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What Determines Muslim-Friendly Tourism in Aceh?

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Armiadi Musa

*Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh
armiadi@ar-raniry.ac.id*

Hendra Halim

*Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh
halim.hendra77@gmail.com*

Bismi Khalidin

*Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh
bkhalidin@ar-raniry.ac.id*

Azharsyah Ibrahim

*Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh
azharsyah@ar-raniry.ac.id*

ABSTRACT

Aceh is the only province in Indonesia legally allowed to implement sharia law across all sectors, including the tourism industry. This study aims to analyze factors influencing Muslim-Friendly Tourism (MFT) in Aceh. Specifically, it examines the direct and indirect relationship between MFT with travel intention, destination image, and tourist attitude. Data is gathered through a questionnaire survey among 150 respondents that were selected using the convenience sampling method. To explain the tourist's travel intentions, this study develops and tests a multiple regression analysis using the extended hierarchical linear modeling. Seven hypotheses were proposed regarding the relationships between MFT, tourist attitude, destination image, and travel intention constructs. The empirical results from the structural model suggest that MFT, destination image, and tourist attitude significantly influence travel intention; destination image and tourist attitude are the perfect mediators in influencing the MFT on travel intention to Aceh. These results have the implication in improving the promotions of tourism destinations in Aceh and developing more effective halal tourism positioning strategies for Aceh in particular and Indonesia in general.

Keywords: Halal tourism, Consumer Behavior, Muslim-Friendly Tourism, Travel Intention, Destination Image, Tourist Attitude



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1 **INTRODUCTION**

Globally, the travel and tourism industry is one of the biggest economic drivers, creating cultural ties and contributing to the world economy's development. In its 2020 report, World Travel & Tourism Council revealed that prior to the pandemic, Travel & Tourism (including its direct, indirect, and induced impacts) accounted for 1 in 4 of all new jobs created across the world, 10.6% of all jobs (334 million), and 10.4% of global GDP (US\$9.2 trillion). Meanwhile, international visitor spending amounted to US\$1.7 trillion in 2019 (6.8% of total exports, 27.4% of global services exports) (WTTC, 2020).

The growth of Muslim tourists is a new segment that emerged in the traveling sector, which will affect the global tourism industry. In the Global Muslim Travel Index 2019, Mastercard and CrescentRating reported that spending by Muslim travelers is expected to rise to US\$220 billion by 2020, with the number of Muslim tourists growing to 156 million from 121 million in 2016. As for the GMTI 2019 results, Indonesia is moving up to join Malaysia as the top destination in the global Muslim tourism market among 130 other countries. Its ranking has been steadily increasing over the last few years (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2019). As the most populous Muslim country, Indonesia has enormous potency to be the hub of halal tourism in the world (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2019).

The Global Islamic Economic Report 2020/21 stated that despite its hit by the covid-19 outbreak, Indonesia is continuing to raise its position within the top 10 overall rankings across all sectors. In the media & recreation sector, Indonesia climbed up 47 steps to reach the fifth position and sixth position in the Muslim-friendly travel sector (SGIE, 2021). Indonesia has proven to be a promising MFT potential. Previously, in the World Halal Tourism Awards 2016 (WHTA 2016) held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Indonesia has won 12 categories out of 16 categories. Aceh, one of the country's provinces, contributed to 2 of the 12 categories: the World's Best Halal Cultural Destination and the World's Best Airport for Halal Travelers (www.indonesia.travel, 2016). The award proves that Aceh is one of the provinces in Indonesia that can develop MFT. In addition, in the *Anugerah Pesona Indonesia* (API) Awards 2020, one of the travel destinations in Aceh, the Museum Tsunami, was named the Most Popular Unique Travel Destination in Indonesia. Realizing the immense potency, the Aceh Provincial Government put tourism as one of the leading sectors after the oil and gas to gain provincial income. In 2016, Aceh launched the destination branding called "the Light of Aceh"

as an effort to improve the image of Aceh and introduce a mixture of Aceh culture. Initial success has been seen in the next couple of months as the number of tourists visiting Aceh has increased gradually, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Tourist Visiting Aceh 2015 – 2018

Year	International Tourist	National/Local Tourist
2015	54,558	1,662,528
2016	76,452	2,077,797
2017	75,758	2,288,625
2018	106,281	2,391,968

Source: Aceh Tourism Office, 2019

As the only province legally allowed to implement the sharia law in Indonesia, Aceh is expected to be a pioneer in MFT. The Quran, in many different ways, issued special attention to tourism and in its attitude toward tourism considered one of the great blessings of Allah. Planning on the Muslim tourist market should be following Sharia in regulating all matters relating to tourism activities (Battour & Ismail, 2014). They are responsible for providing hospitality to visitors who, under Islamic law, enjoy the citizens' rights. Therefore, halal tourism consists of different sectors related to each other (Akyol & Kilinç, 2014). To sum, it attempts to make the tourism experience enjoyable to Muslim Travelers and allow them to perform religious duties (Liu, Li, Yen, & Sher, 2018). Therefore, Muslim-friendly products and services should also be integrated into tourism destination planning (e.g., prayer rooms at airports and public areas, customized meal plans in Ramadan) while maintaining the level of experience destination offers to other tourists. Muslim visitor arrivals were estimated and create a considerable potential that cannot be overlooked for most destinations.

