

## **The Perception of Muslim Millennial Traveler's Towards Halal Tourism**

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### **Abstract**

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The main purpose of this paper is to explore the perceptions of muslim millennial traveler's towards halal tourism in indonesia. It also investigates the extent to which muslim millennial traveler's are willing to purchase certain types of halal products and services in halal tourism. Qualitative data were collected by conducting 150 semi-structured interviews with muslim millennial traveler's in three province in indonesia: nusa tenggara barat, sumatera barat and aceh. Four major aspects (access, communications, environment and services) are identified that describe the perceptions of muslim millennial traveler's towards halal tourism. This paper also provides some suggestions for stake holders on how best to engaged for muslim millennial traveler's. This paper explores the perceptions of muslim millennial traveler's towards halal tourism which is totally new research in destination marketing. It provides some original insights in to the interactions between the religion of islam and tourism.

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## INTRODUCTION

According to the state of the Global Islamic Economy Report, produced by Thomson Reuters in collaboration with Dinar Standard, the global muslim travel market was worth \$140 billion in 2013, which represents 11.5% of global expenditure. The same report predicts that the segment is expected to be worth \$238 billion in 2019 and represent 13% of global expenditure. Muslim customers are one of the fastest developing market segments, and its needs cannot be ignored by destination marketers and tourism operators (Reuters T, Standard. State of the Global Islamic Economy, 2015). In line the research, example the applicability of halal tourism in Ethiopian context has been well appraised (Ahmed, M. J., & Akbaba, A. 2018).

Malaysia continues to top the index for the eighth consecutive year. The destination has managed to maintain its leadership as one of the best destinations for muslim travelers in terms of the various criteria that were analysed. Indonesia

has risen in the ranks and is tied with United Arab Emirates at second spot. Singapore retained its top position among non-OIC destinations with significant improvement in its standing along with Japan and Taiwan.

Halal products and services are not exclusive and promoted only to the Muslim market (El-Gohary, 2016, Battour, M., Hakimian, F., Ismail, M., & Boğan, E. 2018). But there are new opportunities for greater cultural and marketing exchanges between Islamic and non-Islamic societies (Wilson et al., 2013). Factually, OIC destinations have a distinct advantage on the index due to the readily available muslim-friendly facilities and services. However non-OIC destinations have managed to move up the index rankings well by improving their services to better attract the muslim travel market. The main challenge for Islamic destinations is finding the balance between catering to non-Muslim tourists and satisfying their needs without coming into conflict with Islamic teachings (Battour et al., 2017)

**Table 1. Top 10 OIC Destinations**

Rank	GMTI 2018 rank	Destination	Score
1	1	Malaysia	80.6
2	2	Indonesia	72.8
2	2	United arab emirates	72.8
4	4	Turkey	69.1
5	5	Saudi arabia	68.7
6	6	Qatar	66.2
7	8	Bahrain	65.9
8	9	Oman	65.1
9	10	Morocco	61.7
10	11	Kuwait	60.5

Source: Crescentrating, 2018

**Table 2. Top 10 Non-OIC Destinations**

Rank	GMTI 2018 rank	Destination	Score
1	6	Singapore	66.2
2	16	Thailand	56.1
3	22	United kingdom	53.8
4	25	Japan	51.4
5	27	Taiwan	49.6
5	27	Hong kong	49.6
7	32	South africa	47.7
8	35	Germany	45.7
9	36	France	45.2
10	37	Australia	44.7

Source: Crescentrating, 2018

Concurrently, the rapidly expanding muslim travel market has become highly lucrative, with 156 million travelers projected to spend an estimated USD\$220 billion by 2020 (CresCentrating, 2017), with younger muslims identified as one of the important drivers for growth. The Muslim Millennial are tech-savvy, self-empowered and enthusiastic consumers whose identities proudly encompass both faith and modernity (Janmohamed, 2016, Tan, E., Abu Bakar, B., Lim, T., & Nair, S., 2018).

Muslim Millennial travelers are distinct from their previous generations and other millennial travelers, with a unique set of values, needs and expectations in their travel consumption and expenditure patterns (Halaltrip, 2017).

While there has been increasing attention and research on the halal tourism (Mohsin et al, 2016, Oktadiana et al, 2016, Boediman, E. P., 2017, El-gohary, H., 2016,

Samori, Z., Salleh, N. Z. M., & Khalid, M. M, 2016), there has been no significant study focusing on the Muslim Millennial travelers perceptions in the indonesia region. There is a need to consider generational differences that distinguish with the global travelers.

