

**A STUDY ON CORE COMPETENCIES MODEL FOR
MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOUR GUIDE IN TOURISM
INDUSTRY**

BY

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**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the
degree of Master of Halal Industry Management**

**International Institute for Halal Research and Training
(INHART)**

International Islamic University Malaysia

DECEMBER 2024

ABSTRACT

The popularity of the concept of Islamic tourism has given more focus on providing guides that may suit the needs of the Muslims travelers. This study seeks to establish knowledge on the notion of Muslim tourism, competencies involved in offering Muslim-friendly tour guiding services, and the current competency level of the tour guides in Malaysia in order to come up with a model of core competencies that anticipates the satisfaction of Muslim tourists. The study sets out four primary objectives: For the first study, to understand the idea of Muslim friendly tour guides in Islamic tourism, to establish what competencies are necessary for tour guides to enhance the Muslim friendly experience, to evaluate the existing competency levels of tour guides serving the Muslim tourist, and for the last, to suggest a framework for the core competencies of Muslim friendly tour guides in Malaysia. Hence, a qualitative research design was adopted, accompanied by in-depth interviews with the tour guides, tourism agencies in Malaysia, also academicians who specialized in tourism industry to provide verbal data, giving a vivid and credible account of respondent's experience/views. The study identified six key elements essential for a competent Muslim-friendly tour guide: culture and religion awareness, destination knowledge, awareness of Halal food, language barriers, respect tourists' professional handling treating equally and handling of emergencies situations. On the mentioned elements, all of the participants confirmed the awareness but came up with more enhancements for a broader competency model. The study entails the use of these competencies in an effort to enhance a Muslim-friendly experience; and contributes to the formulation of training frameworks for tourist guides of the Malaysian region. The research importance also points to the need for specific competencies among the tour guides with a view of improving the Islamic tourisms and thus the proposed model of core competencies helps as a directory for the tour guides' training and development since they have to meet the expectation of the Islamic tourists in all aspects. Thus, this research enriches the knowledge about Islamic tourism and the position of the tour guides in this domain. It will also highlight gaps in the preparation of tour guides and also it can be used to chart the training and assessing of tour guides regarding the area. Besides, this research serves the development of Muslim-friendly tourism and is useful for tourism institutions, operators, trainers, and developers of tour guides for Islamic countries.

ملخص البحث

لقد أدى انتشار مفهوم "السياحة الإسلامية" إلى زيادة التركيز على توفير المرشدين السياحيين بما يناسب احتياجات المسافرين والسُّيَّاح من المسلمين. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى ترسيخ المعرفة اللازمة حول مفهوم السياحة الإسلامية، والكفاءات المشاركة في تقديم خدمات الإرشاد السياحي المناسبة للمسلمين، ومستوى الكفاءة الحالي للمرشدين السياحيين في ماليزيا، وذلك من أجل التوصل إلى نموذج للكفاءات الأساسية التي يمكن أن تنال رضا وقبول السياح المسلمين. تحدد هذه الدراسة أربعة أهداف رئيسية، هي: فهم فكرة المرشدين السياحيين المناسبين للمسلمين في السياحة الإسلامية، وتحديد الكفاءات اللازمة للمرشدين السياحيين لتعزيز تجربة سياحية وديّة للمسلمين، وتقييم مستويات الكفاءة الحالية للمرشدين السياحيين الذين يخدمون السياح المسلمين، وأخيراً، اقتراح إطار للكفاءات الأساسية للمرشدين السياحيين المسلمين الودودين، في ماليزيا. تنبئ هذه الدراسة بتصميم البحث النوعي، وتعتمد المقابلات المتعمقة مع المرشدين السياحيين وغيرهم من المشاركين المتخصصين، لتوفير بيانات لفظية، وإعطاء وصف حيوي وموثوق لتجربة المشاركين وآرائهم. وقد حددت الدراسة ستة عناصر أساسية للحصول على مرشد سياحي كُفء، وودود للمسلمين، وهي: الوعي بالثقافة والدين، ومعرفة الوجهات، والوعي بالطعام الحلال، والوعي بالحوازر اللغوية، والتعامل المهني مع السائحين، والمعاملة على قدم المساواة، والتعامل مع حالات الطوارئ. وفيما يتعلق بالعناصر المذكورة، أكد جميع المشاركين وعيهم بتلك العناصر، ولكنهم ذكروا مزيداً من التحسينات اللازمة لتوفير نموذج كفاءة أفضل. تنطوي هذه الدراسة على استخدام هذه الكفاءات في محاولة لتعزيز تجربة صديقة ومناسبة للمسلمين؛ والإسهام في صياغة مجموعة من الأطر التدريبية اللازمة للمرشدين السياحيين في ماليزيا. وتبرز أهمية هذه الدراسة في السعي إلى توفير كفاءات محددة من المرشدين السياحيين بهدف تحسين السياحة الإسلامية، وبالتالي فإن النموذج المقترح للكفاءات الأساسية سيساعد بوصفه دليلاً إرشادياً لتدريب وتطوير المرشدين السياحيين بما يلبي

التوقعات المنتظرة منهم في مجال السياحة الإسلامية، من كافة الجوانب. ومن ثم، فإن هذا البحث يُثري المعرفة بالسياحة الإسلامية، ومكانة المرشدين السياحيين. كما يسلط الضوء على الفجوات الموجودة في برامج إعداد المرشدين السياحيين، ويمكن كذلك استخدامه لتخطيط عملية تدريب وتقييم للمرشدين السياحيين في هذا المجال. يخدم هذا البحث تنمية قطاع السياحة الصديقة للمسلمين، وهو كذلك مفيد للمؤسسات السياحية، والمشغلين، والمدربين، ومطوري المرشدين السياحيين في الدول الإسلامية.



APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Halal Industry Management.

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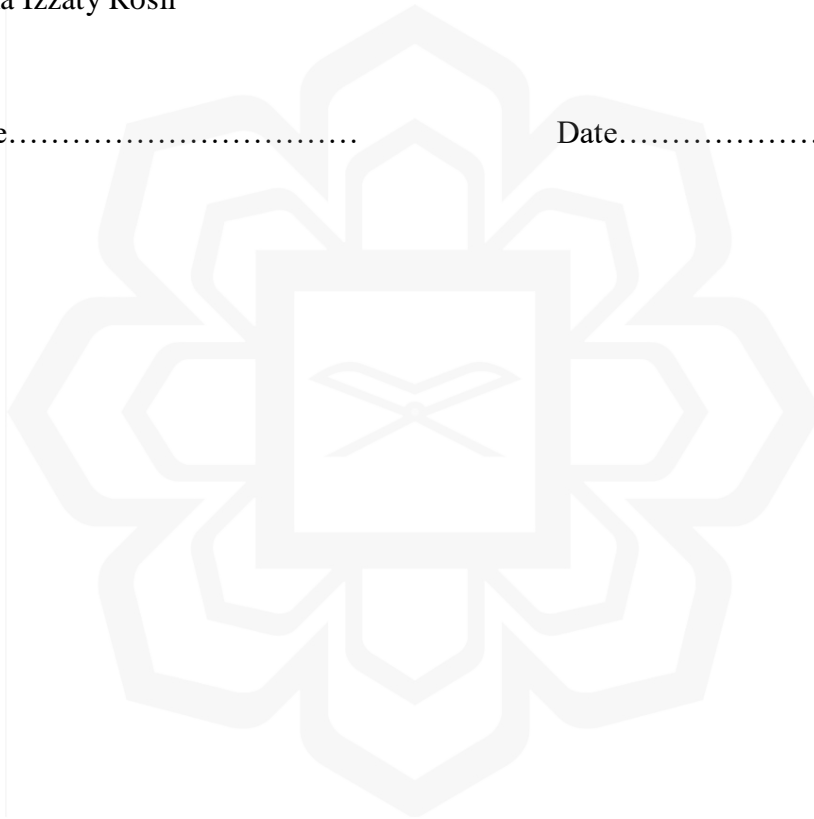
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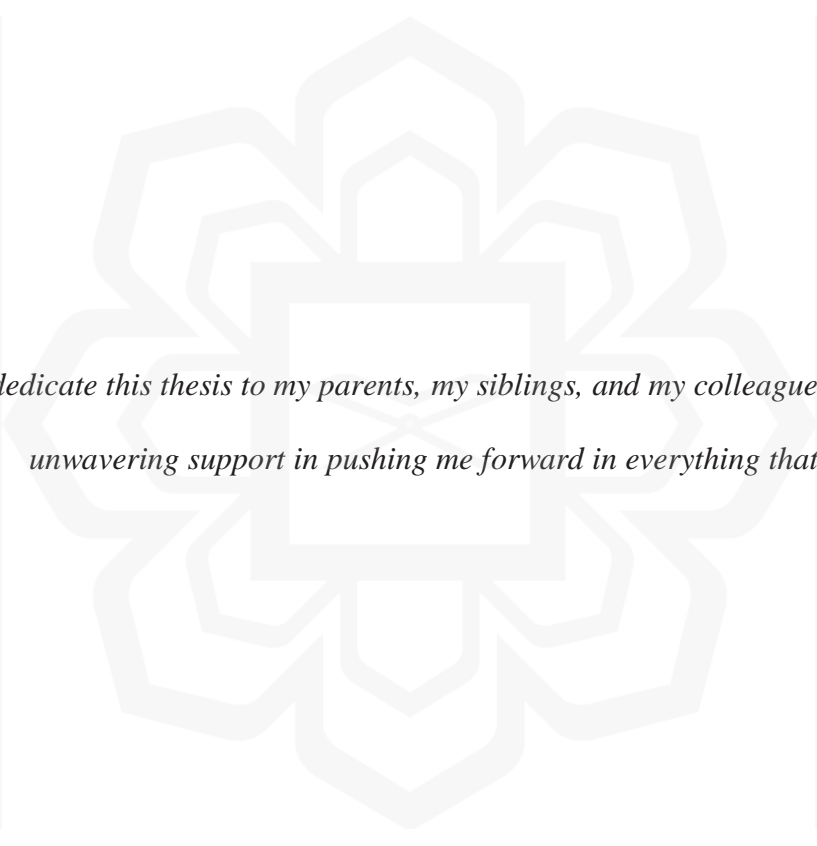
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*I dedicate this thesis to my parents, my siblings, and my colleagues for their
unwavering support in pushing me forward in everything that I do.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is all through the Grace of Allah the Almighty that I have completed my programme with his Grace and Mercy. However, it has been challenging, His mercies and blessings on me have in one way or the other eased the daunting task of doing this thesis.

To all my supporters, those who encouraged me and helped in preparing this thesis, I say thank you very much. First of all, I believe I owe the most to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohammad Aizat Bin Jamaludin for the guidance, suggestions, and concepts that supported this dissertation. Next, I would also like to acknowledge the help and guidance given by my co-supervisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Anis Najiha Binti Ahmad for her thoughtful comments, constructive feedback and brilliant ideas. I am very grateful to them for their support and invaluable tips that led to development of this project.

Additionally, I would like to thank the staff members of Islamic Tourism Centre, the representative from The Terengganu State Tourism Department and the representative from the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC TERENGGANU) for their time spent and wonderful explanations given. Moreover, my gratitude goes to the academician respondent from IIUM for their detailed and brief explanation about the topic that enriched this thesis, and the guidance provided. Also, I would like to thank the various tour guides and / or employees for agreeing to participate in this project for the benefit of this thesis based on their experience.

To my family and friends, I would want to say a big thank you for bearing with me and encouraging me to complete this work. My special gratitude and deepest appreciation to my parents, Rosli Bin Alias and Tuan Nor Ashikin Binti Tuan Endut for always backing up any my actions. This is an acknowledgment of the fact that you stood by me and were ready to help me at any time during my master's adventure. Special heartfelt thanks to my most wonderful friends Afaf Syakirah Binti Md. Rosdy, Husna Binti Abd Rashid and Azim Hatim Bin Aminuddin for allowing me to express anything, giving counters, and giving me continuous support. I really thank you for this, and I'm glad to be able to go further on this with you guys; thank you for all the help.