Previous studies showed that MFT significantly affects various tourism variables such as destination image, tourist attitude, and travel intention (Liu *et al.*, 2018). Destination image is defined as an individual's overall perception or the complete set of impressions of a place (Phelps, 1986). It is regarded as the mental portrayal of a destination (Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996). A destination's image can be developed based on the estimation or understanding of a region's characteristics. Tasci, Gartner, and Tamer Cavusgil (2007) observe that the image of a destination can also be influenced

¹ by promotional information from that destination. Current tourism and marketing literature suggests that destination image is influential not only on the destination selection process and tourists' subjective perception but also on the subsequent evaluation of the trip and on their future intentions (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Castro, Armario, & Ruiz, 2007; Crompton & Ankomah, 1993; Hsu, Huang, & Swanson, 2010; Lin, Morais, Kerstetter, & Hou, 2007; Mansfeld, 1992; Murray & Vogel, 1997; Prendergast & Man, 2002; Ryu, Han, & Kim, 2008).

However, despite the promising facts to be a Muslim-friendly travel destination, the tourism industry in Aceh seemed not to be professionally managed. It indicated the lack of human resources, facilities, services, and behavior towards the tourists. Our preliminary observation showed that people who run the tourism places did not acquire adequate knowledge in managing such places. Consequently, it has an impact on the behavior towards the guests. In addition, the services provided were not standards. The supporting facilities for MFT were not yet fully available in all places, such as the halal certificate of the Indonesian Council of Ulema (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia - MUI*) in all restaurants and cafes, Qibla direction, the Qur'an, and prayer mats in hotel rooms, ablution sites, and other facilities.

Moreover, hygiene issues in various tourist facilities remain a significant challenge in developing halal tourism in Aceh. The cleanliness of *Musalla* (place of worship), toilets, and bathrooms, for instance, were also not well preserved. It does not in line with the spirit of sharia implementation that is currently ongoing in Aceh.

The aforementioned facts show a considerable gap in the MFT industry between "what it should be" and "the reality." This study is hoped to shed light on improving the management and the development of positioning strategy for the tourism industry in Aceh. It will be achieved by examining the influence of MFT on the travel intention, destination image, and tourist attitude; examining the influence of destination image and tourist attitude on travel intention to Aceh; examining the destination image and tourist attitude as influence mediators between MFT and travel intention to Aceh. The remainder of the current study is organized as follows. The literature, including theoretical support for study hypotheses, is reviewed and discussed in the next section. Then, the methodology and results are presented. Finally, the implications and limitations of the current study findings and some directions for future study are discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Muslim-Friendly Tourism Concept

¹ The term Muslim-Friendly Tourism (MFT) is used interchangeably with halal tourism, halal-friendly tourism, Islamic tourism, Muslim tourism, Islamic travel, Shariah Tourism, *Ziyarah* Tourism. However, none of them have a universally understood definition. Many academics begin to define this segment of travelers by first exploring the elements that comprise tourism and its impact. Duman (2011), for instance, defined Islamic tourism as “the activities of Muslims traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for the participation of those activities that originate from Islamic motivations which are not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited.” Meanwhile, according to Osman *et al.* (2015), Muslim tourism has to be based on Islamic teaching that encourages individuals, especially women and children, to travel with their *mahram*, which means that someone who has blood relation with them to provide them with security. In addition, Chookaew, Chanin, Charatarawat, Sriprasert, and Nimpaya (2015) defines halal tourism as offering tour packages and destinations that are mainly designed to cater to Muslim considerations and address Muslim needs.

¹ The niche market of “halal-friendly” tourism includes halal hotels, halal transport (halal airlines), halal food restaurants, halal tour packages, and halal finance. Therefore, halal tourism consists of different sectors related to each other (Akyol & Kiliç, 2014). MFT is defined as a type of tourism that adheres to the values of Islam. In Muslim-friendly hospitality, it is suggested that all product development and marketing efforts are designed for and directed at Muslims. Muslim-friendly hospitality services such as airlines, hotels, and food services are the new fast-developing tourism products in the Muslim-friendly tourist industry (COMCEC, 2016).