Thus, the objective of this study is 1), to explore the perception of Muslim Millennial travelers towards halal tourism in Indonesia, and 2), to investigate the actual extent to which Muslim Millennial travelers are willing to purchase certain types of halal products and services in the halal tourism. this paper is also expected to provide some suggestions for stake holders to be able to cater for Muslim Millennial travelers and increase international arrivals.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Materials**

The GMTI 2018 has adopted the latest set of measurements to better indicate the level of Muslim-friendly travel of each destination. These factors are constantly being reviewed to stay relevant for current and future environments.

1. Access: level of access to each destination has been expanded to include the degree of transport infrastructure present in the area. This includes air, ground and port infrastructure which are critical to the long-term sustainability of the access channels to the destination. The scoring of

visa requirements has also been updated. Further consideration of the feasibility to include land and maritime connectivity in addition to air connectivity will be analysed for possible future indexes.

2. Communications: the weightage of the communications indicator has been increased from 10% in GMTI 2017 to 15% in GMTI 2018 to reflect the increasing influence of communications in facilitating the muslim traveler. Digital presence is now factored to signal the importance of internet and new media initiatives by each destination.

This also acknowledges the increasing need in using creative digital touchpoints to meet and serve the increasingly tech-savvy muslim travel market. In addition, the ease of communication of languages used by the top 30 muslim outbound markets has been revised to now include Arabic, English, Malay, Bahasa Indonesia, Turkish, Russian, French, Urdu/Hindi, Persian and German languages.

3. Environment: the destination's enabling climate such as its business and legal institutions, level of education, research and development and use of information technology is also a significant factor for innovation and sustainability.

4. Service: the weightage of the services indicator has been increased from 40% in GMTI 2017 to 45% in GMTI 2018 to signify the growing importance of service touchpoints for the muslim traveler. Beyond "need to have" services that serve the core faith-based needs of muslim travelers, "good to have" and "nice to have" services can also provide unique experiences that further differentiate each destination, and which can appeal to muslim travelers who are seeking authentic, affordable and accessible experiences.

In addition to key attractions promoted by each destination, unique experiences also consist of the availability of world heritage sites and Islamic heritage sites in each destination. It is noted that availability of muslim-friendly hotel is considered one of the most important attributes that attract muslimtravellers and encourage them to visit the destination.

Increasing access to travel information: with social media continuing to play an important role and rapidly gaining momentum in serving travel information that is relevant to the needs of millennial muslim travelers of each destination, customers' attitudes and choices will be highly

influenced by both digital and human intelligence and touchpoints. As technological change continues to be rapid and disruptive, destinations and services which are already investing in research and innovation will have a distinct advantage.

### Methodology

The objective of this study is to explore the perception of Muslim Millennial towards halal tourism products and services in Indonesia. To achieve this objective, semi interviews were conducted in Indonesia to explore opinions and travel experiences in more depth. The semi interview method was selected to conduct this research because it is considered an opportunity to realise new information from individuals and to generate arrange of insights and understandings that might be used (Cavana et al., 2001). A total of 150 semi- interviews were conducted with Muslim Millennial travelers in West Nusa Tenggara, West Sumatera and Aceh in September-November 2018. The semi-interviewees were tourism of travelers in West Nusa Tenggara, West Sumatera and Aceh. The muslim millennial travelers participants were selected by using the convenience sampling method. they were asked scanning question to identify the religion before proceeding with the semi interview.

The semi structured questions were related to the experience of halal tourism such as tourism object, friendly hotels, halal food, swimming pools and beaches facilities, prayer facilities, Islamic ethics and Islamic dress code. The Muslim Millennial tourists were asked questions related to their intention of trying halal tourism experiences. They were also asked questions regarding the travel motivations for visiting West Nusa Tenggara, West Sumatera and Aceh. Some demographic information and Global Muslim Travel Indicator (GMTI) such as: acces, communication, environment and service was gathered.

The interview transcription was then analyzed and interpreted carefully to get red lines and connections from variety of opinions. Framework analysis suggested by focus group discussion was used when analysing the data.

### RESULT

In terms of demographics, in West Nusa Tenggara 65 participants, in West Sumatera 30 participants and in aceh 55 participants. In all, 53 participants from international tourists and 97 from domestic tourism. Of them were 81 males and 69 were females.

This paper presents results from an exploratory study of Muslim Millennial travelers aged 18-36, from the Asia region (n=150). This study comprises two stages: (1) an manual survey, and (2) in semi interviews with Muslim Millennial travelers. This section presents some findings.