As much as it has been perceived that this journey has been made easy by all of you here, thank you all for making this journey a reality. Again, praise be to Allah for his boundless benevolence on us one of which is the opportunity to bring to a close the work of this thesis. Alhamdulillah

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LIST OF STATUTES

MS 2610:2015, Malaysian Standard; Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services – requirements

Standard of Malaysia Act 1996

Tourism Industry Act 1992 (Act 482)

Trade Descriptions (Definition of Halal) Order 2011



LIST OF SYMBOLS

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| TG ₁ | Private Tour Guide – 1 |
| TG ₂ | Private Tour Guide – 2 |
| TG ₃ | Private Tour Guide – 3 |
| MF ₁ | Licensed Muslim-friendly Tour Guide – 1 |
| MF ₂ | Licensed Muslim-friendly Tour Guide – 2 |
| MF ₃ | Licensed Muslim-friendly Tour Guide – 3 |
| A ₁ | Academician – 1 |
| A ₂ | Academician – 2 |
| A ₃ | Academician – 3 |
| G ₁ | Government Authorities – 1 |
| G ₂ | Government Authorities – 2 |
| G ₃ | Government Authorities – 3 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| CTRE | Continuous Tourism Related Education |
| EFTGA | European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations |
| HRM | Human Resource Management |
| IATM | International Association of Tour Managers |
| ITC | Islamic Tourism Centre |
| MFT | Muslim-friendly Tourism |
| MFTG | Muslim-friendly Tour Guide |
| MOTAC | Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture |
| TDA | Trade Description Act |
| TG | Tour Guide |
| WATH | We Are the Host Course |

TRANSLITERATION

Before using this Table, you must first install the AHT Times New Arabic fonts.

Table of the system of transliteration of Arabic words and names used by the International Islamic University Malaysia.

| | | |
|--------|--------|-------|
| b = ب | z = ز | f = ف |
| t = ت | s = س | q = ق |
| th = ث | sh = ش | k = ك |
| j = ج | Î = ص | l = ل |
| Í = ح | Ï = ض | m = م |
| kh = خ | Ï = ط | n = ن |
| d = د | Ð = ظ | h = ه |
| dh = ذ | ‘ = ع | w = و |
| r = ر | gh = غ | y = ي |

Short: a = اَ ; i = اِ ; u = اُ

Long: Ê = اَ ; Ê = اِ ; Ê = اُ

Diphthong: ay = اِ ي ; aw = اِ و

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Rapid development and widespread recognition of the tourist industry as a vital sector contributing to national and local economies has coincided with the expansion of global communication and information networks as well as advances in science and technology (Zhang et al., 2024). Local and foreign tourists might contribute to the income. As a result, the growth of the tourism sector will aid in the advancement of the real sector. Tourism is an industry that has the potential to generate significant revenue for a country (Bhuiyan et al., 2011). The expansion of the tourism sector is critical because it will create new employment, build infrastructure assets that require a workforce, and turn the revenue wheels of the natural environment surrounding tourist attractions (Mahliza et al., 2021). The tourism sector is ever-changing expanding, and new market segments keep emerging from time to time (Bhuiyan et al., 2011; Aziz, 2018). One of these segments, gaining special attention in recent years, is Muslim-friendly tourism (Mahliza et al., 2021; Cetin & Dincer, 2016). During an era that sees more and more Muslim travellers making their way across the globe, this part of the market often gets overlooked, with not enough travel destinations focusing on these requirements that are aimed at Muslims. According to Kamaruddin and Ismail (2018), the Muslim world population is forecasted to account for 25.13% of the global population in 2020 and 33.14% by 2075.

It is equally important to highlight that for some of the countries, tourism is becoming not only one of the most popular but also one of the most financially beneficial pastimes. Since Islam is the religion that increases its population faster than all other religions in the world, it means that Muslims hold a great role in the creation of wealth and

economic development of many countries, mostly those with Muslim population dominant. The paper by Liu et al. (2018) noted that Muslim travellers are currently contributing to 10 per cent of the market. Their spending in 2011 was USD126 billion. By 2020, it will be USD 192 billion. In addition, every nation needs to follow halal travel because it assists Muslim tourists and increases income for the travel sector. Thus, as the number of the world's Muslim population rises and as the latter is predicted to reach 2 billion in the next years, Aziz (2018) noted that the demand for halal tourism services is anticipated to grow at an incredible rate in the future. Records show that this value will increase to 2 billion within the next ten years.

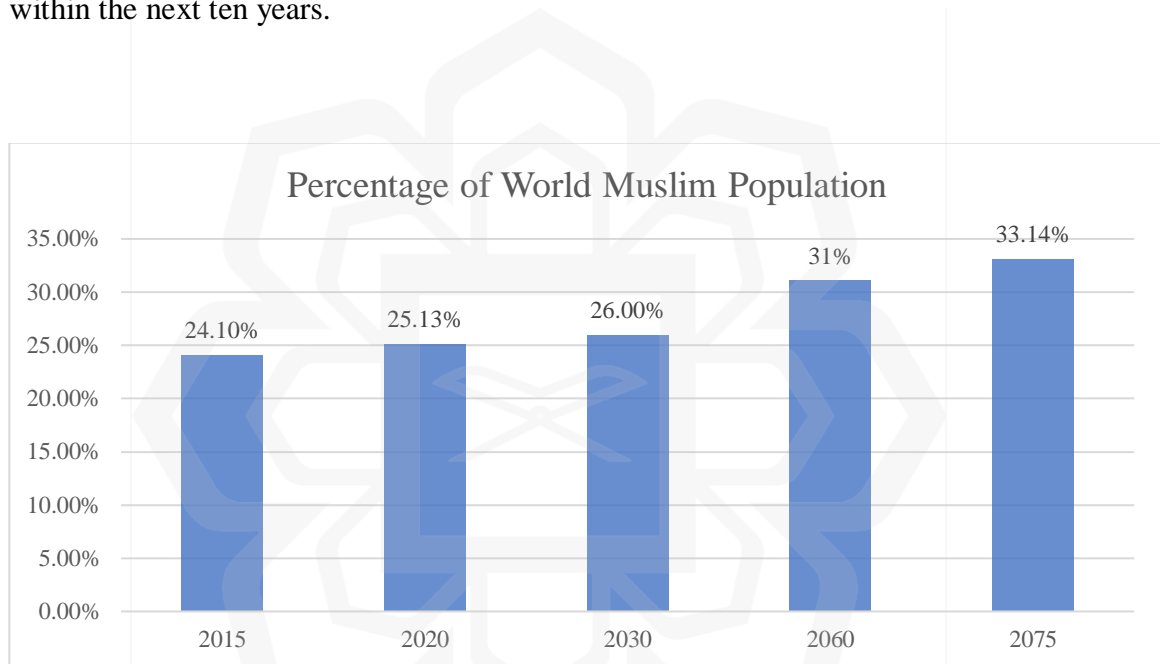


Figure 1.1: The Percentage of World Muslim Population (Yan et al., 2017; Hackett & Lipka, 2018)

Muslims will grow at a rate more than twice as fast as the global population between 2015 and 2075 (Yan et al., 2017; Hackett & Lipka, 2018). In the second part of this century, Islam is predicted to overtake Christianity as the most popular religion in the world. According to Hackett and Lipka (2018), there will be a 32% increase in the world population in the next ten years. It is projected that the number of Muslims will increase by 70%, from 1.8 billion in 2015 to over 3 billion in 2060. In 2015, Muslims made up 24.1%

of the world's population. By 31.1 per cent, it is projected that by 2060, they will account for more than three out of ten of the global population.

Additionally, according to Nugroho et al., (2019), Muslim-friendly tourism refers to a collection of interconnected tourism ecosystems that work in harmony to meet visitors' needs and preferences while also promoting comfort, security, and travel experiences that are in line with Islamic principles. On the other hand, Islamic tourism is adaptable because it does not have a set objective. Islam permits travel for several reasons, including shopping, medical treatment, sports, sightseeing, and visiting religious sites (Laderlah et al., 2011). Moreover, the breadth of Halal tourism encompasses services for all tourists and is not just intended for Muslims only cited by Yan et al., (2017). The heart of Halal tourism emphasizes the concepts of shariah compatible features in both tourism management and services, in addition to good servicing practices (Jaelani, 2017). This is the general difference between the three concepts that are often used in past studies.

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture in Malaysia oversees the tourism industry, which is one of the most significant contributors to the nation's economy. As a result, the government has launched a number of programs to grow the tourism sector and increase the country's overall national income. The Tenth Malaysia Plan, which lists the tourism industry as one of the twelve sectors that have the potential to generate significant income and support the national economy, emphasizes this industry (Kamaruddin & Ismail, 2018). Beginning with this initiative, the tourism industry's growth and development have accelerated, which is also attributable to the Economic Transformation Plan (ETP), which was created to organize and plan the growth of this sector (Mosbah & Salleh, 2014). Tourism in Malaysia in 2023 was recorded to have been boosted by nearly double the number of tourist arrivals, which stood at almost 20 million, as compared to the tourist arrivals in the year 2022, which was around 10 million.

As such, tour guides who are able to cater to the needs of these travellers are in high demand. The role of tour guides, as stated by the International Association of Tour Managers (IATM) exposes them as 'buffers' between the guests and the social setting, inform the transport means, facilitate meaning-making, resolve issues, protect the guests from hazards, and ensure the security of the guests respectively (Zhang & Chow, 2004). Tour guides play an important role in the tourism experience, serving as the main point of contact between travellers and their tourism experience. Therefore, it is important that tour guides possess the necessary skills to meet the demands of this market segment (Cetinkaya & Oter, 2016). Consequently, Cohen (1985) categorizes tour guides' roles into four categories: instrumental, social, interactive, and communicative.

Tour guides are the "turning point" for tourists and have the power to make or destroy a vacation (Zhang & Chow, 2004). Dahles, cited in 2002 posited that tour guiding was instrumental in the manner in which a place was marketed, affecting the quality of the received visitors and the time duration they spend within the vicinity and the outcome revenue for the neighbourhood. If parts of the destination are not performing well, the knowledgeable tour guides may be able to improve visitors' overall feeling while they are there. On the other side, a location might be well-equipped to provide an exceptional tourist experience, but an unqualified tour guide might ruin the entire experience for the tourists (Prakash et al., 2010). It has been hypothesized that tour guides seem to be to blame for the level of contentment that tourists feel over the services they receive at their destinations. Therefore, the selection of a tour guide must not be taken lightly. In addition, tour guides have to be well-equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of tourists (Cetinkaya & Oter, 2016).

Some knowledge may be considered vital, and it can be expected that guides will be important to the dissemination processes (Holloway, 1981). Some of their key roles include identifying and describing the sites and making meaning from the discovered locales (Bowman, 1992; Cohen, 1985; Schimdt, 1979). A tour guide must assess attractions—animate and artificial activities and events—in reference to their surroundings

rather than "telling" stories and history related to them. A tour guide is a person who leads brief sightseeing excursions, according to Mancini (2001). Cohen (1985) argues that tour guides must have a high level of professionalism and in-depth cultural familiarity.

Tourists come from many cultural cultures, and they also have distinct preferences for service quality, gifts as souvenirs, travel habits, criticism, and product loyalty (Hofstede, 2001). The competency of guides has been determined presently, but there are no specific guidelines and service standards for Muslim-friendly tour guides. According to Derera and Eshetie (2017), this study affirms the absence of professional and regional codes of conduct and accreditation, quality assurance measures for tour guides. There is a great deal of norms and procedures within quality assurance for the tour business; however, no standards exist to articulate the qualifications and experience required for exceptional tour guiding (Ninpradith et al., 2019).

According to McClelland (1973), who coined the term "competency," job performance is not solely based on intellect (i.e., knowledge and abilities). Excellent job performance is also supported by features of the mind, the brain, and the personality. Ninpradith et al. (2019) argued that the term competence could be defined as the behavioral patterns that are derived from the individual's knowledge, skills, ability, and other characteristics that enable him or her to outperform other counterparts in the organization and meet personal job demands. Since jobs need to be finished, it is required that the objectives of a job are met. Professional knowledge for a tour guide refers to the understanding necessary for leading tour groups. Skills are typically linked to a person's employment (Ninpradith et al., 2019). When performing a specific position in their professional employment, a person must have the professional knowledge, abilities, and attitude necessary to fulfil their responsibilities to the business (Lin, 2017).

Knowledge of tourism in a sustainable manner, as cited by Ninpradith et al. (2019), also reports that guides' responsibilities, duties, professionalism, and acquaintance with the

aspect of tourism security are included. The concept of the professional performance of jobs and tasks with efficiency involves preparing tourist transportation on both ends, operating toward the end of the tourists' journey, and helping visitors who are willing to look out for their safety and well-being. Problems should be managed professionally, with courtesy, while at work, and looking professional. A code of ethics that guides the tour guide has aspects that touch on the people's national, religious, and cultural practices. Core competencies refer to the essential skills and abilities that an individual must possess in order to perform their job effectively (Ljungquist, 2007).

