, and fundraising to provide food for the needy. Some perceive social activity in terms of being environmentally friendly by reducing plastics use. Discipline culture is also perceived as an activity that has a social impact.

#### h. No Non-Halal Activities

All informants during the trips did not carry out non-halal activities and indeed stayed away from them even though they were very easy to find, such as drinking alcohol.

#### i. Recreational Spaces With Privacy

Most of them did not find recreational places that were private, besides they did not try to find them.

### 2.3. Process After The Trip

Experience during the trip provides input for the assessment of the destination country. In connection with the preferred experience of the destination countries, several informants mentioned infrastructure progress, "This country is very friendly for pedestrians, modern infrastructure". Some informants said that the thing that impressed them the most in Singapore and Australia was their highly developed infrastructure.

Meanwhile, several informants mentioned the cleanliness of the environment, such as the following statement. "For Singapore, I like it to have a clean environment." Some even said that Singapore is a developed, clean, disciplined, and beautiful country. Meanwhile, other informants mentioned the weather and natural scenery. "In that country, I like the weather because it was not summer yet so the weather was quite cool and fresh, and the scenery is good." Another informant liked its discipline culture. "We'll see it's more organized and more disciplined there". Some informants love Singapore because it is easy to find halal food and there are many Muslim communities. "As for the food, I also like it because there is a lot of halal food so it is not difficult for us Muslims to find it." Another informant said, "What I like about this country is because there are a lot of Muslims and it's also easy to find halal food."

The thing that is not liked about the destination country is that it is difficult to get a place of worship and its facilities, "So I've been around in a mall, yes, there isn't a place of worship so I have to go back to the hotel or to the nearest mosque from there." Another informant said, "In Europe, the toilets smell dirty, so it's hard to find a place of worship." Apart from that, it is also difficult to get halal food, "If you want food made of meat or chicken, it is rather difficult to find halal food". "The most familiar ones are shrimp or fish. All informants stated that they wanted to return to visit countries that had been travel destinations, to explore other tourist attractions, because of the convenience of the place and the lovely weather.

### 3. Discussion

Muslim women are bounded by the rules of their religion in regulating daily behavior. Including behavior in traveling. There are restrictions on what can be done and what cannot be done. This rule includes food, with the concept of halal and haram, and rules about dressing with the concept of covering most body parts. Moreover, the arrangement of daily worship has been determined by the time and procedure. It also includes the concept of taharah, namely maintaining the purity of the body, especially when going to pray.

Following the planned behavior theory which states that the intention to do something is caused by subjective norms, attitudes towards behavior, and perceptions of behavioral control, one's belief becomes a subjective norm that will direct people to behave. Based on this theory, Muslim women will pay attention to the implementation of their religious rules on various occasions, including when traveling. Considerations before deciding to visit a country - where Muslims are a minority - include the availability of halal food, it is still possible to pray, and no restrictions to wearing modest clothes to cover body parts properly. Experience during the trip becomes an input for consideration for subsequent behavior.

### 4. Materials and Methods

A qualitative approach is used to explore how the fulfillment of Muslim women travelers' faith-based needs influences their decisions to travel to Muslim-minority countries. semi-structured interviews will be conducted in one-to-one interviews with a sample of Muslim women travelers who had recent travel to Muslim-minority countries during the past five years, and whose ages are not more than 40 years old. We will limit participants to individuals residing and/or working in Jakarta and surrounding areas.

Interview questions are made based on the Muslim Traveler Faith-Based Needs 2.0 in the Global Muslim Travel Index 2022 (Mastercard-Crescent Rating, 2022). It classifies needs and requirements into three hierarchical levels:

1. Need to Have
  - a. Halal food service
  - b. Salat (Prayer) facilities
  - c. Water-friendly washroomsNo islamophobia
2. Good to Have
  - a. Ramadan (fasting) services and facilities
  - b. Local Muslim experiences
  - c. Social impact activities
3. Nice to Have
  - a. No non-halal activities
  - b. Recreational spaces with privacy

This qualitative method starts with a study about the phenomenon of increasing women Muslim travelers to worldwide country and choose the main focus for this. After that, the interview question classifies into needs and requirements with three hierarchical levels such as the need to have, good to have, and nice to have. This question was shared with 15 Muslim women travelers in Jakarta and surrounding areas. The result will become an observation object and research for this paper.

Figure 2. Global Muslim Travel Index 2019 (Mastercard-Crescent Rating, 201

Asia	Erpa	Australia	North America
Korea, Japan, Thailand, China, Singapore, Hongkong	Switzerland, England, Netherlands, France, Germany	Australia	Canada

## 5. Conclusions

In according with the theory of planned behavior, Muslim women traveling are influenced by subjective norms, namely their religion. They will try to follow the rules of their religion and the experience gained in a tourist destination country, however, will be a consideration for coming back again.

Based on the description of how Muslim women practice their religion while traveling, provide suggestions for related parties. Countries that are visited by many Muslim women need to provide facilities related to worship, both places and also supporting facilities such as clean flowing water. Information about the locations of places of worship, and places that sell halal foods, needs to be reproduced. This effort also needs to be a concern of travel agents. Information about local cultures, including food, can be included with information on non-halal activities so that Muslims can anticipate them.

This study takes general travel objects so that the findings vary. Future research can take objects for medical tourism and education tourism for more specific results. Further research can also refer to the findings in this study by using a quantitative approach that can be carried out on wider respondents.

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