Based on the findings of the respondent at the West Nusantara, West Sumatera and Aceh, Muslim Millennial travelers needs and characteristics can be characterized into the three part :

A). Accessible : always on with internet for sharing foto and update status in social media.

B). Affordable: flexible transportation, accommodation (**backpacker**)

C). Authentic: always hunting the new location of destination, flexible itenary.

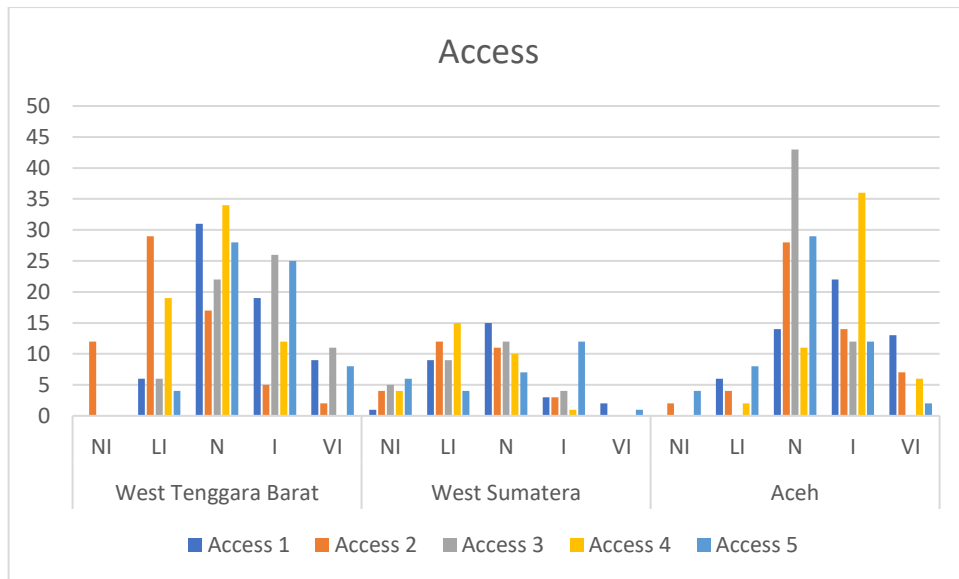
The 26 items measuring travel meaning can be reduced to four components. These have been labelled: visa requirements, air connectivity, transport infrastructure, outreach, ease of communication, and digital presence, safety and culture, visitor arrivals and enabling climate, access to prayer spaces, dining options & halal assurance, accommodation options, airport facilities and unique experiences.

Based on results, there are some similarities on informants' thoughts and opinions on West Nusa Tenggara, West Sumatera and Aceh Islamic tourism.

The first component includes items that relate to access:

#### a. Access

When the participants were asked regarding their experience related of visa requirements, air connectivity and transport infrastructure. Such as access from airport, port, train station to destination tourism where certain sharia rules are applied, majority participants in West Nusa Tenggara, West Sumatera and Aceh displayed a quite satisfied/neutral response.

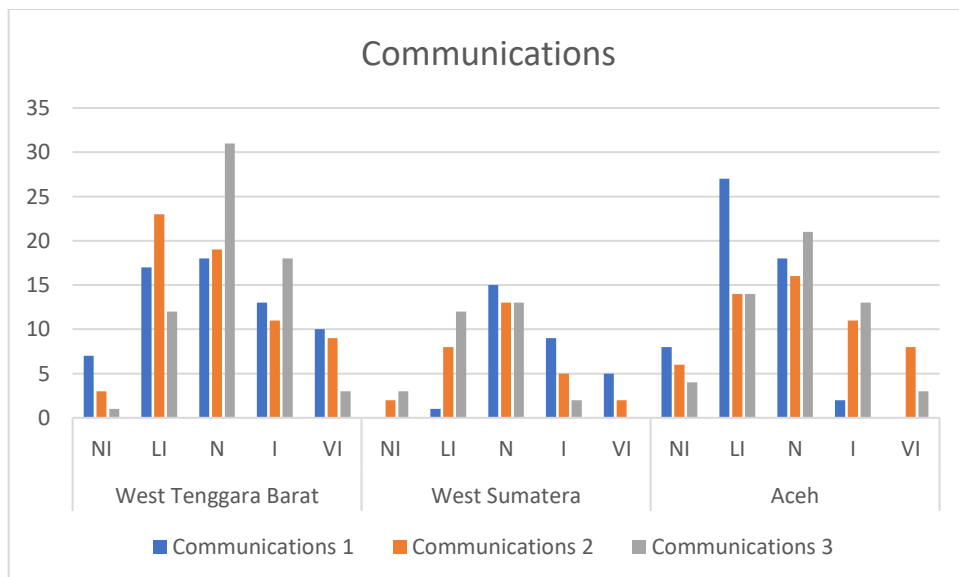


**b. Communications**

The second component relate to communications:

When the participants were asked regarding their experience related of outreach, Where

certain sharia rules are applied, majority participants in West Nusa Tenggara, West Sumatera and Aceh displayed a quite satisfied/neutral response.