This research aims to identify the core competencies of Muslim-friendly tour guides and the extent to which they are able to meet the needs of Muslim travellers. For instance, language proficiency, familiarity with cultural experience, as well as knowledge of halal food options are important attributes that one hopes to investigate in this area. The study also seeks to explore the present training and development that Muslim tour guides in this area are being given and how it helps them in delivering a better service to Muslim travellers.

This research will be very useful to the tourism sector. For tourism organisations, it will supply valuable information on how to recruit and educate a workforce that is both able and inclined to meet the needs of this market segment. In conclusion, the insights gathered through this research should also be able to construct sound foundations for advancing the Muslim-friendly tourism sector, as well as raising and uplifting the overall travel experience of Muslim travellers.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The growing trend in Muslim-friendly tourism calls for necessary skills and competencies that meet the needs of this market segment among tourist guides (Kamaruddin & Ismail, 2018; Battour & Ismail, 2016). Muslim-friendly is a broad, all-encompassing term for tourism-related activities serving the needs and preferences of prospective Muslim visitors. Aziz (2018) and Battour (2016) suggested that beyond just halal food and prayer spaces, Muslim-friendly means more services that are adapted to the specific cultural and religious qualities of Muslim travellers, like access to mosques, opportunities to engage in understanding Islamic history and culture, as well as activities grounded on Islamic values and principles. Maybe it means trips to Muslim-friendly travel activities (Mahliza et al., 2021).

As much as Muslim-friendly tourism is fast emerging around the world, there is still a research gap when it comes to the identification of core competencies expected of Muslim-friendly tour guides. The absence of this research poses a slight problem as far as finding out whether the tour guides actually possess skills and knowledge adequate for servicing Muslim travellers is concerned.

In light of the increasing number of global Muslim travellers, as postulated by Kamaruddin and Ismail (2018), there is a growing need for cultural and religiously attune tour guides for these travellers. However, there is a dearth of knowledge concerning the type of knowledge and skills that are necessary to deliver quality services for Muslim tourists who happen to be on holiday. Because of this lack of information, it is hard to train people, especially in the tour guide training programs, the type of tour guide they should be preparing their candidates for. Furthermore, tour companies sometimes find it hard to look for qualified candidates to recruit for the positions offered by the company. Due the Muslim tourists are restricted in terms of dress code, food they take, and places they visit; hence, they are ignored or marginalized by the tourism industry (Aziz, 2018). This is a problem because it seems that delivering culturally sensitive services to Muslim tourists is

an important consideration now that the number of tourists from this population group is on the rise (Zhang & Chow, 2004).

The lack of understanding about the knowledge and skills required for Muslim-friendly tour guides is a problem for the tourism industry because it makes it difficult for tour companies to identify and hire suitable candidates (Mackenzie & Raymond, 2020). Schultz (1993) defined “human capital” as crucial strategic asset management that was critical to enhancing a company’s people and resources in an effort to ensure higher productivity and sustain a competitive advantage. Training, education and other professional activities can improve an employee’s competencies, content, character, and resources. This means that performance and satisfaction will increase among employees and, consequently, improve the performance of businesses. Unquestionably, one of the most well-known strategic management concepts is "core competence." The concept, which was first proposed in the early 1990s, is referred to as "collective learning in the organization, especially how to coordinate diverse production skills and integrate multiple streams of technologies" (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).

According to Weiler and Ham (2002), tour guide training programs are responsible for preparing individuals to provide effective tour guiding services. The training module employed by ITC serves as a commendable exemplar for other educational institutions providing training programs for Muslim-friendly tour guides. Nevertheless, the training received a lukewarm response from tour guides due to the limited representation of certified Muslim-friendly tour guides in relation to the overall population of tour guides. Hence, the primary objective of this study is to raise awareness among unlicensed tour guides on the significance of Muslim-friendly tour guide products.

Based on data acquired from the Islamic Tourism Center, it has been determined that a total of 131 tour operators have been officially certified as Muslim-friendly tour operators so far (ITC, 2023). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the aforementioned

figure does not encompass all states. The ITC has certified a number of tour guides in states such as Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Sabah, Sarawak, Penang, Negeri Sembilan, Putrajaya, Melaka, and Perak as being Muslim-friendly (ITC, 2023). Hence, it is imperative to ensure that tour guides from different states are duly informed about the significance and advantages associated with possessing a legitimate license as a Muslim-friendly tour guide.

This study has the potential to offer valuable insights into the various issues encountered by the tourist sector, thereby facilitating the enhancement of the industry's strategies in effectively addressing the requirements of Muslim travellers. Furthermore, it might also underscore the significance of offering comprehensive training to tour guides in order to guarantee a more inclusive and amicable experience for all travellers. The primary objective of this study is to facilitate the achievement of success among tour guides in Malaysia by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to cater to the needs of Muslim tourists.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

This research will attempt to respond to the research questions as follows:

- 1.3.1. What is the concept of Muslim-friendly tour guides in Islamic tourism?
- 1.3.2. What are the essential competencies required for a tour guide to effectively cater to Muslim tourists?
- 1.3.3. How do current tour guides perceive their abilities to provide a Muslim-friendly experience to their guests?
- 1.3.4. What are the effective model of core competencies for Muslim-friendly tour guides in Malaysia?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This research provides some objectives as follows:

- 1.4.1. To study on the concept of Muslim-friendly tour guides in Islamic tourism.
- 1.4.2. To identify the competencies of Muslim-friendly tour guides to provide a better Muslim-friendly experience.
- 1.4.3. To observe the current level of competency among tour guides in catering to Muslim tourists.
- 1.4.4. To propose a model of core competencies for Muslim-friendly tour guides in Malaysia.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The objectives of this study are to discuss and analyze the skills and competencies, and training requirements of the tour guides to meet the demands of the Muslim tourist market. The area of study for this research work will include aspects like the knowledge base and skills possessed by a tour guide about Muslim tourists; knowledge of Muslim tourists' expectations and the identification of core competencies model; the designing of the training programme and the assessment of the effectiveness of the training programme. Besides, this research will also analyze the present training, and development offers for tour guides in Malaysia and establish if these offers are effective in meeting the demands of Muslim clients.

In addition, this research will establish the necessary skills and knowledge that a tour guide ought to have, enabling him/her to offer a better Muslim-friendly package. Therefore, this research will systematically recommend a model of core competencies for Muslim-friendly tour guides in Malaysia to improve the efficiency of their abilities in offering a Muslim-friendly experience. Finally, this study will assess the effectiveness of the developed training program in enhancing the tour guides' abilities and readiness to meet

the needs of Muslim tourists and indicate directions for improvement. Therefore, the extent of this research will exclusively focus on how the Malaysian Muslim-friendly tourist guide meets all the needs of the Muslim tourist. From that, the final core sample of Muslim-friendly tourist guides will be identified at the end of this study.

1.6 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The implications of this research are substantial because the studied field reflects the growing need for travel services targeting Muslim consumers. The study will endeavour to obtain findings on the competency and professional development of tour guides in order to ensure Muslim-sensitive service and in the process make a significant contribution to the formulation of the training curriculum for improvement of the performance of tour guides. In understanding the opportunities of further continuing Malaysia as a preferred tourist destination, the research is important for academicians as it adds new knowledge to the pool of existing knowledge regarding the fields of tourism and hospitality management. In so doing, this study extends current knowledge on the competence profile that tourists guide needs to possess in order to meet the increasing needs of Muslim tourists adequately. The conclusion of this research can be useful for further research to define and progress the best practices in the using industry.

Even more, for the tourism training center, which is operating in Malaysia, the identification of the key competencies of Muslim-friendly tour guides is valuable because it offers specific information on what skills and traits the tour guides should possess in order to meet the needs of Muslim travellers. The implication of these findings in the training center could help the institutions to optimize their training interventions and recruitment techniques in order to attract and retain competent tour guides. This can thus lead to increased satisfaction of customers, increased customer loyalty, which can eventually be an added advantage to the tourist market pertaining to Muslim-friendly tourist destinations.

Besides, the influence of the authorities, such as the tourism board or government in enhancing the image of Malaysia and most importantly, the extent of accommodation for Muslim tourists is crucial. The findings of this study will be of significant value to policymakers and lawmakers, wishing to formulate and implement specific policies and regulations focusing on the issue of cultural integration in the sphere of tourism. Thus, by enhancing the qualifications of tour guides, the authority will be able to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of the tourists' stays, thus continuing to assert the status of the country as one of the best tourist destinations for Muslim visitors.

Also, the ultimate consumers of this product, the tourists, will largely benefit from the compiled study on the crucial competencies of Muslim-friendly tour guides. In particular, through the clarification of the list of competencies that ought to be possessed by tour guides, the study can help make tourists' vacations more enjoyable and resistant to cultural insensitivity. Thus, relying on the services of a tour guide, tourists can confidently count on the fact that the former has all the knowledge and skills necessary to orient in the features of local culture, traditions, and religious beliefs, as well as in navigating in relations with representatives of other cultures if it is necessary. This way, a tour guide with the mentioned competencies will contribute to the construction of a more favorable attitude within the general population of the community receiving the tourists. It will contribute to the exchange between the tourists and the receiving community.

Thus, this research also contributes to the existing literature to identify Malaysian Muslim-friendly tour guides core competencies model. To date, few studies have focused on this field but, in general, not as a Muslim-friendly tour guide, leaving a significant gap in understanding this important target market. The findings of this research will provide a valuable contribution to the literature on halal tourism and its marketing and inform the development of future research in this area.

1.7 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Core competencies = Defined as the collective learning in the organization, especially how to coordinate diverse production skills and integrate multiple streams of technologies. (Wang & Ding, 2017))

Tour guide = A person who takes people on trips through an area and explains the interesting details about it. (Merriam-Webster)

Muslim-friendly tourism = Defined as a collection of interconnected tourism ecosystems that work in unison to meet the needs and preferences of visitors while also promoting comfort, security, and travel experiences that are in line with Islamic principles. (Mahliza et al., 2021)

Halal tourism = The word halal is rooted in an Arabic word that means 'permissible' or 'lawful' according to Islamic rules and regulations. From the Islamic point of view, the term 'Halal Tourism' can be justified by integrating and adopting the definition of 'Halal' mentioned earlier. (Azam et al., 2019)

Islamic tourism = Refers to activities related to travel and tourism that are in line with the teachings of Islam. This may include visiting religious sites such as Mecca and Medina. (Suid et al., 2018)

Knowledge and Skills = Defined as a technical knowing how and knowing what as distinction. Skills are the ability of an individual to put into action the knowledge he/she has in order to achieve the intended goal. (Eraut et al., 2004)

Human capital development = It is a crucial component in enhancing a firm's assets and employees in order to boost productivity and maintain competitive advantage. (Schultz, 1993)

1.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Overview Chapter 1 discusses the research background, problem statement, objectives, and questions for the research, as well as its scope and significance. In Chapter 1, definitions of the terminology employed in this research are also presented. Chapter 1 is the starting point

of this research and thereby contains the overall picture of the study. It starts by defining the research background based on a paper discussing the research area in the light of the emerging studies in the area of Muslim-friendly tourism as well as pointing out the significance of ensuring that tour guides possess all the competencies required to meet the needs of Muslims tourists. This background justifies the need for the study given the current trend of the development of Muslim-friendly tourism services. The problem statement sets direction on the objectives that define the current problems and shortcomings in the competencies of the tour guides thus emphasizing the needs of the Muslim traveller in consideration to cultural, religious and social aspects.

This chapter also describes the research questions and objectives that give direction to the study by defining them. These are about the knowledge of the competencies of the personnel, the assessment of their shortcomings and the proposed model to improve the situation and to fulfil the expectations of Muslim tourists. Scope of the research are outlined within the definition of the area of study, which indicates that the presented research is aimed at Malaysian tour guides and their competencies in serving Muslim tourists and the limitations of the study in view of the geographical and contextual context. Lastly, the chapter relates to the context of the contemporary tourism industry, and its purpose for the academic community and policymakers.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a research background and discusses relevant pieces of literature. First, this chapter gives a clear idea about terms related to halal, as well as the background of Muslim-friendly tour guides and Muslim tourists or travellers. This chapter then reviews and discusses the existing literature related to customer satisfaction. Additionally, this chapter discusses the skills and knowledge of tour guides in more detail and how they can benefit the tourism industry. Finally, this chapter concludes the proposed conceptual framework.