In 2009, CrescentRating identified six critical faith-based needs of Muslim travelers. These are: 1) Halal Food 2) Prayer Facilities 3) Ramadan Services 4) Water-friendly Washrooms 5) No Non-Halal activities and 6) Recreational Facilities and Services with Privacy Thus, these needs are grouped under “Need to have,” “Good to have” and “Nice to have” In addition to the six needs above, it also uncovered three new “needs,” which are 1) No Islamophobia 2) Social Causes and 3) Local Muslim Experiences. This fact has given rise to the “Muslim Traveler Faith-Based Service Needs 2.0” (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2019).

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1 Destination Image

Destination image is one of the most critical elements of a tourist destination and becomes a critical factor for the success or failure of tourism management. According to Phelps (1986), the destination image is an overall perception or the whole set of impressions of a place. In this context, the image of a destination can be divided into two stages: 1) the primary image, developed after visiting a tourist destination; and 2) the secondary image, the image created before a person has traveled to a particular destination. Some authors suggest that it is more strategic to use messages recalling past experiences during the primary image. In contrast, in the secondary image stage, it is more beneficial to communicate information and persuasive messages about the destination (Lopes, 2011). Variables such as age, race, the fact that a person has visited a destination before, their level of education, motivation, and cultural values strongly influence the image of a destination. In this sense, working with all of these variables is a unique opportunity to strengthen a positive image of a destination and increase the likelihood of a particular tourist destination being selected (Gallarza, Saura, & Garcí'a, 2002).

Tourist Attitude Towards Destination

Attitude toward a behavior can be defined as "the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In general, tourist attitudes comprise cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Vincent & Thompson, 2002). Tourist attitude describes the psychological tendencies expressed by tourists' positive or negative evaluations when engaged in certain behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kraus, 1995; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009). Tourist attitude comprises cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Vincent & Thompson, 2002). The cognitive response is the evaluation made in forming an attitude, while the affective response is a psychological response expressing the preference of a tourist for an entity and the behavioral component is a verbal indication of the intention of a tourist to visit or use that entity. Attitude predisposes a person to act or perform in a certain manner, as shown in studies of household recycling behavior (Vining & Ebreo, 1992), pro-environmental behavior (Steel, 1996), and tourism behavior (Hrubes, Ajzen, & Daigle, 2001; T. Lee, 2007; Sparks, 2007). Tourist attitude is an effective predictor of tourist decision for traveling to a particular destination (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Ragheb & Tate, 1993). According to the theory of planned behavior, behavioral intention is affected by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls toward

behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The intention behind an attitude can affect external behaviors (Ajzen, 1991; T. Lee, 2007). The more favorable the attitude toward the behavior, the stronger will be an individual's intention to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

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Travel Intention

According to Moutinho (1987), behavioral intention, which is the immediate antecedent to behavior, varies attributable to (a) evaluative beliefs, (b) social factors that provide a set of normative beliefs, and (c) situational factors. Moutinho's explanation seems to mainly come from the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Travel intention emphasizes one's intent to travel or commitment to travel. Travel intention is an outcome of a mental process that leads to action and transforms motivation into behavior (Jang, Bai, Hu, & Wu, 2009). That is, intention serves as an essential mediator that connects motivation to future travel behavior. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), "the best single predictor of an individual's behavior will be a measure of his/her intention to perform that behavior." Religion greatly influences many people's behavior as customers (Essoo & Dibb, 2004). In the context of tourism, religion may influence the choice of destination and tourists' product preferences (Weidenfeld & Ron, 2008). Muslim-friendly facilities like the halal hotel, halal restaurant, and prayer room are positively related to the revisit intention (Hariani, Rahmanita, & Ingkadijaya, 2017). In addition, many tourism and marketing researches suggest that destination image is influential not only on the destination selection process and tourists' subjective perception but also on the subsequent evaluation of the trip, and on their future travel intentions (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Castro *et al.*, 2007; Crompton & Ankomah, 1993; Hsu *et al.*, 2010; Lin *et al.*, 2007; Mansfeld, 1992; Murray & Vogel, 1997; Prendergast & Man, 2002; Ryu *et al.*, 2008).