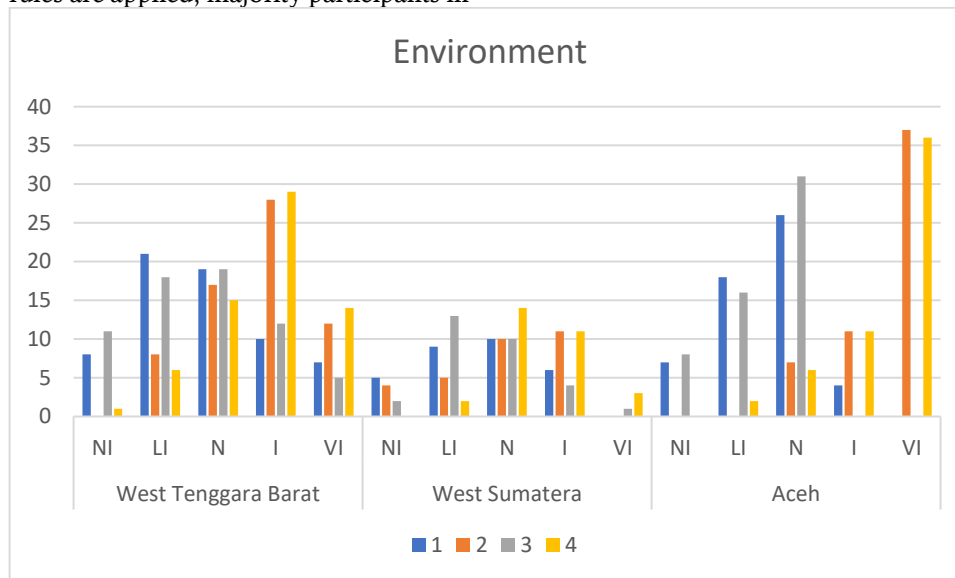
As digital natives, muslim millennial travelers use social media primarily to remain highly accessible and visible online when they travel. This allowed them to connect and share information-foto and update status.(Hasanah, S., &Harun, A. N. 2018)

The findings of this study have proved that pull factors are more significant determinants for muslim millennial travelers than the push factors. Besides, it was revealed that the majority of Muslim Millennial travelers depend on the internet for travel information (Mannaa. M, 2018).

### c. Environment

The third component is environment, when the participants were asked regarding their experience related of safety and culture, visitor arrivals and enabling climate. Where certain sharia rules are applied, majority participants in

West Nusa Tenggara displayed a satisfied/important response, majority participants in West Sumatera displayed a quite satisfied/neutral response, and majority participants in Aceh displayed a very satisfied/very important response.



They believe their security will be protected and they will be well taken care off, as long as they obey the local habits and culture. Positive opinion showed by all informants that the halal tourism will be good for them too as it will keep them safe. Interestingly, they perceive for a chance in experiencing different and unique tourism.

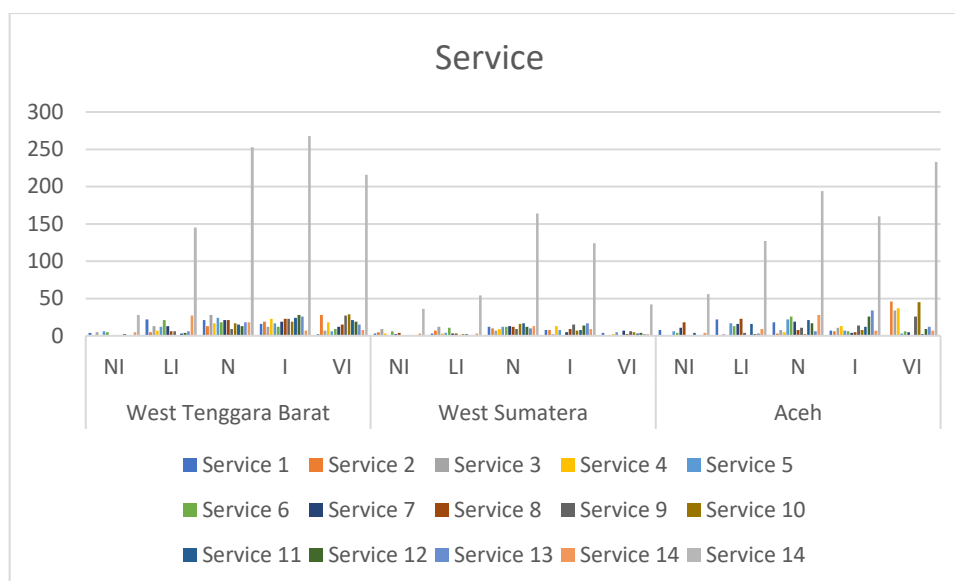
There were views on how significant West Nusa Tenggara, West Sumatera and Aceh would be as a moslem-friendly tourism destination for tourists with strong islamic background, such us tourists from the Malaysia who would like to enjoy their vacation that offer halal ready product and services.