2.2 DISCUSSION ON RELEVANT CONCEPTS

2.2.1 Islamic Tourism Vs Muslim-Friendly Tourism Vs Halal Tourism

2.2.1.1 Islamic Tourism

According to previous research and literature, the idea of Islamic tourism emerged before Muslim-friendly Tourism. There are not many words in Islam that can be used to depict travel (Aziz, 2018). Also, “travelling” and “tourism” also embraces *siyahah*, *ziarah*, *rehlah*, and *umrah / hajj* (pilgrimage) (Bahrom et al., 2010). According to Sohirin and Shah (2014), *siyahah* means an action in which a particular individual travels from one place to another for tourism or to sightsee. On the other hand, *rehlah* which refers to, to go and pass through another place for a special intent, while *ziarah* means to visit people an intent. *Rehlah* is actually a phrase which has been used with the intent to individually describe travelling for business and educational needs (Duman, 2011). Islamic tourism is not only

the religious tourism but rather it includes all types of tourism though excluding these types of tourism being against the Islamic law (shariah) (Suid et al., 2018).

In addition, as articulated by Othman (2013), it is possible to define Islamic tourism in numerous contexts based on the principles of the religion. The definition could therefore be deduced from the behavior of the travellers, reasons to travel, places of interest, and products being offered including; accommodation, food, and transport. According to Othman (2013) Islamic tourism is an interest/ activity related to travel with the objective of involving the appreciation of Islamic history, art, culture and heritage and experiencing a feel of the Islamic life style. Islamic tourism on the other hand is based on the provision that any trip taken must be with the intention of being blessed by Allah. Some of the flexibility; reason; simplicity and balance are other features that it has as postulated by Laderlah et al., (2011). Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) defined Islamic tourism as any activity, event and experience undertaken in a state of travel that is in accordance with Islam (ITC, 2016).

According to Laderlah et al., (2011), *“In Islam, the activity of travelling and exploring the world may be considered as ‘ibadah and da’wah. ‘Ibadah is a noun (word) that includes everything that Allah (S.W.T.) loves and accepts either from speaking or from doing. Moreover, da’wah means to attract or preach a person into a right way. Tourism will become an ‘ibadah if the purpose of traveling is for God’s blessing and avoid the wrongdoings. In order to preach in the right way, the preachers or da’i must have knowledge and have a good manner in order to deliver the message of Islam to the society.”*

In addition, Islamic tourism is a form of tourism that upholds Islamic principles (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004). According to Md. Saleh and Md. Nor (2014), Islamic tourism is practiced in a variety of ways around the world, from less conservative Muslim nations to more conservative Muslim nations and non-Muslim nations, despite the definition appearing rigid and limited to Islamic values. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, Islamic tourism

refers to traveling in accordance with Islamic principles, such as by performing the Hajj (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2009). Islamic tourism is viewed as a tourism product in much less conservative Muslim nations like Malaysia by emphasizing the values, history, and culture as its distinctive selling point (Henderson, 2003). Islamic tourism, however, is still in its infancy in non-Muslim nations. It also refers to activities related to travel and tourism that are in line with the teachings of Islam. This may include visiting religious sites such as Mecca and Medina (Suid et al., 2018).

Islam promotes exploration. It is equated with the 5th pillar of Islam, which states that performing the Hajj only once in a lifetime is required and that life is viewed as a pilgrimage to meet Allah (Din, 1982). In Islam, travel must be purposeful, as opposed to tourism activity, which satisfies the consumer and generates profits. According to Din (1982), some of the motivations for traveling include spiritual goals (strengthening one's submission to Allah), progressive actions (developing and fortifying relationships among Muslims, also known as *silaturrahim*), and self-development goals (gaining new knowledge as a result of Allah). But in Islam, the main goal of travel is to make people aware of how insignificant they are in comparison to Allah (Salleh & Nor, 2014). The Quran contains numerous verses that exhort and mandate that men travel in order to observe past events and draw lessons from them. Travel also challenges the perseverance and patience of the travellers, broadens their knowledge, and leads to complete submission to Allah.

2.2.1.2 Muslim-friendly Tourism

On the other hand, Muslim-friendly tourism is a broader concept that refers to tourism activities and services that cater specifically to the needs and preferences of Muslim travellers. According to Aziz (2018) and Battour (2016), this includes not only halal food and prayer facilities, but also other services that are tailored to the cultural and religious preferences of Muslim travellers, such as access to mosques, opportunities to learn about

Islamic history and culture, and activities that are in line with Islamic values and principles. May be refers to travel activities that are tailored to the needs of Muslim tourists (Mahliza et al., 2021).

Muslim-friendly Tourism (MFT) is one of the service sectors that focuses on offering services in the tourism and hospitality industry, which heavily emphasises lodging, dining, and travel-related activities. All of these services are founded on the *Shari'ah* with the goal of satisfying travellers who are looking for MFT services (Aziz, 2018). The concept of Muslim-friendly tourism is designed to accommodate the religious, cultural, and linguistic sensitivities of Muslim travellers, providing them with safe, comfortable, and culturally respectful travel experiences.

According to Aziz (2018), the phrase "Muslim friendly tourism," however, first appeared after 9/11 and as Islamophobia spread across the globe. Several nations, both Muslim and non-Muslim nations aspire to capitalise on this specialised market in the tourist sector, but they are unable to come to an agreement on a single phrase that can accurately describe the Islamic travel and tourism sector (Aziz, 2018). As a result, Malaysia created the term "Muslim Friendly" to cater to the needs of Muslim travellers as well as to give the same goods and services that everyone else, including non-Muslims, can enjoy. The term "Muslim-friendly" in the tourist business, according to Battour (2016), refers to:

“an effort to make visiting foreign countries a pleasant experience for Muslims who observe their religion. As a result, it is similar to the idea of "Halal Tourism," but with a broader definition that allows Muslims to practise their religion. In other words, Muslim-friendly locations provide Muslims with both convenient places to pray each day and a variety of 'Halal' amenities (such as Halal food and beverages, sex-segregated swimming pools, etc.).

To meet the needs of Muslim visitors, Muslim-friendly tour guides have provide basic amenities like halal food, prayer spaces, and qibla directions in hotel rooms and this

is to provide better experience for Muslim travellers (Mahliza et al., 2021). As a result, it can be surmised that the concept of MFT is based on the Islamic tourism concept but the term used has been accustomed to fit the new segment of the tourism and hospitality industry to cater the need of travellers around the world and not leaving the religion based belief and practice to obstruct it (Aziz, 2018; Mahliza et al., 2021). In short, Battour (2016) disclosed that MFT is an endeavour to turn tourism experience as a pleasure to Muslim travellers and letting them to perform their religious duties while travelling.

2.2.1.3 Halal Tourism

Halal tourism refers to tourism activities and services that are in compliance with Islamic principles and values. As stated by Battour and Ismail (2016) mentioned that, this includes halal food and beverages, prayer facilities, and accommodation that is sensitive to Islamic beliefs and practices, such as gender-segregated swimming pools and spa facilities. In that sense, halal tourism's accessibility is not prejudiced towards Muslims solely, as everyone can engage and utilize those services.

Halal tourism is a segment in the tourism industry that focuses on aspects of religion offering services that accommodate Islamic *Shari'ah* laws to clients who are Muslims. Halal in this context means the acceptable or lawful in Islamic teachings and specifically, has been used to mean the tourism experiences acceptable to Muslim visitors (Suid et al., 2017; Battour & Ismail, 2016). Halal tourism is defined as tourism services and products that address the consumers' need for conforming to Islamic Shariah in terms of service providing; accommodation, food and beverages, and free from any prohibited items such travelling and tour packages (Battour et al., 2011). Therefore, in line with Zafir (2015) it is possible to identify fairly specific recommendations for serving food, which complies with Sharia. Nevertheless, as evident in the work done by Marzuki et al., (2021), Muslims are still in doubt as to whether the dishes are completely and honestly halal. Therefore, indeed; halal food is a necessity for each and every one in the Islamic faith, however, it becomes

the responsibility of the tourist destination and or service provider to ensure Muslims are provided with it. As mentioned by Suid et al. (2018), they must make an attempt to adhere to Sharia requirements for Halal cuisine.

However, in a period of constantly developing tourism, there has been an uptrend in the Muslim travellers' demand for tourism services that are compatible with their faith (Suid et al., 2018). By providing halal-friendly travel options, the travel and tourism industry can tap into a growing market segment and help meet the needs of a growing demographic of travellers. Overall, the idea of halal tourism is to give Muslim travellers trips that are safe, comfortable, and respectful of their religion and culture.

2.2.2 Tour Guides

Tour guides are referred to by other terms in literature. As cited by Prakash et al., (2010), these include tourist guide, step on guides, city guides, interpreters, escorts, tour escorts and in some cases tour leaders and tour managers. Tour guides have also been described by several authors as “an information giver and fount of knowledge,” “mentor” (Cohen, 1985), “a mediator” (Pearce, 1984), “culture broker” (McKean, 1976) and “middleman” (van den Berghe, 1980), etc.

According to Dahles (2002), tour guiding has a critical role in how a destination place is portrayed, in determining the calibre of the visitor experience, the duration of stay, and the subsequent economic benefits for a local community. One of the most crucial aspects of a visitor's experience at a location is the tour guide (Prakash et al., 2010). They assist tourists and assist them in designing their own experiences. Tour guides are front-line employees who present travellers with the "moment of truth," which can make or break the trip (Zhang & Chow, 2004). As cited by Cetinkaya and Oter (2016), even while guides have been around for more than 2,600 years, they only started playing a significant role in

the travel business with the rise of mass tourism. Today, organised tourism would be very challenging without the assistance of tour guides, both tour managers and tour leaders (who accompany the group during the travel) and tour guides (who welcome the group at the destination) (Cetinkaya & Oter, 2016; Prakash et al., 2010).

Although there are various definitions of a tour guide, the International Association of Tour Managers (IATM) and the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (EFTGA) have agreed upon the following definition: “A *tour guide is a person who leads groups or individual foreign or domestic visitors around the monuments, sites, and museums of a city or region; to interpret the cultural and natural heritage and environment in a way that is inspiring and entertaining in the visitor's chosen language*” (Cetinkaya & Oter, 2016). IATM claims that tour guides serve as "intermediaries" between tourists and the "unknown" environment, acting as "buffers" between tourists and the social environment, arranging transportation, interpreting, handling issues, protecting travellers from difficulties, and creating a safe environment for tourists (Zhang & Chow, 2004).

Professionals in the tourism and hospitality industries, often referred to as "tour guides" escort tourists around popular destinations (Ap & Wong, 2001). Tour guides can take visitors on excursions, visits to museums, and tours of various geographical areas. The best tour guides have a wealth of information about the local culture, history, and practicalities to share with their clients (Cohen, 1985). In order to provide visitors with a memorable experience, many businesses and groups employ guides, some of whom may have specialized knowledge and expertise in the area, culture, or type of recreation for which they are hired.

Moreover, in a book that was written by Powell (1993), makes the case that a tour guide should be a leader who can take on responsibility, an educator who helps the visitor understand the places they visit, an ambassador who extends hospitality and promotes the destination in a way that encourages visitors to return, a host who can create a comfortable

environment for the guest, a tour manager who knows how and when to fulfil the previous four roles, and a facilitator who knows how and when to carry out the previous four roles (facilitator). Tour operators undoubtedly have a variety of duties as producers of tourism experiences, with occasionally conflicting functions to satisfy the demands of guests, employers, and host communities (Weiler & Ham, 2002).

Tour guides offer a wide variety of services, with specific duties varying by specialty. To a greater or lesser extent depending on factors like group size, mode of transportation, age range, and duration of trip, tour guides are responsible for providing amusement for their clients, fielding inquiries, and imparting useful knowledge (Mossberg, 1995; Dahles, 2002). Generally speaking, a tour guide is someone who has extensive expertise about a specific location, historical period, or type of activity and is hired to show visitors around and answer questions about it (Prakash et al., 2010). Although a guide's own passion in a topic is important, some employers require professional training to ensure that their employees are adequately equipped to provide tourists with useful and interesting information (Sulaiman et al, 2016; Lin et al., 2017; Guzel & Sezerel., 2020; Pereira, 2015).