Interrelationships Among MFT, Destination Image, Tourist Attitude, and Travel Intention

Previous studies showed that Muslim-friendly facilities such as halal hotels, halal restaurants, and prayer rooms are positively related to travel intention (Hanafiah & Hamdan, 2020; Hariani *et al.*, 2017). In addition, Liu *et al.* (2018) found that MFT has a positive and significant impact on travel intention. Destination image is an essential factor in eliciting the intention to revisit the same destination (Alcañiz, García, & Blas, 2005; Bigne, Sanchez,

¹ & Sanchez, 2001). Lin *et al.* (2007) reported that a favorable image of a specific destination reinforces travelers' preferences for that destination. In addition, Ryu *et al.* (2008) study supported the relationship between image and behavioral intentions. According to T. H. Lee (2009) and Phau, Shanka, and Dhayan (2010), the perceived destination image is the main predictor of the destination's choice intention. Few studies have revealed the role of customers' attitudes in predicting their satisfaction towards halal brand service services for subsequent travel to destinations. For example, attitude is a necessary construct that influences and predicts many behaviors produced through a relatively permanent and stable evaluative summary of an item (Kraus, 1995). Moreover, MFT has been found to positively and significantly influence the tourist attitude towards the destination and also destination image (Liu *et al.*, 2018). As a result of the above discussion, the following hypotheses are presented:

H₁: MFT has a positive and significant influence on travel intention

H₂: MFT has a positive and significant influence on destination image.

H₃: MFT has a positive and significant influence on tourist attitudes towards destination

Destination image has a significant impact on decision-making in tourism or travel, both before and during the visit. Tourists often have little knowledge of places not yet visited, and the pictures held by tourists of these places can have a significant impact on their selection of a destination (Govers & Go, 2004; Tsiotsou, Ratten, Byon, & Zhang, 2010). In addition, much tourism and marketing research shows that destination images influence the process of selecting a destination and subjective perceptions of tourists and evaluating their next trip and their future travel intentions (Mansfeld, 1992). Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is presented:

H₄: Destination image has a positive and significant influence on travel intention

Several studies have found that tourist attitude has a positive and significant impact on travel intention. In a study in Taiwan, Liu *et al.* (2018), for instance, found a strong relationship between tourist attitudes towards a destination and their travel intentions. In addition, Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) also found that destination image and tourist attitude have a significant relationship with

intention to travel. According to Ragheb and Tate (1993), tourist attitude is an effective predictor of tourist decisions for traveling to a particular destination. This result is also supported by Jalilvand and Samiei (2012). Therefore, based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is presented:

H₅: Tourist attitude has a positive and significant influence on travel intention

1
Previous studies found that destination image positively contributes to attracting new and first-time tourists and its crucial relationship with their pleasure and future desires (Battour & Ismail, 2014; Liu *et al.*, 2018). In the hospitality field, limited research has been conducted in exploring the moderator that affects destination image on satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. Sudigdo, Khalifa, and Abuelhassan (2019) revealed a significant and positive impact of Islamic attributes of destination (worship facilities, *halalness*, and general Islamic morality and security guarantee) on the decision to visit Jakarta with tourism destination image as a mediator. The overall destination image plays a critical role in tourism marketing to enhance attracting more international arrivals. The destination image consists of complex predictors and multi-processes of hospitality and tourism-related services (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). In addition, previous research also confirms that destination image also influences the traveler's attitude in selecting a particular destination for a visit (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Hence, based on these findings, the study proposed the following hypothesis:

H₆: Destination image mediates the influence of MFT on the tourists travel intention

Few studies in the brand service and service quality research reported that customer satisfaction was mediated by consumers' attitude in perceiving the service quality, personal beliefs, and values, and also their previous expectations on the products and services (Caruana, 2002; Chen & Tsai, 2007). The whole pictures of the perceiving items led them to buy the products. Previous studies showed a strong relationship between destination image and the attitude of the tourists to choose a destination (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002; Liu *et al.*, 2018; Mansfeld, 1992; Sudigdo *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, based on the above studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₇: Tourist's attitude mediates the influence of MFT on the tourists travel intention

The aforementioned discussion reveals a relationship among the study variables. Based on that, this study has proposed seven hypotheses that will be employed in developing a theoretical model that will be tested to examine their relationship. Figure 1 presented four variables that are operationalized in this study. MFT (X₁) serves as an independent variable, while destination image (Z₁) and tourist attitude (Z₂) serve as mediating variables, and travel intentions (Y) as the dependent variable.

