

THE USE OF MEDIA TO PROMOTE MUSLIM
FRIENDLY HOSPITALITY SERVICES IN MALAYSIA:
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

BY

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Halal Industry

International Institute for Halal Research and Training
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AUGUST 2021

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the interest in Muslim friendly hospitality services (MFHS) seems to be a research topic among researchers. In mass communication, research on Islam as a subject of promotion has been widely done in prior research focused on how Islam been portrayed in tourism promotion in majority Muslim countries. Study on how media been used to promote MFHS in Malaysia is vital to understand how tourism organisation employed media to promote MFHS in Malaysia. With the advancement in communication technology, traditional media as a research subject has been left out in mass communication research with new research direction has been turned to the internet and its component such as social media platform. However, little research has been done to understand how social media platforms had been employed to promote MFHS in Malaysia and explore tourism organisation's performance in promoting MFHS in Malaysia. As a travel stakeholder, the tourism organisation should anticipate and improve their performance while using media as a promotion tool. Previous literature suggests that media use among tourism organisations was limited with focused information on Islam in tourism hovering around related Islamic services and products, Islamic art and architecture and Islam as a religion for the Malay community. Hence, this study explored strategies use by tourism organisation in social media; in this study, Facebook has been selected as a social media under study since it is the most popular social media platform among Malaysian. Content analysis method has been applied to examine tourism organisations Facebook post. A total of 416 posts from four MFHS tourism organisation have been analysed according to content analysis procedure that later identified three main themes in examining the content of the Facebook post; post frequency, design and content strategies, and online engagement. Aside from that, this study applied the extrapolation method to explore differences/similarities between tourism organisation. Content analysis resulted in; overall tourism organisation uses of Facebook were still moderate, especially by government tourism organisation. Facebook has been used mainly to provide information on Islamic products and services with little effort to interact and engage with users. Consequently, it left a post with little engagement by a user that later reflects the total number of page followers. This study also discovered that traveller had been involved in providing content in the tourism organisation Facebook page. They have been hired as a freelance contributor, or their story has been picked and shared in tourism organisation official Facebook. This trend was growing among private tourism organisation but has been left out by government tourism organisation. On the other hand, this thesis also studied media content's impact on people's awareness and attitude. A total of 207 respondents that use media as a source to gain information on MFHS has been selected after data screening. Three dimensions have been identified during Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) has been applied to predicts the relationship between content on people awareness and attitude. Overall, respondents agreed that credibility, relevancy, and legitimacy significantly influence awareness and attitude, while timeliness and engagement do not significantly influence user awareness and attitude.