According to Cetin and Dincer (2016), one of the most significant resources a tourism business can have is a knowledgeable guide. A guide can be thought of as the "facade" of a firm or business. Many foreign tourists have a tendency to see their tour guides as ambassadors of the city or nation they are visiting. While the Oxford dictionary's definition of a guide is merely "a person who shows others the way," studies have shown that a tour guide's responsibilities are much more expansive. Early research on tour guides concentrated on the subject of the function of tour guides. As stated by Cohen (1985), the words "pathfinder" and "mentor" are two of the origins of the term "tour guide." The leading and mediating domains of the tour guide's duty served as the inspiration for the two origin lines.

As cited by Cetin and Dincer (2016), Cohen (1985) identified four key facets of the job of a tour guide. These elements are communicative, social, interactive, and instrumental. The instrumental aspect of the tour guide's job first and foremost relates to his or her own accountability for the successful completion of the journey as a continuous social venture. Second, the social aspect is focused on the individual's accountability for the cohesiveness and morale of the travelling party. The third element of engagement is his or her role as a liaison between his or her own group and the local populace, landmarks, institutions, and tourist attractions. The fourth position of the communicative component pertains to the tour guide's function of providing tourists with information about the destination (Cohen, 1985).

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|----|-------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Academic Grades | 15 | Marketing and Sales Skills |
| 2 | Adaptability at Work | 16 | Negotiation Skills |
| 3 | Attention to Detail | 17 | Networking Ability |
| 4 | Computer Skills | 18 | Oral Communication |
| 5 | Confidence | 19 | Organisational Ability |
| 6 | Creativity | 20 | Practical Skills |
| 7 | Critical Thinking | 21 | Problem Solving Skills |
| 8 | Customer Service Skills | 22 | Relationship Management Skills |
| 9 | Decision Making | 23 | Relevant Work Experience |
| 10 | Event Management Skills | 24 | Research Skills |
| 11 | Industry Knowledge | 25 | Team Working Skills |
| 12 | Leadership Ability | 26 | Work Ethics |
| 13 | Legal Understanding | 27 | Written Communication |
| 14 | Management Skills | | |

Figure 2.1: List of Skills and Attributes Discovered for Tour Guides (Wang et al., 2009)

Thus, in the context of the tourism and hospitality discipline, various academics suggest that the trainees should possess the right combination of personal attributes or personality traits coupled with the right set of professional philosophies which are

indicative of this discipline. Previous study revealed that there is a great deal of appeal to prospective employers regarding the 27 facets of the tourism field examined by a team of academics.

Additionally, Jamaluddin et al (2023) mentioned in his paper five fundamental characteristics that must be met in order to be considered a Muslim-friendly tour guide. Figure 2.2 below shows the characteristics and its details. Muslims should not treat lightly the prohibition against travel without the permission of the Imam since they are required to submit to Allah’s word. It is accepted by Muslims globally that the Qur’an and the Hadith of the Prophet PBUH are believed to be the main sources through which people in the Muslim community are provided with guidelines on how to lead their lives in the most appropriate ways to the least. Concerning the advice, it is essential to conduct the practices by engaging a proper understanding of the Sharia compliance techniques applied so that Muslim travellers could receive the high-quality travelling services. This is due to advancement in facilities in the Muslim-friendly tour guide services in the global halal tourism market.

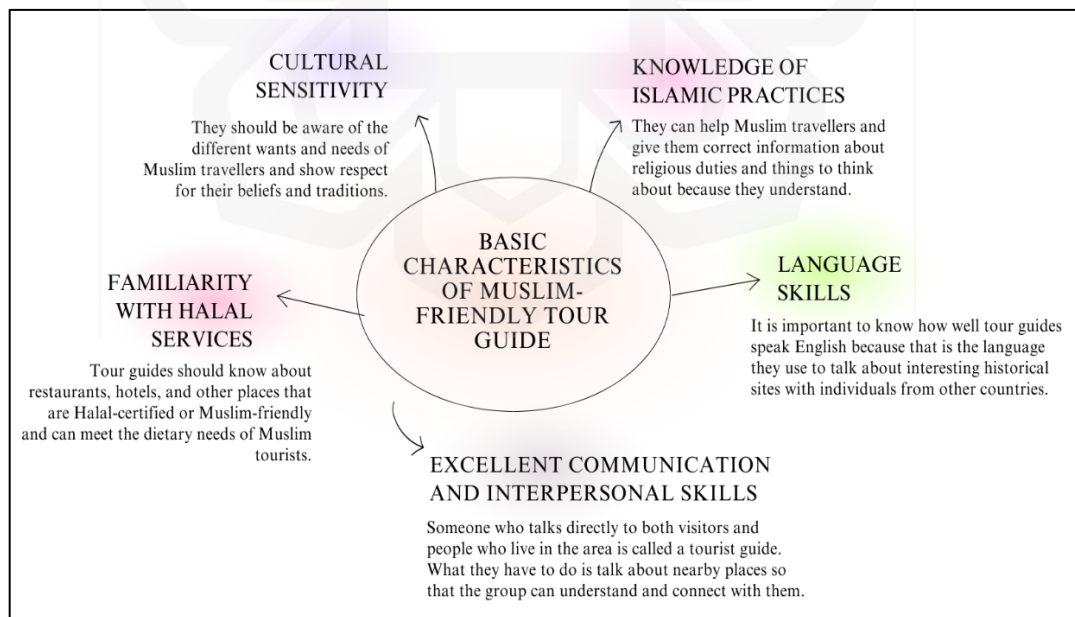


Figure 2.2: Mind Map of Characteristics for Muslim-friendly Tour Guides (Jamaluddin et al., 2023)

Consequently, a guide who is specific to Muslim clients understands the Islamic practices and norms and caters to Muslim clients' needs with appropriate information. This suggests that they know and respect the importance of the religious events and service needs to provide help in finding places for prayers, halal food, and all the other religious necessities (Sünnetçioğlu et al., 2020). Another aspect of a Muslim-friendly tour guide is cultural sensitivity; it goes beyond informing the traveler on factual and timely information to meeting their needs. This is because they are conversant with the cultures and religions of the Muslims hence, they can provide the Muslim tourists with more specific tour conducts providing the tourists more educational information on Islam.

They are aware of the role, importance, procedure of prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage such as prayer five times a day, not eating during the whole month of Ramadan and going to different places of worship. Consequently, they are in a position to help the visitors to help find the right place to pray, either by pointing out the closest mosque or by rearranging ideal spaces. In addition, it is wise to suggest Halal food since there is a diet restriction and Muslim tourists should be served appropriately (Sünnetçioğlu et al., 2020). They can also help in other religious matters for example in finding places for the act of ablution or washing (medical student only got half of the word right) also in ascertaining what kind of dressing code is convenient for visiting prayer houses. In this sense, a Muslim-friendly tour guide ensures that he or she is sensitive to cultural differences, which helps the Muslim tourists feel comfortable and allows them to practise their faith while on the tour.

2.2.3 Core Competency Model

The core competency model is a way of thinking about an organization's capabilities and strengths that contribute to its competitiveness and success (Ljungquist, 2007). Competency is the behavioural characteristics that come from the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that enable an individual to perform better than what is required of them by their co-workers within the organization in order to carry out their

individual jobs (Ninpradith et al., 2019). To successfully complete the tasks at hand, it is necessary. According to McClelland (1973), who conceived the term "competency," job performance is not solely based on intelligence. The underlying causes of excellent job performance also include attitudes, cognitive abilities, and personality traits.

"Core competence" is without a doubt one of the most well-known strategic management concepts. The phrase "collective learning in the organization, especially how to coordinate diverse production skills and integrate multiple streams of technologies" is used to describe the idea, which was first introduced in the early 1990s (Prahalad & Hamel, 2006). The phrase "a bundle of skills and techniques that enable a company to provide benefit to customers" was later added to the definition (Prahalad & Hamel, 2006). Both managers and academics are interested in the idea of core competence as being essential to organizational revival and serving as the catalyst for strategic change (Ljungquist, 2007). It is a difficult and complex concept that is challenging to theoretically define, empirically identify as an occurrence, and practically apply. These issues have only recently been acknowledged by academics in general conceptual discussions and empirical studies focusing on core competences (Wang et al., 2009).

Competencies are typically linked to a person's job. When performing a specific role in their professional job, a person must have the professional knowledge, skills, and attitude necessary to fulfill their responsibility to the organization (Lin, 2017). Contemporary core competence issues are difficult to categorize according to any one theory due to their varied origins and applications. The fact that all of the associated concepts have their own roots in the aforementioned views makes classification even more difficult (Ljungquist, 2007).

Employees recognize core competencies as part of the process of identifying organization resources, functionality, and skillsets (Prahalad & Hamel, 2006). These three elements are collectively referred to as "associated concepts." Whenever these affiliated

concepts are defined interchangeably, it often leads to conceptual and empirical fusion during the identification process, which also happens in strategic management research.

Firms that adhere to the concept of operational excellence execute their business strategies optimally by ensuring that the organization's assets are matched appropriately with the company's obligations and objectives, thereby gaining a competitive edge. The strength of the core competency model is also realized as a tool that can allow a company to determine which aspects require investment and further development in order to preserve and enhance the firm's competitive advantage (Wang & Ding, 2017). The process of determining organizations' central competencies and of utilizing them during their strategic management usually follows a sequence of activities that include evaluation of organizational competence, identification of potential competitive cores, and resources investments in identified competencies. This process is never-ending and the organization has to keep a check on the process and the situations and as the organisations grow and as the market alters the entire process has to be changed.

2.2.4 Human Resources (Human Capital Development)

Human resource management (HRM) is the process of planning for, recruiting, selecting, training, compensating, organizing, and developing the people who are the organisation's key factor and help in attaining organisational objectives (Chew, 2005; Dessler, 2007). HRM also refers to the procedures and guidelines used to carry out the human resource component. This includes labour relations, compensation, performance evaluation, job analysis, human resource planning, selection, and recruitment (Dessler, 2007).

Under this topic, there was a study about the human capital development. The term "human capital," according to Schultz (1993) has termed it as a key ingredient in the process of building up a company's resources and manpower, in an effort to enhance productivity and sustain the degree of competitiveness. Human capital can remain a key instrument with

which the organisation keeps itself on the alert and as productive as it should be to remain competitive. Organizational training, education and other business experiences bring improvement in the knowledge, skills, ability, values and social capital of an employee (Marimuthu et al., 2009). There is a chance of having happier and well performing employees and thus there will be some impact on the performance of the company.

According to Crocker (2006), human capital theory is that a society's prosperity depends on its citizens' knowledge and skills in addition to the traditional stocks of financial capital, labour, and natural resources. Like any other asset, this human capital can be used to produce results that benefit both individuals and society. The theory specifically states that greater knowledge and skill will result in better economic outcomes for both people and societies (Walters, 2004). The widely held belief that we live in a knowledge economy, in which knowledge and skill are valued more highly than in the past, has given rise to this idea in recent decades (Sweetland, 1995).

Human resource management techniques also produce highly skilled workers who have a passion for their jobs; motivation will produce the value that discloses the beneficial performance of the people. Additionally, Malaysia's HRM practices combine indigenous and Western human resource management practices (Chew, 2005). According to Chew (2005), there are two main categories of human resource practises in Malaysia: those that are based on ethnic values (such as Malay, Indian, and Chinese values) and those that are based on British values. It was discovered that the businesses were mostly run in a British or native manner.

Only with management's dedication to effective training will be able to attract and retain good staff and ensure consistent quality (Marimuthu et al., 2009). Increased productivity and better employee performance are the long-term benefits of investing in training and education (Crocker, 2006). However, the returns on this investment will only be substantial if government policies and measures are in place to support it, not only in

education and training but also in areas like transportation and infrastructure planning and labour market programmes.

The government has the responsibility to provide support for education or training activities in the following ways through policies measures to encourage development of the working force. This involves applying resources in transport and infrastructure development to make them accessible, existing in the area of employment and training through development of programs aimed at matching skills of those in the work force to job requirements, and availing training through collaborations with other education institutions and other players in the market. In this way the government guarantees that investments in training pay off and are sustainable, and more specifically, lead to higher productivity, superior employee performance, and staff retention.