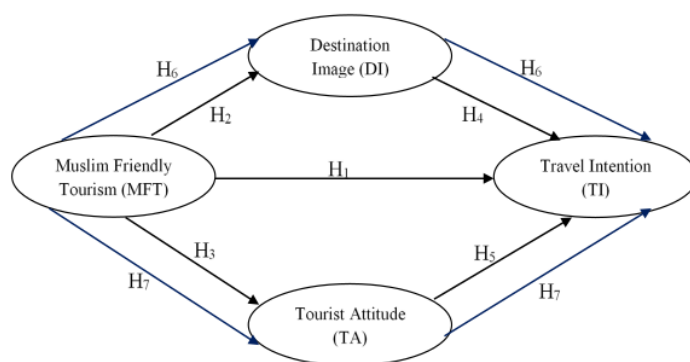


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODS

The data for this study were gathered through questionnaires from tourists traveling to Banda Aceh city, Sabang, and Aceh Besar. Based on data from Aceh Tourism Office, these regencies received the highest number of visitors in the last five years. In selecting the respondents, this study uses a purposive sampling technique with the criteria (i) Muslim tourists, and (ii) have visited at least one of the tourism destinations in the above three regencies. Since accurate data regarding the size and location of this population were not available, probabilistic sampling techniques could not be used. Sample selection was a result of the convenience method. Convenience sampling is used to select those who are easy to reach from the population and selected using the purposive sampling method. Tourists were selected at different locations within the three regencies, including Museum Tsunami, PLTD Apung, Pantai Lampuuk, Pantai Iboih, Sumur Tiga, dan Pantai Gapang. These locations were chosen based on their popularity as tourist attractions in Aceh.

As to size, although initially 175 questionnaires were collected, some had to be rejected because they were indicated not correctly filled in, finally resulting in a sample of 150 valid respondents. It is a minimum number suggested by Hair, Babin, Money, and Samouel (2003) in a research that employs discriminant analysis tools. Of the satisfactorily completed questionnaires, 48% of the sample were male respondents, while 44% represented female respondents, and 8% preferred not to reveal their genders. The sample profile is displayed in Table 2.

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Table 2. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

No.	Variable	Content	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	72	48.0
		Female	66	44.0
		Preference no answer	12	8
2.	Marriage Status	Single	104	69.3
		Married	39	26.0
		Preference no answer	7	4.7
3.	Age	< 20 years old	20	13.3
		21 – 29 years old	81	54.0
		30 – 39 years old	18	12.0
		40 – 49 years old	25	16.0
		50 – 59 years old	1	0.7
		> 60 years old	0	0
		Preference no answer	5	3.3
4.	Education	Primary school	0	0
		Junior high school	0	0
		Senior high school	26	17.3
		University	98	65.3
		Graduate school	26	17.3
5.	Times of visiting	1 st time	63	42.0
		2 nd time	27	18.0
		3 rd time	16	10.7
		4 th time and above	44	29.3
6.	Tourist's region	Africa	2	1.3
		Europe	0	0
		Asia	148	98.7
		America	0	0
		Oceania	0	0
7.	Travel Pattern	Independent	78	52.0
		Group package tour	56	37.3
		Business trip	16	10.7
		Official business trip	0	0

¹ Regarding education level, most respondents (65%) were at the university level plus 17.3% in graduate study level. Further, the research project was conducted across various regions, with the most dominant region being Asia (98.7%). There is a clear predominance of individuals who had experienced 1st-time visits (42%). The majority of respondents were aged between 21 and 21 years (54%). Finally, in regard to travel patterns, most respondents (52%) traveled independently, and 37 % traveled in a group.

The questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive review of tourism literature. To measure positive and negative affective states, an affect scale developed by Liu *et al.* (2018) was adopted for this research. The researchers modified the existing scales and categorized them into four parts. The first and second part consists of 12 questions about MFT and destination image consecutively; the third part consists of five questions about tourist attitude; the last part consists of four questions on travel intention. That makes a total of 33 questions. Data analysis was performed using Hierarchical Linear Modelling (HLM). It is a complex form of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression employed to analyze variance in the outcome variables when the predictor variables are at varying hierarchical levels (Woltman, Feldstain, MacKay, & Rocchi, 2012). HLM is particularly appropriate for this research designs as the data for participants are organized at more than one level.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 3 shows the validity test result that consists of indicator, load factor, and the information of each indicator. Using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), all of the indicators in each construct have a significant loading factor towards the measuring construct. CFA is a multivariate statistical procedure used to test how well the measured variables represent the number of constructs. In this case, all construct received > 0.40 of the loading factor; therefore, all constructs are valid (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 1998). Cronbach's alpha reliability test showed that MFT scored 0.937, Destination Image scored 0.934, Tourist Attitude scored 0.893, and Travel Intention scored 0.827. Generally, the lower acceptance limit of Cronbach's alpha is from 0.60 to 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 1998). Hence, these results indicate that the items were very reliable to measure the research components.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Test Results