خلاصة البحث

في السنوات الأخيرة ، يبدو أن الاهتمام بخدمات الضيافة الصديقة للمسلمين الجماهيري ، تم إجراء بحث حول الإسلام كموضوع للترويج على نطاق واسع في بحث سابق ركز على كيفية تصوير الإسلام في الترويج السياحي في البلدان ذات الأغلبية المسلمة. تعتبر دراسة كيفية استخدام وسائل الإعلام للترويج لنظام MFHS في ماليزيا أمرًا حيويًا لفهم كيفية استخدام منظمة السياحة لوسائل الإعلام للترويج لنظام MFHS في ماليزيا. مع التقدم في تكنولوجيا الاتصالات ، تم استبعاد وسائل الإعلام التقليدية كموضوع بحثي في أبحاث الاتصال الجماهيري مع توجيه بحثي جديد تم تحويله إلى الإنترنت ومكونه مثل منصة وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. ومع ذلك ، تم إجراء القليل من البحث لفهم كيفية استخدام منصات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لتعزيز MFHS في ماليزيا واستكشاف أداء منظمة السياحة في تعزيز MFHS في ماليزيا. بصفتها صاحب مصلحة في السفر ، يجب على المنظمة السياحية توقع وتحسين أدائها أثناء استخدام وسائل الإعلام كأداة ترويج. تشير الأدبيات السابقة إلى أن استخدام وسائل الإعلام بين المنظمات السياحية كان محدودًا بمعلومات مركزة عن الإسلام في السياحة التي تحوم حول الخدمات والمنتجات الإسلامية ذات الصلة ، والفن والعمارة الإسلامية والإسلام كدين للمجتمع الملايو. وبالتالي ، استكشفت هذه الدراسة الاستراتيجية التي تستخدمها المنظمة السياحية في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ؛ في هذه الدراسة ، تم اختيار Facebook كوسيلة تواصل اجتماعي قيد الدراسة نظرًا لأنه أكثر منصات التواصل الاجتماعي شيوعًا بين الماليزيين. تم تطبيق طريقة تحليل المحتوى لفحص مشاركة المنظمات السياحية على Facebook. تم تحليل ما مجموعه 416 مشاركة من أربع منظمات سياحية في MFHS وفقًا لإجراء تحليل المحتوى الذي حدد لاحقًا ثلاثة مواضيع رئيسية في فحص محتوى منشور Facebook ؛ استراتيجيات ما بعد التردد والتصميم والمشاركة عبر الإنترنت. وبصرف النظر عن ذلك ، طبقت هذه الدراسة طريقة الاستقراء لاستكشاف الاختلافات / أوجه التشابه بين التنظيم السياحي. نتج عن تحليل المحتوى ؛ كانت استخدامات منظمة السياحة الشاملة لـ Facebook لا تزال معتدلة ، خاصة من قبل منظمة السياحة الحكومية. تم استخدام Facebook بشكل أساسي لتوفير معلومات حول المنتجات والخدمات الإسلامية مع القليل من الجهد للتفاعل والتفاعل مع المستخدمين. ونتيجة لذلك ، تركت مشاركة مع القليل من التفاعل من قبل مستخدم يعكس لاحقًا العدد الإجمالي لمتابعي الصفحة. اكتشفت هذه الدراسة أيضًا أن المسافر شارك في توفير المحتوى في صفحة Facebook الخاصة بالمنظمة السياحية. لقد تم توظيفهم كمساهم مستقل ، أو تم اختيار قصتهم ومشاركتها في Facebook الرسمي لمنظمة السياحة. كان هذا الاتجاه ينمو بين منظمة السياحة الخاصة ولكن تم استبعاده من قبل منظمة السياحة الحكومية. من ناحية أخرى ، درست هذه الأطروحة أيضًا تأثير المحتوى الإعلامي على وعي الناس وموقفهم. تم اختيار ما مجموعه 207 مستجيبين يستخدمون الوسائط كمصدر للحصول على معلومات حول MFHS بعد فحص البيانات. تم تحديد ثلاثة أبعاد أثناء تحليل العوامل الاستكشافية (EFA) ، وتم تطبيق الانحدار الخطي المتعدد (MLR) للتعنبؤ بالعلاقة بين المحتوى على وعي الناس وموقفهم. بشكل عام ، اتفق المستجيبون على أن المصداقية والملاءمة والشرعية تؤثر بشكل كبير على الوعي والموقف ، في حين أن التوقيت المناسب والمشاركة لا يؤثران بشكل كبير على وعي المستخدم وموقف.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Fadzilla Hernani Mohd Janis

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To my Beloved Mak, Abah, husband and daughters

Thank you for your unconditional love and support.

I sincerely dedicate this thesis to you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks, and praises to the Almighty Allah for His Mercies and showers of Blessings on my family and me. Thank Allah for giving me the strength and determination to complete my study and for all the people who have supported me throughout my PhD journey.

First, I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my Supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr Noriah Ramli, for her constant help, support and guidance throughout this research. She managed to teach me how to work independently accompanied by her useful advice to help me carry out this research. Similarly, I want to express my gratitude to Dr Afridah Abas, Assoc. Prof. Dr Majdah Zawawi, and Professor Ida Madieha Abdul Ghani Azmi for their proposal, inspirations and constructive inputs at different stages of my research.

I owe deep gratitude to the most important man in my life, my husband Mohd Anaz and my beloved daughters Siti Maryam and Siti Aminah for their unconditional love, endless support and prayers for me. Without their help, constant support, and encouragement, I could not endure and achieve outstanding accomplishments in my academic life. To mak and abah. Thanks for giving me love and believing me. Thanks for all the supports and encouragements through all this year. Thanks for being understanding when I am not able to be around as much. My thanks also go to my parents in law: mama and ayah and in-laws who help me take care of my daughters. Thanks for the supports, prayer, and strong faith in me, it became my strength to continue this journey. They have provided me with unconditional love and care. To my siblings: Along, Uda, Zila and Adik. They have been my best friends for life, and I love them dearly and thank them for all the supports. I always believe that I have my family to count on when times get rough.