2.3 REVIEW OF PAST LITERATURE

2.3.1 Travel Agencies

Travel agencies are businesses that specialize in helping customers plan and book their travel experiences. They provide a variety of services and products, such as flight booking, tour packages, accommodation booking, transportation, destination information, travel insurance, and 24/7 support. The goal of travel agencies is to make the travel planning process as easy and stress-free as possible while also providing customers with the best possible travel experience (Syratt, 2003). By leveraging their expertise, resources, and relationships in the travel industry, travel agencies can provide a one-stop shop for all of a customer's travel needs, helping them to plan, book, and enjoy their trip with confidence.

2.3.2 Tourists' Satisfaction of Tour Guides

Tourist satisfaction is a vital component of the tourism system because it determines repeat business among customers. Tourist satisfaction here is defined as an intricate notion, which depicts a condition or a status whereby a tourist has adequate knowledge of the destination, and avails appropriate services, professionalism, flexibility, cultural sensitivity, and halal products among other indicators (Wardi et al. 2018).

This going to show that tourist satisfaction is a multifaceted concept the consequences of which can be profound and can influence the profitability of the tourism business (Pizam et al, 1978). For instance, tour literature that is indeed satisfying, will ensure that tourists recommend the tour to the next client, therefore ensuring that there is brand new advertisement as a result of more word-of-mouth influence by joyful tourists. Tourists that are satisfied will also be more likely to revisit the particular tourism destination in the future hence encouraging repeat business in tourism, making it even more profitable.

Some of the factors that define satisfaction level include the quality of the tour that is offered, if there are adequate options of halal food in the places, the extent of the tour guide's knowledge about cultural and religious affairs and lastly the expertise level of the tour providers and how able they are in adjusting to the changes. For instance the tour guides with history and background knowledge of; cultural practices of the host society, religious beliefs and traditions of the people they are hosting can enable the station to better understand and meet the needs of the intended consumers in order to present a more informative and tour. In the same way that the guide must be able to learn how to better satisfy the customers' needs and wants, so also the suppliers of the goods and services that go into the delivery of that tour can assist in improving the use and perception of the tour by the end user.

Another obvious factor that can have an influence on the level of tourists' satisfaction is the quality of the offered tour. A positive attitude in the consumers is also determined by

whether or not they feel that they were offered value for their money, and whether the tour meet premium quality (Ramya et al, 2019). This might involve gaining easy access to well-qualified tour services and other services such as well-facilitated accommodation services, proportional and original cultural encounter services and other services like preferential services such as unequivocal halal food services.

2.3.3 Training and Development

To improve an employee's knowledge or soft skills and increase productivity, training can also be referred to (Chowdhary, 2006). On the other hand, development and training can enhance the utilisation of the workforce and may raise employee job satisfaction. In a study, Campbell (1971) came to the conclusion that training is highly linked with job satisfaction, which serves as evidence for this claim. By providing employees with more information about their professions and the history of the company, the training programme benefits both the organisations and their employees (Lovrentjev, 2015). They would feel more positive about their company as a result.

According to Rowden and Conine (2005), trained staff members may be more adept at meeting customer needs. The company will undoubtedly expand with the help of the favourable statistic. There are two main components, which are the general and specialised skill training. When overall skill training increases an employee's job satisfaction and training for specific skills tends to make it simpler for the employee to change jobs or companies, it follows that training for specific skills may cause an employee to be less satisfied in their current position, which will open the door for them to leave the current organisation. Economists usually distinguish between two types of training: specific training and general training and discuss the effects of each in order to avoid the situation mentioned above.

If employees join other agencies after receiving specific training, the company that provided the training will boost the efficiency of its current organization, and it will not be beneficial to other companies (Wang et al., 2014; Papa et al., 2018). According to Schmidt's research studies from 2007, which focused on the value of job training to various employee categories, training and development have a positive impact on job satisfaction. To lessen the potential of a negative effect, such as an employee leaving the company after training is over, different training should be developed for different levels within the organization.

2.3.4 Muslim Tourist Needs

The needs and expectations of Muslim visitors are significantly shaped by their religious beliefs, cultural background, and personal values (Said et al., 2022). Consequently, it is crucial for destinations and the tourism industry to possess a comprehensive understanding of these distinctive requirements in order to effectively accommodate them. Muslim travelers frequently prioritize sites that have a diverse array of amenities catering to their religious needs. This encompasses the convenient availability of halal food choices, not only inside dining establishments but also within lodging facilities.

The individuals anticipate the presence of a supportive framework that acknowledges and upholds their dietary limitations, while also guaranteeing the absence of any haram (prohibited) components in their food (Said et al., 2022). In addition, the provision of easily accessible prayer facilities, encompassing spaces such as mosques, prayer rooms, or designated areas specifically designated for daily prayers, holds significant significance (Oktadiana et al., 2016). In light of these, since satisfaction of Muslim's tourism entitles cultural savvy and sensitivity, it is mandatory for a tour guide be acquainted with specific needs and expectations of the Muslim travelers (Putra & Tucunan, 2021). Such information is useful for the guide to help Muslim tourists to feel comfortable and provide surroundings for their satisfactory traveling and tourism experience.

Thus, the tour guides who are often assigned to accompany Muslims must have general as well as the specific knowledge of the tourist attractions and the cultural or religious features that may be sensitive to Muslims (Oktadiana et al. , 2016). Hence, it is important for people to have respect for Muslims and as such, courtesy by respecting Islamic customs. Besides, they should inform the tourism market about appropriate clothing while visiting shrines and religious places (Said et al. , 2022). This flexibility can enhance the prospect of the traveller to meet the religious obligation and at the same time will help preserve the aesthetic of the overall touring.

Often, the Muslim tourists seek an opportunity to visit cultural and historical points of interest deemed significant in the Islam and this is why they want to be provided with the opportunity to participate in the tours (Said et al., 2022). Such visits give persons a chance to get in touch with their spirituality and faith, apply personal cultural identity, and learn more about history. The contribution of tour guides to the general meaning of experience can be further expounded with the understanding of the importance of these places and the provision of educating information (Oktadiana et al. , 2016). Also, there is a need to create a broad and tolerant environment that would contribute to the improvement of interfaith dialogue and relations between different cultures. This strategy deals with the quest to ensure that there is increased tolerance and respect, hence the embracing of Muslim travelers with a feeling of being welcomed.

Apart from the above mentioned specifications, the factor that considers Travellers have the feeling that they are protected and secured is of great significance to the Muslims. This entails heinous efforts in order to calm down any worries concerning security during travel and to provide detailed descriptions of secure measures throughout the trip. The goal which is set is to create an extensive experience that is centred on cultural experience, religious participation, and a perception of being valued and appreciated as a guest in the given area. Thus, the tourism industry can set up a broader, diversified, and welcoming environment that benefits all tourists by considering the special needs and expectations of Muslim guests.

2.3.5 Basic Requirement for Tourist Guide

To become a tourist guide in Malaysia, one has to follow specific procedures that are laid down. Initially, any person who is willing to pursue a course in this field is supposed to apply to a registered tourism training institution recognised by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia (MOTAC, 2021). As guides they are required to register with an undertaking of the four to six Basic Tourist Guide Course which provides the details of knowledge and competence that a tourist should have. They next have to sit for other mandatory written and practical ones set by the Ministry as well They next have to sit for other mandated written and practical tests set by the Ministry as well, as it was mentioned earlier. The results normally take 30 working days to be released.

Those who successfully complete the Basic Tourist Guide Course are awarded certificate from Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia and Malaysian Skill Certificates, which is given by the Department of Skills Development through the respective training centre. They must also undergo the We Are The Host (WATH) Course, from the training institution or the Tourist Guide Association of Malaysia (MOTAC, 2021). After the courses, candidates are required to present various prescribed documents to the Licensing Division of the Ministry within three months with the Malaysian Skill Certificate, Basic Tourist Guide Course Certificate, WATH Course Certificate, a passport size photograph a copy of identity card, membership receipt of State Tourist Guide Association among others.

When these documents are provided, a temporary Tourist Guide License is provided within five days. Step authorities in acquiring a Permanent Tourist Guide Licence involves; Getting of three Continuous Tourism Related Education (CTRE) certifications and successful completion of the Tourist Guide Confirmation Course upon completion of two year probationary period. To renew the license they have to earn six CTRE certificates in the next two years (MOTAC, 2021).

There is career mobility that seems to follow several trends for tourist guides. Such services can benefit from people increasing the stock of foreign languages they know and thus, the number of languages they can guide in can be expanded, especially for the foreign tourist influx. These tourist guides in particular can apply to become instructors or examiners for Tourist Guide Courses in the training facilities. These tourist guides may after some time invest in other sectors that are related to tourism such as companies dealing with tourism services, holiday companies and hotels or resorts.

City tourist guides and local nature tourist guides differ in many ways and have different responsibilities. Tourist guides for cities are those who are allowed to show tourists around the urban districts of Malaysia and must undergo the Basic Tourist Guide Course, which normally lasts for 4-6 months provided by the registered tourism training organizations. The license they possess can be described as being Blue in color.

However, local nature tourist guides are limited to guiding the natural areas of their choice during the registration of their license. They undergo Local Nature Tourist Guide Course conducted by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks and lasting for 17 days. Their license is green in colour.

2.3.5 Specific Requirement for Tourist Guide (Based on MS2610:2015 Malaysian Standard, Muslim Friendly Hospitality Service – requirement)

- i. Tourist guides are required to hold a valid license, exhibit necessary abilities, demonstrate linguistic proficiency, and fulfill all legal prerequisites in order to conduct tours within their designated region.
- ii. The code of conduct refers to a set of guidelines or principles that govern the behavior and actions of individuals inside a particular organization or community. It serves as a framework for promoting ethical conduct, maintaining professionalism, and ensuring. A licensed tourist guide is

required to adhere to the code of conduct and ethics established by the appropriate governing body.

- iii. Licensed tourist guides are required to adhere to a modest and professional dress code as mandated by the appropriate governing body. It is strongly advised for female Muslim personnel to wear a headscarf. The licensed tourist guide is expected to conduct themselves in a courteous manner that aligns with Islamic beliefs.
- iv. Services catering to the needs and preferences of the Muslim community. The tourist guide who possesses the necessary license and offers services catering to the needs of Muslim consumers should encompass, but not be restricted to, the following:
 - a. Possessing a fundamental understanding of the prerequisites for Muslim travelers;
 - b. Providing regular updates to guests regarding their designated prayer times;
 - c. Allocating sufficient time for guests to engage in their prayer rituals;
 - d. Ensuring that all dining establishments are officially certified as halal by a recognized governing body;
 - e. In situations where halal food options are unavailable, the tour guide will furnish guests with a comprehensive list of eateries that have obtained halal certification.

2.4 SUMMARY OF PAST LITERATURE

The core competence model is a tactical implementation of organizational strategy which is used to benefit a business organization by focusing on those skills where it has a competitive advantage. The process involves analyzing factors within a company and the organization's competencies to identify primary competencies that set the firm apart from other competitors and the areas the firm has strengths in. Core competence model's purpose

is that it aims to help the companies come up with the strategies that would help to deliver the enhanced value to the consumers leveraging their strengths. The core competence model been developed on the foundation that a company's performance is dependent on its efficiency in the exploitation of its fundamental competencies. They are critical skills for delivery of quality services and products to customers and constitute the key sources of competitive strategies for any business organization.

Thus, the firm is able to create a sustainable competitive advantage, and ensure that it will remain relevant and continually deliver quality goods and services to the consumer. In conclusion, the theory of core competence proves to be a useful tool, which allows evaluating the company's opportunities and defines the unique skills and abilities that should be developed with the purpose of creating competitive advantages. The focus on the key competencies of the organization enables a company to create superior value for consumers and obtain competitive advantage as well as ultimate sustainability.

Furthermore, satisfaction of tourists is one of the deciding factors in the tourism business since it influences the consumers' loyalty and their willingness to come back. To this end, new research suggests that a satisfied consumer is a loyal consumer, particularly where the consumer is a tourist, because such a customer is likely to encourage others to visit and use the same tour firm for subsequent visits. The degree of traveller satisfaction is determined by the quality as well as the variety of tours and trips, knowledge and sensitivity of the tour guide concerning cultural and religious requirements, and the efficiency and flexibility of the selected tour company.