Aceh is offering moslem friendly tourism services, the tourist believe in Aceh has a huge potential for moslems who would like to experience observance at mosque activities. The tourist feel that aceh tourism can be a segmented marketing effort targeting at specific tourists from Islamic countries such as Malaysia, Brunei and Middle East. The majority of their demand for tourism originates from neighboring

countries such as Malaysia. The participants were asked the main reason for selecting Aceh. For Aceh, the responses included exploring Islamic culture, fun and friendly people, cheaper prices. The main motivations to visit West Nusa Tenggara were beautiful beaches.

### d. Service

The fourth component is service, using availability of muslim-friendly airport as promotion tools to attract muslim travellers is the best choice to increase inbound muslim tourists and make the destination muslim friendly. When the participants were asked regarding their experience related of access to prayer spaces, dining options & halal assurance, accommodation options, airport facilities and unique experiences. Where certain sharia rules are applied, majority participants in West Nusa Tenggara displayed a satisfied response, majority participants in West Sumatera displayed a quite satisfied/neutral response, and majority participants in Aceh displayed a very satisfied/very important response.



Accommodations : the study finding shows that Muslim Millennials travelers prefer independent travel over packaged trips. (Mannaa, M., 2018).

In several hotels at West Nusa Tenggara, West Sumatera and Aceh, a number of hotels and inns provide muslim visitors with a qibla direction, prayer mats and Al-Quran in the room and serve halal food.

In Lombok International Airport (LIA), Sultan IskandarMuda International Aceh and Minangkabau International Airport (MIA) has taken initiative to satisfy millenealmuslims travelers. The airport allocates two prayer rooms for use of travellers and visitors. One room is located on the second floor on terminal, and another rooms are located at the departure gate. The prayer rooms are segregated by gender. Washing space is provided to perform ablution for praying. The payer rooms are opened for 24 hours a day for muslimtravellers with prepared prayer tools and display qibla direction. Moreover, several restaurants prepare halal food and alcohol-free are 'halal certified'.

In all, participants from non muslim showed positive perceptions and agreed to wear Islamic dress if that is required of them when visiting Islamic heritage sites such as mosques. They considered that a new experience and an opportunity to try the dress of other cultures. All of them reported that having to take off their shoes before entering a mosque does not bother them at all. They found it quite easy to follow and respect that aspect of Islamic culture.

The essence of halal tourism emphasizes shari'ah principles in managing tourism and polite and friendly service for all tourists and the surrounding environment. Therefore, to realize Indonesia as the world's halal tourism Mecca, the development strategy is directed at fulfilling the tourism competitiveness index as its main

indicators, including improving infrastructure, promoting, preparing human resources, especially increasing the capacity of tourism business actors.

In general, the uniqueness and distinct identity are the best traits to attract Muslim Millennial travelers. However, the challenge is to position the uniqueness of the genuine destination for offering the best value for Muslim Millennial travelers for inclusive tourism experience.

## CONCLUSION

Halal tourism in Indonesia has good economic prospects as part of the national tourism industry. Halal tourism is not exclusive, but is inclusive of all tourists (adults-youngers). Muslims are also the youngest segment amongst all other major religious groups with a median age of 24 years old in 2015. These Muslim Millennials and young adults, with some already transiting into parenthood, are shaping the future of tourism and hospitality with their unique service needs. To attract the Muslim Millennial travelers, the stakeholders of halal tourism should acknowledge the needs of the Muslim Millennial travelers. As the internet and social environments play key roles in Muslim Millennial travelers everyday lives, there is aneed for more smartphone and internet to share experiences on social media.

In essence, the study is significant in assisting the local authority and tourism department in preparing for better tourism strategies, planning and implementation. As tourism is inclusive and requires integrated value chain and operation from multi parties (government, society, tourism business).

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