I also take this opportunity to thanks my close friends; Idzzy, Poh Ling, Effa and Liza who have always equipped me with kind words of encouragement and advice. I cherish the friendship I had and take this chance to appreciate each one of them. My deep appreciation also goes to my postgraduate partners, Sis Syazatul Akhyar and Sis Nabilla. They were the most supportive friends that I had. They were my biggest supporter and a constant reminder that I could do better than what I think I can. They give me a reason to survive this PhD journey. Thanks to both of you for the love and prayers.

Not to forget, I want to convey great thank to all of the lecturers in Institute of Halal Research and Training (INHART), IIUM for their supports and contribution in sharing knowledge during my academic years: Professor Irwandi Jaswir, Dr Betania Kartika Muflih, Dr Mohammad Aizat Jamaludin, Assoc. Prof. Dr Mohamed Elwathig Saeed Mirghani, Dr Mohd Hafidz Mahamad Maifiah and Assoc. Prof. Dr Yumi Zuhani Has-Yun Hashim. Thanks to Professor Abdi Omar Shuriye for giving me insightful knowledge and advice during my early PhD journey.

Finally, I like to extend my appreciation to the Ministry of Education Malaysia for the financial support under NRGs 130010001 grant. Finally, I like to thanks everyone else who supported and encouraged me to complete my doctoral programme, although their names are not acknowledged here.

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LIST OF STATISTICAL ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

Abbreviation/Symbol	Definition/Elaboration
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CGC	Consumer Generated Content
CGM	Consumer Generated Media
Cronbach alpha	Cronbach coefficient alpha; index of internal consistency
DMO	Destination Marketing Organisation
e-WOM	Electronic Word of Mouth
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
HHWT	Have Halal Will Travel
ITC	Islamic Tourism Centre
KMO	Kasier-Meyer-Olkin
Kolmogorov-Smirnova (K-S)	decide if a sample comes from a population with a specific distribution
M	Mean: average of numbers
MLR	Multiple Linear Regression
MSA	Measures of Sampling Adequacy
MFHS	Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services
<i>N</i>	Total number in a sample
SD	Standard Deviation: measure the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of values
Shapiro-Wilk (S-W).	Test for the assessment of normality
UGC	User Generated Content

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Media plays a unique role in modern society. Undeniably, aside from the medium of interaction, media also played an essential role in developing the tourism industry in the 19th century. Tourism products and services are intrinsic. The tourism industry's tourism experience resulted from a combination of a wide range of services consumed while travelling, which is the fundamental offering offered by the tourism industry (So et al., 2015). There's a vital relationship between tourism and the media because tourism is highly dependent on media reporting. Travellers refer to media to make travel decisions since they have never seen the destination first hand (UNWTO, 2007). Media plays a vital role for Muslim travellers searching for tourism services and products that fulfil the Islamic obligation. Travelling in Islam is viewed as a trying task that subjects an individual to the tests of patience and perseverance. There is no real division between the physical and spiritual aspects of travel (Din, 1989).

Despite the claims that Islam is not a marketable commodity, Muslim friendly marketing has long been employed by tour companies by designing Islamic tour packages dedicated to catering to Muslim traveller needs (Chhabra, 2010). However, Henderson (2003) argues that there is a scope for consultation with religious figures in Islamic tourism promotion and local communities regarding the formulation of codes of conduct and presentation of sites such as mosques and shrines as tourist attractions. This suggestion is by no means an easy task to overcome as Muslim-friendly tourism

faces significant ideological barriers. Thus, aligned Islamic tourism with the Muslim communities' needs and goodwill can be envisioned (Chhabra, 2010).

As media evolved, tourism promotion had shifted from print media to internet tools. While print media face a limitation of space, financial constraints, and ability to reach a wider audience, the internet overcomes all the restriction and widely use by tourism organisations to promote tourism products and services. The internet platform has been adopted by tourism organisation related to Muslim friendly as a new marketing strategy by creating an official website to promote Muslim friendly products and services aside from maintaining conventional marketing materials.