No	Indicator	Load Factor	Cronbach Alpha	Remarks
Muslim-Friendly Tourism (W)			0.937	Reliable
1	W1	0.729		Valid
2	W2	0.663		Valid
3	W3	0.612		Valid
4	W4	0.541		Valid
5	W5	0.664		Valid
6	W6	0.543		Valid
7	W7	0.626		Valid
8	W8	0.552		Valid
9	W9	0.622		Valid
10	W10	0.603		Valid
11	W11	0.571		Valid
12	W12	0.475		Valid
Destination Image (C)			0.934	Reliable
13	C1	0.641		Valid
14	C2	0.646		Valid
15	C3	0.632		Valid
16	C4	0.497		Valid
17	C5	0.614		Valid
18	C6	0.569		Valid
19	C7	0.632		Valid
20	C8	0.478		Valid
21	C9	0.525		Valid
22	C10	0.626		Valid
23	C11	0.612		Valid
24	C12	0.526		Valid
Tourist Attitude (S)			0.893	Reliable
25	S1	0.758		Valid
26	S2	0.744		Valid
27	S3	0.628		Valid
28	S4	0.719		Valid
29	S5	0.659		Valid
Travel Intention (N)			0.827	Reliable
30	N1	0.689		Valid
31	N2	0.516		Valid
32	N3	0.709		Valid
33	N4	0.747		Valid

Table 4 shows the average value (mean) of the variables used in the study ranged from 4.0200 to 4.1417, with the level of data distribution ranging from 0.61303 to 0.64011. Of the four variables observed, the variable of tourist attitude scored the highest value. This result indicates that respondents perceived a positive experience while visiting the observed places.

Table 4. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation Between Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3	4
Muslim-Friendly Tourism	4.1073	0.61303	1			
Destination Image	4.0270	0.61446	0.865	1		
Tourist Attitude	4.1417	0.64011	0.922	0.858	1	
Travel Intention	4.0200	0.61410	0.398	0.425	0.413	1

Table 5 demonstrated the relationship among the variables tested. It shows that MFT has a positive and significant effect on travel intentions with a regression coefficient (β) of 0.398 with a probability <0.05 and the variance explained by MFT at a determinant coefficient (adjusted R^2) 15.8%. Thus, it can be concluded that hypothesis 1 is supported. The findings highlighted the urgent need for comfort praying facilities. According to Weidenfeld and Ron (2008) and Mohsin (2005), Muslim tourism destinations located near a *masjid* influence the tourist preference in a hotel reservation, while the availability of praying rooms influences the attitude towards the destinations. In general, the intention of Muslim-friendly tourists was influenced by the availability of Muslim-friendly supporting facilities such as halal hotels, halal restaurants, and prayer rooms. These findings are also confirmed by Hariani *et al.* (2017) and Liu *et al.* (2018).

Table 5. Analytical Regression

Model	Influence Between Variables	β	Sig.	Adj. R^2
1	The Muslim-Friendly Tourism variable influences the travel intention to Aceh	0.398	0.000	0.158
2	Muslim-Friendly Tourism variables affect destination image variables	0.865	0.000	0.748
3	The Muslim-Friendly Tourism variable influences the tourist's attitude	0.922	0.000	0.849
4	Destination image variable influences the tourists travel intention to Aceh	0.425	0.000	0.175
5	The variable attitude of tourists influences the tourists' travel intention to Aceh	0.413	0.000	0.165

In addition, Table 5 also revealed that MFT has a significant effect on destination image, and its direction is also positive with a regression coefficient

(β) of 0.865 with probability <0.05 . The MFT variable explains the variance towards destination image at a coefficient (adjusted R^2) of 74.8%. Thus, these results provide significant evidence to accept the second hypothesis. The findings indicate that the destination image of MFT is an essential factor that led visitors to come to Aceh in the last few years. Therefore, the stakeholders are responsible for providing hospitality for Muslim tourists in fulfilling the standard of halal tourism with other related sectors. This result is in line with previous research conducted by Coshall (2000), O'Leary and Deegan (2005), (Akyol & Kiliç, 2014), and also (Liu *et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, data from Table 5 also showed a strong influence of the MFT variable on tourist attitude. The direction is positive with a regression coefficient (β) of 0.922 with a probability <0.05 . The variance is explained by MFT at a determinant coefficient (adjusted R^2) of 84.9%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the third hypothesis is supported. These findings indicate that Muslim-friendly tourist destinations in Aceh should adopt various ways to encourage and motivate visitors to come. For example, they can give some prizes consist of membership if he publishes a review of these tourist destinations. This fact can help to form more positive tourist attitudes. These are in line with the studies of Akyol and Kiliç (2014) and Fakharyan, Jalilv, Elyasi, and Mohammadi (2012). In addition, it also supported the studies of Liu *et al.* (2018), who found that MFT positively and significantly impacts tourist attitude; and study of (Hanafiah & Hamdan, 2020), who found the components of MFT, i.e., halal food, has a significant impact of tourist attitude.