That of tour experience is a key attribute capable of influencing the level of satisfaction of the tourists. Translated, the satisfaction of tourists can be determined by the value for money and the quality of tour services received which encompass quality of accessible tour services and amenities that also include comfortable accommodation, genuine local interaction with products that are halal. The tour guide's cultural and religious

background can be useful in providing information as well as avoid offending some of the tourists by having a sense of understanding of their beliefs. Flexibility to meet clients' needs and their preferences is also essential to the success of the tour as the provider of the tour is also able to see prospective changes that may likely happen by clients who have hired them.

Other prerequisites include halal options which are quite relevant in influencing the satisfaction of tourists. It is identified clearly that the Muslim travelers' satisfaction levels are higher when they are provided with the Halal foods to fulfill their needs. This can be significant in boosting tourist satisfaction especially if a tour provider understands the Muslim tourist needs and can be in a position to avail halal service provision.

In conclusion the factors that would lead to tourist satisfaction includes quality of the tour, the halal options available, knowledge/awareness of the culture/religion as well as the tactfulness of the tour guide, and the professional level/ flexibility of the tour company. Thus, if the leaders of the tourist industry pay necessary attention to strategy points and invest in the training of the providers of the tours, it will be possible to achieve higher satisfaction of a tourist and, consequently, to facilitate the repetition of their tours, that will lead to the general success of the industry.

To sum up, the term 'halal tourism' is limited to the aspect of provision of halal food items and beverages whereas the term 'Muslim-friendly tourism' is a wider concept that covers along with halal food facilities to pray, respect to the religious beliefs. Islamic tourism mainly focuses on Islamic culture and history and is not narrowed down only to the requirements of the Muslim clients. Thus, while halal tourism, on one hand, is subcategory of Muslim-friendly tourism defined strictly in terms of compliance with *Shariah*, on the other - Muslim-friendly tourism speaks for broader spectrum of services catered to Muslim guests.

2.5 PROPOSED COMPETENCIES MODEL FOR MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOUR GUIDE

With the steadily rising market of Islamic tourism, the necessity of MFTGs has emerged as a key factor in the Muslims' tourism satisfaction. Therefore, there is need to have well-structured competencies model that enable tour guides to be equipped with skills, knowledge and attitude required in order to meet this unique market segment. However, in addition to those core competencies MFTGs need other key competencies that are unique to religious, cultural and social values within the Muslim culture of the tourists.

The following is the proposed competencies model This model is intended to cover the gaps that have been found out with regards to the existing competencies of the tour guides. According to the model, the elements of the awareness, facilitation and Islamic values have been identified as areas of focus which aims at matching the potential of the tour guides to the perceived requirements of the Muslim tourist. Besides, this conceptual model assists training institutions, policy makers, and tourism stakeholders in formulating benchmark and raising up the consciousness towards the quality of services delivered by MFTGs which sub consequently improves the quality of Islamic tourism experience.

2.5.1 Cultural and Religious Knowledge

Cultural and religious knowledge is therefore a measure of how much a tour guide knows or how acquainted they are with the culture, belief and history of the people target for service whereas sensitivity is the ability to appreciate the needs of the people you are serving culturally and or religiously and respond to them in equal manner (Viken et al, 2021; Prakash et al, 2010).

That is because an aspect of culture, spiritual belief or any other particular need that may require consideration for any of them should be respected as people with those needs maybe going through a tough time travelling (Viken et al. 2021). For instance, Muslim clients, may need halal meals and avoid alcoholic products also they have to find a place to perform their prayers. A tour guide who is aware of these practices and meet such needs in appropriate manner will be of significant benefit to the Muslim travelers hence making their trips more enjoyable.

2.5.2 Destination Knowledge

Destination knowledge is defined as the extent of familiarity with the areas being tour guided and the historical and cultural aspects of the regions (Pizam et al. 1978). Muslim clients can be influenced by the level of destination knowledge that a tour guide possesses; this is so important that it can directly determine the degree of satisfaction within the available tour.

According to Pizam et al. , 1978, it is also suggested that, it would assist the tour guides to provide a better presented and informed tour to the Muslim holiday makers. Professional tour guides who are conversant with the places, which they intend to take clients can enrich clients with meaningful information on the areas of interest as well as temper the kind of a tour that is to be expected (Pizam et al. 1978). This can lead to the increased on the part of the customer satisfaction and loyalty and enable the success of Muslim-friendly tour guide sector.

Further, training the guides with high levels of destination knowledge can also go a long way to facilitating cultural competencies and awareness. The significance of the cultural and historical backgrounds of the tourists' destinations means that tour guides will be more sensitive and responsive to issues that Muslims may face during their travels. This

could assist in making the tour more enjoyable for the Muslims thereby improving on the customer satisfaction and tour loyalty.

2.5.3 Halal Knowledge

In other words, if a tour guide possesses the higher level of Halal food knowledge, prayer time and prayer place, then he or she will be ready to organize the Muslim travellers needs (Cetin & Dincer, 2016). For example, a local and knowledgeable tour guide can have information of where the Muslim travelers can find Halal meals in case they are on tour. Likewise, a tour guide with information about prayer timings and places will assist the Muslim clients perform their cultural expectations while on a tour (Suid et al., 2018). In conclusion, competent guides can contribute to better and more comfortable perception of a voyage by a Muslim travellers.

On the other hand, if a tour guide does not have some kind of information about such aspects, then he or she will not effectively be able to support and help the needs of the Muslims travelers. For instance, a tour guide that is unable to find Halal food to advice his or her clients who are Muslims will not be able to address the dietary needs of the clients making the tour experience to be a negative one. In a more specific niche of Muslim-friendly tour guides, offering Halal foods is considered as an important feature catering to the Muslim travelers' needs (Caber et al. 2018). This entails having what the Islamic laws of abstinence permit in the realms of food and drink as well as having specialties that suit the needs of the Muslim travellers. Such options are, for instance, it can provide Halal-certified restaurants, and Halal foods that are prepared on the premises with Halal certified store ingredients.

Offering Halal food also can contribute to the creation of the trust, as well as to the development of the cooperative relations with Muslim guests (Caber et al. 2018). Muslim

travellers who get a chance to get Halal type foods that cater for their needs regarding their prescribed diets are likely to be content with the services offered (Suid et al., 2018). This can also help in improving the customer satisfaction level and hence the loyalty level towards the Muslim friendly tour guide services hence making the industry more successful.

There is, however, a need for mosques, appropriate dressing and decency among the travelers, and cultural sensitivity to the Islamic culture (Cetinkaya & Oter, 2016). Places of worship especially prayer facilities which could be mosque, or any other prayer ground are a crucial factor to consider in tourism for the Muslim travellers (Mahliza et al., 2021). Other issues of concern include the type of dressing, which involve the Muslim's headscarf, and business-appropriate and Islamic clothing for women. Self-consciousness of culture and these specifics by tour guides can assist in making the environment more positive and less offending (Mahliza et al., 2021).

2.5.4 Communication and Service Qualities

Interaction is an important element of service provision since it can influence the top management's perceptions of the quality of the services being delivered (Sulaiman et al. 2016). With good communication there is trust between the service providers and the users hence better relationships are crafted. They also report it can help in the communication of various information throughout the delivery of the service provision process and also in the management of issues and disputes that would likely occur in the process (Cetinkaya & Oter, 2016; Guzel & Sezerel, 2020). On the other hand, poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, mis communication and clients' dissatisfaction, all of which have direct relationship with poor quality of services.

As noted by Sulaiman et al., (2016), it is worth to note that proper communication with the customers can improve the quality of services due to proper and timely

information, feedback, and updates about the status of the customers' requests or complaints. Due to this, customers feel knowledgeable, self-induced, and appreciated by an enterprise which can improve their general view of the quality of services. Furthermore, the results revealed that communication influenced the service providers' ability to comprehend their customers' needs and requirements or expectations with a view of delivering appropriate services that meet those needs (Sulaiman et al. 2016).

There is also a lessening of conflicts and addressing of all issues that are likely to occur during the process of servicing clients, by improved communication (Mahliza et al., 2021). Well-equipped service providers are able to listen carefully to issues posed by the clients, grasp their positions and then give suitable solutions that tend to solve their issues. This in turn helps in achieving good customer relations and avoiding a situation where the client will spread negative information about the company to other people.

2.5.5 Professionalism

A number of the studies indicated that the level of professionalism exhibited by the tour guides has the potential to positively influence the experience of Muslim civil pilgrims and their satisfaction with the tourism services offered to them (Eraut et al., 2004; Lin et al., 2017). In other words, professionalism can be best described by technical competence, ethic professionalism, proficiency in communication, and customer care.

In perspective of Muslim-friendly tour guide services, professionalism of tour guides can impact customer satisfaction in a number of ways (Ap & Wong, 2001). For instance, a professional tour guide who possesses key information about the visited destinations and cultures available for Muslim travelers can share helpful knowledge and suggestions that would improve travelers' experience. Tourist guides with knowledge of the Muslim culture

and travelling standards can also help the Muslims find anything they may need on the cruise, including Halal food and prayer times.

Furthermore, professional tour guides with ethical behaviours and good personal conduct can assist in empowering travellers and create a trusting relationship between the two (Ap & Wong, 2001; Lin et al. , 2017). They also can offer safety to the travelers who is a very important factor for Muslim people who feel insecure during their travel to another country. Tour-guide effectiveness is in the ability to listen carefully to the needs and preferences of the travel Muslims, act swiftly to respond to their questions, offering relevant and accurate information in order to ensure that their experience is enjoyable, should enhance the tour guide (Cohen, 1985).

Of these, one of the major guideline entails providing pre-travel information to the tourists on local foods, drinks and activities contrary to Islamic laws regarding halal provisions. In doing so, the guide equips the tourists with some knowledge of risks associated with certain aspects of life, such as consumption of non-halal foods or locally manufactured products. If by mistake a haram product is offered to a tourist the guide should immediately recommend halal ones. For instance, if the particular food contains haram ingredients then the guide will suggest a similar halal certified food or else direct the tourist to another restaurant that is preferably serving halal foods.

One of the professional skill is capacity to deal with such circumstances in appropriate manner. Where mishap happens, an apology combining with immediate re-channelling to an appropriate choice would likely help to comfort the troubled tourist. It also shows which areas meet the guide's halal requirements so that the customers can make an informed decision. Another measure is the advance identification of potential service providers in a certain area. This makes it possible for the guide to have better check and balances and minimize chances of such circumstances developing to affect the required halal arrangements. When clients are in doubt as to the halal compliance of the products

they wish to purchase, tour guide can use applications that approve halal certification bodies or possess a list of halal certified foods of that particular places.

As much as the tourist is displeased and feel violated, it is important that they remain calm and practice good language when confronting them about the violation they just experienced in a haram product. The concerns of a professional guide needs to be responded to in a highly sensitive manner and the tourist needs to be shown that their needs are concern. It not only solves the present problem but also strengthens the guide's professionalism and the image of the destination as friendly for Muslims.

2.5.6 Adaptability

In this category, flexibility means the capacity of the ac-credited tour guides to change their conduct, services and products to suit the travelers' needs and demands (Amelung et al., 2007; Lin et al., 2017). This is even more significant in the aspect of Muslim-friendly tour guide services whereby tour guides require advanced knowledge that will enable them to address various needs of the Muslim tourists.

For instance, Muslims may demand Halal food when they are on a trip, or they may need prayer locations as they undertake their travel at certain periods. Thus, a tour guide who meets these needs and who is helpful and attentive to such a client segment can further improve the overall tour experience of Muslim travellers (Cetinkaya & Oter, 2016). It may span across providing diversified Halal food for the consumers or ensuring that prayers can be performed at appropriate times in line with the planned itinerary.

Another form of flexibility may also be important in occasions where some event or condition breeds out of the planned course of the tour (Amelung et al., 2007; Lin et al.,

2017). For example, flexibility is a practical characteristic when organizing a bus tour: informed on the go planner can easily change the route depending on the weather, traffic or other force majeure. This tends to avoid interference of the particular tours experiences hence assisting in enhancing the positive experience of the tour to the Muslim travelers. Furthermore, flexibility can also open a way to trust and cooperation from side of Muslim passengers. Since tour guides interact with the customers, competent tour guides who are in a position to notice and meet the needs and requirements of the clients can facilitate provision of positive the experiences needed for Muslim travellers (Amelung et al., 2007). This can also assist in enhancing the probability of consumers' satisfaction and loyalty, therefore supports the Muslim-friendly tour guide business agenda.