For the past few years, a scholar such as (Hashim, Murphy, & Hashim, 2007; Henderson, 2003, 2008) had studied the inclusion of Islam in Malaysia tourism promotion both in print media and official website. This early research concluded that Islam had been portrayed moderately by government tourism organisations, focusing on the fact that Islam is the Malay community's religion and emphasises Islamic architecture images such as mosques and Islamic calligraphy. In 2009, Malaysia's had introduced itself as a Muslim-friendly destination. There's no updated study on Muslim-friendly tourism's promotional content in tourism organisations in print media and social media, especially on social networking sites (SNS). Thus, there is still an obvious need to study Muslim-friendly hospitality services promotional content by tourism organisation. Aside from the nature of SNS, it differs from printed and websites. It's crucial to examine and understand how tourism organisations employ SNS aside from any changes or improvements to promoting Muslim-friendly hospitality services in Malaysia's promotional printed materials.

1.2 STUDY BACKGROUND: MEDIA AND MUSLIM FRIENDLY HOSPITALITY SERVICES IN MALAYSIA

The word media is a plural form of word medium which means, any material through which something else may be transmitted (John Hartley, 2002). For typical usage, the medium is merely a channel or system whose speech is the most widely used medium (Schrank, 1991). However, the term has narrowed to focus on the ‘mass media’ rather than on telecommunications. Mass media refers to the organised means of communicating openly, at a distance, and to many in a short time (McQuail, 2000). Mass media added McQuail (2000), is born into the context and conflicts of transition-age and continued to be deeply implicated in the trends and changes of society and culture, as experienced at the personal level, society and the ‘world system’.

Meanwhile, Traudt (2005) defines mass media as the range of print, electronic and film opportunities supported by multiple platforms for presentation and consumption. In general, mass media is the range of medium to present content to the end-user. There are three main categories of mass media, which are print (newspaper, magazines, brochure, booklet, book, billboard, etc.), electronic (cinema, television, and radio) and digital (internet, mobile phones, social media, websites, blogs and podcast).

In the 1920s, the word “mass media” was first used to describe a segment of the media to attract the larger audience using national radio networks and the mass distribution of newspapers and magazines. In contrast, for centuries, certain types of mass media such as books and manuscripts, have been effectively used. Mass media often act as a social institution that responds to individuals and societies’ social and cultural needs. However, media runs as a business enterprise, subject to financial discipline and operating in competitive environments. Aside from transmitting information, to established culture and encoded message, the primary aim of mass

media is neither to disseminate certain information nor to unite a public in some expression of culture or values, but simply to catch and hold visual or aural attention (McQuail, 2010). McQuail (2010) added:

Media attain one immediate economic goal: to gain audience revenue (since attention equals consumption, for most practical purposes). An indirect one, which is to sell (the probability of) audience attention to advertisers....those who use mass media for their purposes do hope for some effect (such as persuasion or selling) beyond attention and publicity, gaining the latter remains the immediate goal and is often treated as a measure of success or failure. The publicity strategies of multi-media conglomerates are typically directed at getting maximum attention for their current products in as many media as possible and in multiple forms (interviews, news events, photos, guest appearances, social media sites, etc.). The goal is described as seeking to 'achieve a good share of mind'.

In the hospitality and tourism industry, the factor that makes the mass media so appealing is the tourism industry harnesses mass media which in turn holds a form of mystique to the public. The mass media communication designed appeals to a broader demographic. Advances made in mass media technology aid the marketing and promotion of tourism. If it gets people talking, it signifies a good mass marketing drive (UKEssay, 2018). Within commercial media institutions, promotion can be seen through three features respectively, i.e. the competitiveness, the actuality/transience and the objectivity/detachment.

Therefore, the promotional activities using media bring a tremendous change in various industries, including tourism and hospitality environment. Consumers are better informed and well communicate with people from the tourism industry. From traditional media type of promotion using printed material to advertisement in the electronic media such as television and radio until the advancement of communication technology, people utilise the internet as their primary source of information searching. In the ancient world, people need to travel beforehand and gather information about particular places and use word of mouth as the medium of information to spread the

news to other people. Advancement in communication technology has made travelling much more convenient, where media has provided all the information we need in particular places.