Additionally, it is also revealed from Table 5 that destination image has a significant effect on travel intention. Its direction is positive with a regression coefficient (β) of 0.425 with a probability <0.05 . The variance explained by the destination image of the travel intention is at a determinant coefficient (adjusted R^2) of 17.5%. Thus, it can be concluded that hypothesis 4 is supported. These results show that destination image has perceived by the tourists as a vital component that influences their travel intention to Aceh. This result is consistent with previous research conducted by (Govers & Go, 2004), Tsiotsou *et al.* (2010), Liu *et al.* (2018), and (Mansfeld, 1992) that indicated a strong and positive relationship between the variables.

Besides, Table 5 displayed that tourists' attitude significantly affects travel intention, and its direction is positive with a regression coefficient (β) of 0.413 with a probability <0.05 . The variance explained by the tourist attitude towards the travel intention is at a determinant coefficient (adjusted R^2) of 16.5%. From this result hence, it can be concluded that the fifth hypothesis is

¹ supported. These findings imply that the motivation, perception, culture, and hospitality of the Acehnese have developed tourist attitudes that influence their future travel intention. According to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), behavioral intention is affected by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls toward behavior. The intention behind an attitude can affect external behaviors. The more favorable the attitude toward the behavior, the stronger will be an individual's intention to perform the behavior (Hrubes *et al.*, 2001). This result is in line with some previous studies, such as Liu *et al.* (2018), Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), and Ragheb and Tate (1993).

The following hypothesis predicts the effects of mediation using regression analysis. Table 6 showed the test result of the effect of the independent variable, MFT (X), on the dependent variable, which is travel intention (Y), and the mediation variable, the destination image (Z_i). Based on the table, the second stage of the regression coefficient in MFT towards the travel intention (β) 0.398 is at a probability < 0.05 . When the mediation variable (destination image) is included, the influence between MFT on travel intention becomes insignificant at a value of $0.418 > 0.05$ with a value (β) of 0.120. Therefore, it can be concluded that the influence of MFT on travel intentions is fully mediated by the destination image variable (full mediation) so that the sixth hypothesis is supported. These findings indicated that Islamic attributes of destination (worship facilities, halalness, and general Islamic morality and security guarantee) affect the tourist decision to visit Aceh with destination image as a mediator. These findings are related to the outcomes found in several previous studies, such as Sudigdo *et al.* (2019), Battour and Ismail (2014), and Liu *et al.* (2018). The overall destination image plays a critical role in tourism marketing to enhance attracting more international arrivals. Destination image positively contributes to attracting new and first-time tourists as well as its crucial relationship with their pleasure and future desires (Liu *et al.*, 2018). In the hospitality field, limited research explored the moderator effect of destination image on satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. The destination image consists of complex predictors and multi-processes of hospitality and tourism-related services (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). In addition, previous research also confirms that destination image also influences the traveler's attitude in selecting a particular destination for a visit (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005).

Table 6. Mediation Effects of Destination Image

Equation Stages	Destination Image (Z)	Travel Intention (Y)	
	Stage 1 (β)	Stage 2 (β)	Stage 3 (β)
Muslim-Friendly Tourism (X1)	0.865*	0.398*	0.120*
Destination Image (Z)			0.321*
R	0.865	0.398	0.429
R ²	0.748	0.158	0.184
ΔR ²	0.746	0.153	0.173

* Significance at level $p < 0.05$

1
Hypothesis 7 predicts the effects of mediation using regression analysis. The influence of the independent variable, MFT (X), on the dependent variable, travel intention (Y), when the mediator, tourists' attitude (Z₂), is tested wholly and simultaneously can be observed in Table 7.

Table 7. Mediation Effects of Tourist Attitudes

Equation Stages	Tourist Attitude (Z)	Travel Intention (Y)	
	Stage 1 (β)	Stage 2 (β)	Stage 3 (β)
Muslim-Friendly Tourism (X1)	0.922*	0.398*	0.113*
Tourist Attitude (Z)			0.413*
2	0.922	0.398	0.415
R ²	0.850	0.158	0.173
ΔR ²	0.849	0.153	0.161

* Significance at level $p < 0.05$

It shows that the second stage of the coefficient of regression in MFT towards the travel intention is (β) 0.398 at a probability < 0.05 . When the mediation variable is included, the tourists' attitude, the influence between MFT on the travel intention becomes insignificant at a value of $0.084 > 0.05$ with a value (β) of 0.113. Thus, it can be concluded that the influence of MFT on travel intentions is fully mediated by the variable tourists' attitude (full mediation), so that hypothesis 7 is supported. It is consistent with the studies of Chen and Tsai (2007) and (Caruana, 2002) that reported mediation of some attitude components such as perception, personal belief, and value toward intention to buy a product. In term of destination image, this study is consistent with studies of Gallarza *et al.* (2002), Liu *et al.* (2018), Mansfeld

¹ (1992), and Sudigdo *et al.* (2019), that found a strong relationship between destination image and the attitude of the tourists to choose a destination. According to Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) and Ragheb and Tate (1993), tourist attitude is an effective predictor of tourist decisions for traveling to a particular destination. As mentioned earlier, attitude predisposes a person to act or perform in a specific manner, as shown in studies of household recycling behavior (Vining & Ebreo, 1992), pro-environmental behavior (Steel, 1996), and tourism behavior (Hrubes *et al.*, 2001; T. Lee, 2007; Sparks, 2007).