Communication allows a message to reach targeted audiences by implying different media from traditional to recent media technology. Hospitality is among the industry which actively promoting itself by using media to create brand knowledge and awareness. While hospitality offered in regards to tourism will determine the survival of the tourism industry. As the emergence of various media types (printed, electronic and digital) the search for the hospitality services among people has been broadened. As the Muslim nowadays is more aware of the need to search on services that parallel with Islamic requirement, while non-Muslim looking for security and hygiene (Alkawsaneh & Alfandi, 2015), it is vital for the media to improve the promotional content in on Muslim friendly hospitality services.

1.2.1 Media from the Islamic Perspectives

Media and communication are not an alienated part of Islam. Over the centuries the development of Islamic cultures and civilization have been influencing by the three central pillars of human communication: firstly, produced information is transmitted from person to person using oral or verbal communication, secondly, an literary, artistic and linguistic interaction in all branches of knowledge and finally the first attempt in history to bring oral and written cultures into a unified framework that becomes a foundation for the scientific revolution that followed in Europe (Mowlana & A.Kechichian, 2015).

In Islam, the fundamental purpose of communication media is to spend welfare and to end conflicts. It has become the media's primary responsibility to provide the

public with the correct information on Islam and the truth it carried (Ali et al., 2014). Hence, the Islamic concept of communication encourages its believers to spread the universal idea of Islam throughout the world and condemn fake and baseless news.

Allah says:

“O, you who believe, if a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest you harm people unwillingly and afterwards become full of repentance for what you have done” (Qur’an: *al-Hujraat*: 6).

Islam encourages debates among its followers but recommends for the discussion to happen in better manners to avoid confrontation. Allah says:

“And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them...” (Qur’an: *al-Ankabut*: 46).

Islam also encourages its followers to spread the goodness of Islam throughout the world. Allah says:

“And let there be (arising) from you a nation inviting to (all that is) good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful” (Qur’an: *al-Imran*: 104)

Unlike Western concept freedom of expression, Islam gives complete freedom of expression to use this opportunity to spread peace and welfare instead of vulgarity and unfaithfulness. In other words, the Islamic concept of communication supports right deeds, which means that it’s the media’s responsibility to speak the truth and avoid misinformation. Allah says:

“And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know (it)” (Qur’an: *al-Baqarah*: 42).

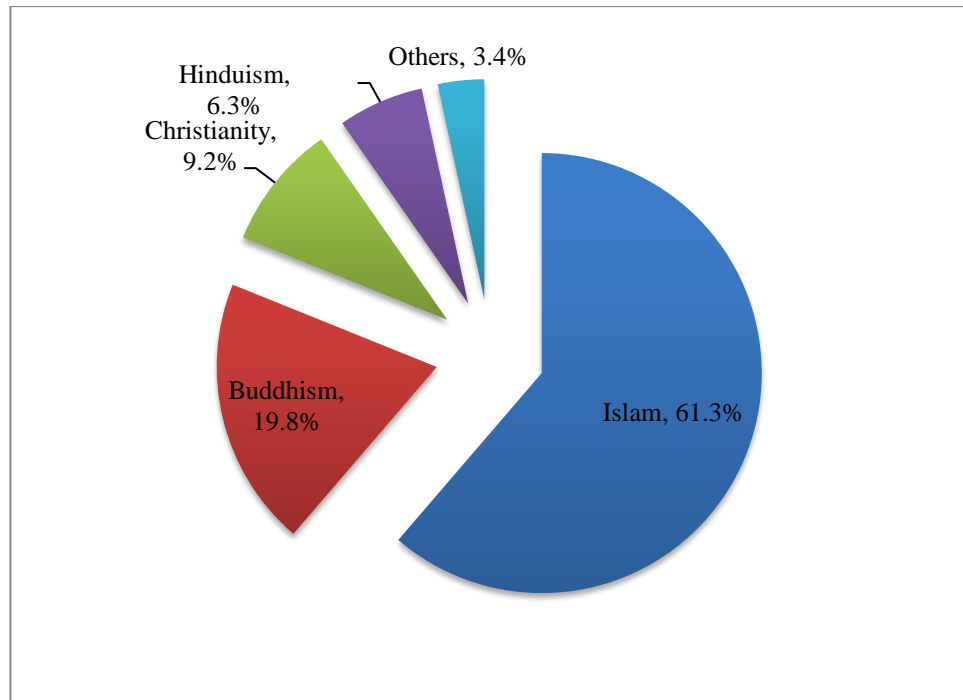
Media is the vital medium of *da’wah* because of its ability to reach a wider public. Islam has been featured as progressive religion by western media. Therefore, media in

the Muslim world need to show a more significant commitment to reporting Islam and Muslim affairs. Media in the Muslim world need to act as a medium for *da'wah* to disseminate the divine message and speak the truth on Islam. According to Ishak and Solihin (2012), the work of *da'wah* itself is to communicate the reality of the divine message to people.

Today, with the advancement in communication systems, various media channel can carry the work of *da'wah*. As fulfilling the religion obligation during travel is no exception, media must carefully execute information to cater to Muslim needs and avoid misinformation. The media role is to assist and increase Muslim travellers' awareness of travelling in Islam, and the promotion should not be limited to only halal food as the main concerns.

1.2.2 Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services in Malaysia

Malaysia is a multicultural country in Southeast Asia, consisting of two regions; peninsular Malaysia, which consists of 12 states, and East Malaysia, which consists of Sabah and Sarawak. For the year 2010, Malaysia has a total population of 28.3 million consisting of three dominant cultures: Malay, Chinese and Indian. Islam is the widely professed religion in Malaysia, with 61.3% followed by Buddhism 19.8%, Christianity 9.2%, Hinduism 6.3% and others 3.4% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010, Figure 1.1).



Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia (2010)¹

Figure 1.1 Religion Composition in Malaysia

The tourism industry in Malaysia has gone through different phases after the country gained his independence from Britain. According to Din (1982), after independence, Malaysia's concern over the western influence in tourism development. To infuse the local community culture, Malaysia had begun a serious tourism effort to establish the Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Trade in 1959. Ministry of Culture and Tourism have its ministry in 1987. To cater to tourism promotional activities, Malaysia has restructured Tourist Development Corporation (TDC) that enacted in 1972 to become Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board in 1992. In 1987, the government established the Ministry of Culture and Tourism that later renamed it to Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (MoCAT) in 1992. However, MoCAT has split

¹ Statistics regarding the religion composition in Malaysia will be updated in 2020 under the 2020 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia.

under its ministry and renamed as Ministry of Tourism (MoTour) in 2004. MoTour responsibility is to governed matters on tourism. This development reflected the government serious efforts in promoting tourism as one of the country income earners. Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC) has been established in 2013 to replace MoTour to connect tourism and culture.

Tourism is among the main contributor to the Malaysia national economy. In 2019, the Malaysia tourism sector became the third-largest contributor by contributing a total RM86.14 billion to (GDP) to the national economy. In 2019, Malaysia received 5.33 million Muslims tourists' arrivals, an increase of 1.45 per cent from 2018 (5.25 million tourists) generating RM16.72 billion in tourist receipts which is an increase of 0.72 per cent from 2018 (RM16.60 billion). Tourist from Indonesia, Brunei and Bangladesh are the top three countries with the highest Muslim international traveller to Malaysia (refer to Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Malaysia top tourist arrival from Muslim countries (January 2018 to September 2019)

Country	January 2018	September 2019
Indonesia	2,438,946	2,792,776
Brunei	1,055,723	929,789
Bangladesh	108,678	120,757
Saudi Arabia	94,088	104,491
Pakistan	56,073	74,580
Iran	59,429	35,677
Egypt	21,412	23,411
Iraq	17,577	17,122
Turkey	12,367	11,574
Kazakhstan	10,411	13,912

Source: Tourism Malaysia with the cooperation of the Immigration Department

Islam and the Muslim community were moderately portrayed, before branding Malaysia as a Muslim friendly hospitality services (MFHS) destination. Malaysia is a