Table 8. Research Hypothesis Testing Results

	Hypothesis	Information
² H ₁	The Muslim-Friendly Tourism variable influences the travel intention to Aceh	Supported
H ₂	Muslim-Friendly Tourism variables affect destination image variables	Supported
H ₃	The Muslim-Friendly Tourism variable influences the tourists' attitude	Supported
H ₄	Destination image variable influences the travel intention to Aceh	Supported
H ₅	The tourists attitude variable influences the travel intention to Aceh	Supported
H ₆	The destination image variable mediates the influence of the Muslim-Friendly Tourism variable on travel intention to Aceh	Supported
H ₇	The tourists' attitude variable mediates the influence of Muslim-Friendly Tourism variables on travel intention to Aceh	Supported

¹ In short, all of the links were significant and positive. Figure 2 shows the specified relationships among model constructs.

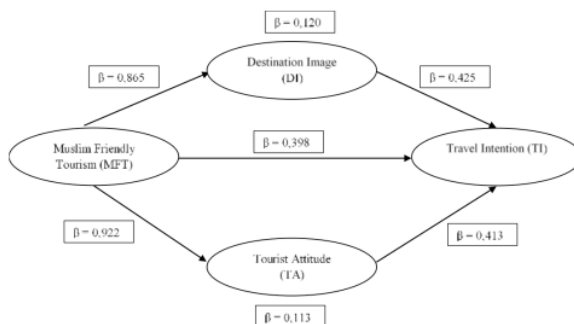


Figure 2. Relationship among the constructs

CONCLUSIONS

Results indicated that MFT has a significant effect on travel intentions (H_1 is supported), MFT influences the destination image (H_2 is supported), MFT has a significant effect on tourist attitudes (H_3 is supported). Destination image has a significant effect on travel intention (H_4 is supported). Tourist attitude has a significant effect on travel intention (H_5 is supported). The results of structural equation analysis also showed that destination image mediates the influence of MFT on the tourists' travel intention (H_6 is supported). Tourist's attitude mediates the influence of MFT on the tourists travel intention (H_7 is supported). These findings specify that tourists have perceived Aceh as MFT positively and, thus, it is very potential to develop as one of the main MFT in Indonesia professionally.

The results have several implications that are of practical importance. When tourists articulate MFT, inexperienced tourists gain an opportunity to enhance their understanding of destination attributes. Deciding to travel to a particular destination may lead tourists to become dependent on the interpersonal influence of MFT. Moreover, the impact of MFT on a tourism destination choice is significant because it is likely to help destination managers build a positive destination image and, more important, to increase tourists' intentions to travel. Positive MFT is generated by a satisfactory destination experience in terms of destination attributes such as hotels, transportation, and entertainment. Thus, understanding the types of experiences likely to trigger positive MFT is useful for destination managers. Tourists' positive experiences of services, products and other resources provided by tourism destinations could lead to repeat visits and disseminate positive MFT about the destination among tourists. Recommendations originated from previous visits can be taken as the most reliable information sources for potential tourists.

The results have several important practical implications. When travelers articulate the MFT, inexperienced travelers have the opportunity to improve their understanding of destination attributes. Determining to travel to a particular destination can cause tourists to become dependent on the interpersonal influence of the MFT. In addition, the impact of MFT on the choice of tourism destinations is quite significant because it is likely to help destination managers build a positive destination image and, more importantly, increase tourists' intention to travel. A positive MFT is generated by a satisfying destination experience in terms of destination attributes such as hotels, transportation, and entertainment. Thus, understanding the

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1 types of experiences likely to trigger a positive MFT is useful for destination managers. Positive experiences of tourists about the services, products, and other resources provided by a tourism destination can lead to repeat visits and spread positive MFTs about the destination among tourists. Recommendations from previous visits can be used as the most reliable source of information for potential tourists.

The study, however, had two limitations. First, the questionnaire used a convenience sampling method; thus, the sample could not be treated as representative of all tourists. The impacts of culture, nationality, and multiculturalism on MFT and the decision-making process need more studies in the future. Second, the sample size constituted 150 respondents. It is, according to Hair *et al.* (1998), a minimum number in conducting research that employs discriminant analysis tools. Thus, further studies should consider expanding the number of respondents to reach an ideal goal, which then is replicated with a larger population.

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