2.5.7 Conceptual Framework

The domains of knowledge and skills for a Muslim friendly tour guide should therefore encompass a rather broad conceptual framework that one need to incorporate in order to be able to design and deliver an excellent tour package that would meet the cultural needs of Muslim tourists. Such components may include cultural and religious knowledge, destination knowledge, level of knowledge on halal, professionalism and flexibility.

A tour guide with great knowledge about the Islamic religion, the Five Pillars of Islam, the function of a mosque, and the significance of Islamic holiday and events, therefore, will be adequate in helping the Muslim tourists and directing them appropriately. Likewise, another important aspect of the employing a qualified tour guide is when the guide knows the historical and cultural aspects of the countries to be toured and or anywhere that the guests may have interests with; the guide's familiarity with Muslim cultural and religious requirements when traveling to certain destinations also play a significant role in ensuring that Muslim travelers are given more information about the places of interests.

Secondly, fluency in one or more languages of the countries' representing the Muslim tourists is inevitable as it will foster understanding and give the tourist a better touch of the culture. The customer orientation and the customer relations shortage in general, including the special focus on Muslim travelers' preferences and the necessity to make them feel as comfortable as possible during their trip, are also included in the list of the conceptual framework factors.

Also, it becomes important for the tour guide to be flexible in his/her approach and be able to change easily times if the changes are essential for the course of the tour and also about being diplomatic while dealing with sticky situations in the course of the tour. Therefore, by integrating all of these constituents within the conceptual framework for a Muslim friendly tour guide, it enables one to have a reference point of the knowledge and skills that is necessary in order to perform a great and culturally sensitive tour to the Muslims tourist.

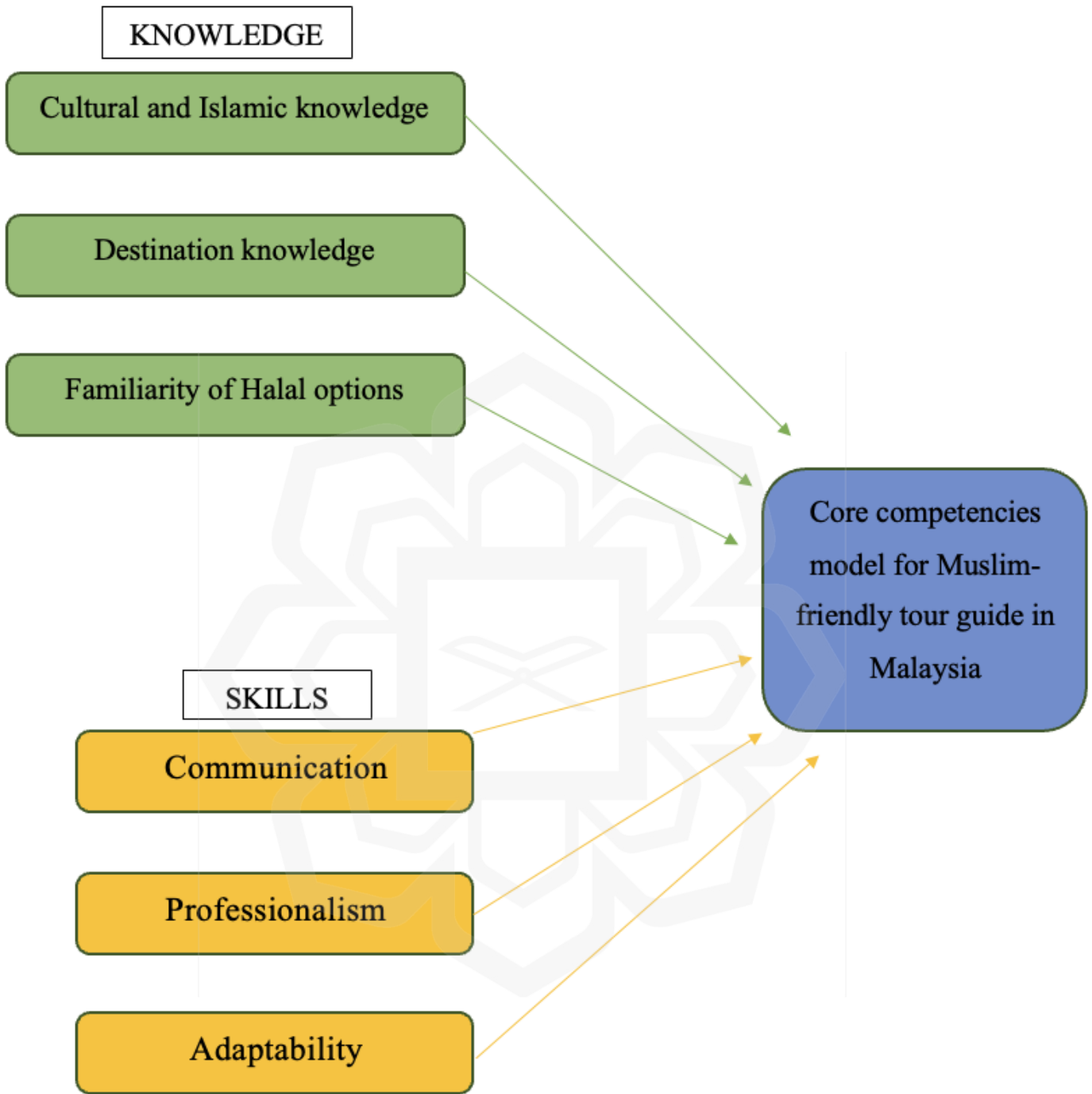


Figure 2.3: Conceptual Framework of Core Competencies Model for MFTG

2.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter contains related background information about; Halal tourism, Muslim-friendly tour guides and online Muslims tourists or travellers. These backgrounds assist in defining the nature of users' experience and performance of tour guides on tourists. The literature review in halal tourism has emphasized on the need of qualification in becoming a Muslim-friendly tour guide which is also going to talk about the customer satisfactory on Muslim-friendly tour guides experience to cater Muslim needs.



CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses research methodology and provides information about the qualitative approach that was used in this research. It consists of sections on research design, target population, as well as sampling criteria and sample size of the respondents. Other aspects mentioned in this chapter include research instruments, data collection procedures, statistical analysis used, as well as verification strategies and ethical issues.

3.2 PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTION

A philosophical assumption is a basic belief or underlying premise that informs and guides a particular perspective or worldview. A philosophical framework is the paradigm upon which a researcher's inquiry is founded. It provides a framework of opinions and comprehensions from which the research project's theories and practices are derived. The term "research paradigm" describes how the researchers see the world, what they believe to be true, and how they behave in it. As a result, it directs their actions in carrying out the research appropriately (Abdul Rehman & Alharti, 2016).

A paradigm is, in other words, a fundamental theoretical structure that includes underlying philosophical presuppositions. The research paradigm determines the study plan (Khaldi, 2017). The study's conceptual foundation determines what knowledge is sought, how to find it, and how to turn facts into knowledge. The research paradigm guides your topic study. This enhances study clarity, methodologies, and analysis. Researchers must

also recognize how their own opinions, preconceptions, and biases affect research. Researcher viewpoint will affect data collection, processing, and interpretation.

In this research, interpretivism was applied by acknowledging the objective set of competency requirements for Muslim-friendly tour guides. A group of scholars, Abdul Rehman and Alharti (2016) described “interpretivism” as a paradigm for the conceptualization of social science that focuses on understanding attitudes, motives, and reasoning of people and social associates in an attempt to decipher the information that might be gathered about an event.

To understand how people interact with each other, interpretivism uses qualitative study methods that focus on people's beliefs, motivations, and ways of thinking instead of quantitative data. This strategy emphasizes community rules, beliefs, and standards (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Interpretive researchers seek new meaning in data, unlike positivists, who verify truths numerically or experimentally.

Interpretivism is particularly suited to this study as it seeks to understand the subjective experiences and perspectives of tour guides, academicians, and authorities on the multifaceted nature of Muslim-friendly tourism. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the complex interplay of cultural, religious, and professional factors that shape core competencies in this context.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design comprises the process of designing and developing a strategy to guide researchers during the research process. A research design in a quantitative approach assists the researcher to come out with a logically accurate design that answers and measures all variables precisely, selects a correct sample, collects data, and runs the statistical analysis.

Unlike statistical data, verbal data are gathered through audial and visual means such as audio and video recording. These provide a fairly accurate account of the event, as can be seen in the data analysis stage (Gall et al., 2003). Usually, the interpretive researchers do not heavily rely on quantitative data but instead incorporate methods within their paradigm that yield qualitative data (Abdul Rehman & Alharti, 2016). Several methods were employed to generate qualitative information, such as filing notes, personal notes, documents, observation, formal and informal interviews, and asking open-ended questions.

In the context of the research on the core competencies model for Muslim-friendly tour guides in Malaysia, a qualitative research design involved in-depth interviews with both tour guides and experts in the tourism industry as well as academicians to gather data on their experiences and perspectives. For example, the interviewer asked the tour guides about their understanding of the cultural and religious norms of Muslim tourists and about the strategies they use to provide Muslim-friendly tours.

A qualitative design was chosen for this research as it enables a rich exploration of the diverse perspectives and experiences of tour guides, academicians, and authorities involved in Muslim-friendly tourism. Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on numerical data and statistical analysis, a qualitative approach allows for a more in-depth understanding of the complex social and cultural dynamics that shape core competencies in this field.

3.4 RESEARCH POPULATION

As defined by Jilcha Sileyew (2020) as well as Garg (2016), a population is the total number of the target samples in which a researcher has interests and focuses to make conclusions from. This makes it possible to establish a proportionate number through a sample of the entire population of a suitable number. Therefore, several numbers of Muslim tour guides and agencies in Malaysia were chosen as the population for this research. The agencies such as Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC), Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture (MOTAC) Terengganu, and Tourism Terengganu. Additionally, academicians specializing in tourism or Islamic tourism and authorities involved in the Malaysian tourism industry will be included to provide diverse perspectives on the research.

3.5 SAMPLING PROCEDURE AND SAMPLE SIZE

In order to obtain specific numbers of the total Malaysian tour guide population, the researcher obtained verification data through a legally registered tourism agency. Instead of randomly choosing individuals from a population, purposive sampling targets a particular group that possesses certain traits or experiences that align with the research objectives. This method is useful when researchers want to gain in-depth insights from a specific segment of the population, such as experts in a field, individuals with particular experiences, or members of a specific community. While it allows for more focused data collection, it may introduce bias since the sample is not randomly selected, making it less generalizable to the entire population.

Purposive sampling is especially appropriate because these individuals are well positioned to provide relevant, firsthand information that can address the specific questions in your thesis. For instance, tour guides can share perspectives on ground-level tourist interactions, challenges, and local insights. Academicians offer theoretical and research-

based insights into tourism trends and issues, providing a broader analytical perspective. Tourism agencies provide the policy and administrative viewpoint, explaining official strategies, objectives, and perhaps future goals for the tourism industry. This sampling strategy enhances the study's credibility by involving voices directly relevant to the subject, ensuring that the data is both insightful and applicable to the realities of tourism.

A larger sample size increases the likelihood that the sample accurately represents the population and provides more precise estimates of population parameters. However, increasing the sample size can also increase the cost and time required to collect the data.

In qualitative research, the concept of saturation plays a key role in determining sample size. Saturation is reached when gathering further data no longer reveals new themes or insights. While previous studies have indicated that saturation can occur within a range of 9-17 interviews or 4-8 focus group discussions (Hennink and Kaiser, 2022), the present study aimed for a sample size of 8-10 participants. This number was deemed sufficient to capture the diverse perspectives and experiences relevant to the research objectives, while also aligning with practical considerations of time and resources.

3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A research instrument is a tool that aids in the collection and analysis of data. This research adopted semi-structured, in-depth interview instruments that conducted either online or face-to-face. A semi-structured interview involves a mix of predetermined questions and open-ended questions that allow the interviewer to explore the candidate's answers in more depth (Morris, 2015). The semi-structured, in-depth interview resembles to a conversation in that two people discuss a topic of mutual interest in a manner that is, ideally, relaxed,

honest, and open (Morris, 2015) This type of interview is more flexible and allows for a more conversational approach.

A face-to-face interview was employed to find out more about the participants' thoughts, feelings, views, and experiences. During the interview process, the person was asked to talk openly. The conversation lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. For this interview, a questionnaire based on various literature reviews was made ahead of time to serve as an interview guide (Kvale, 2006). For people who have trouble understanding English, the conversation was done in Malay, which is their native language. The responses were translated into English at a later time.

Next, there is one time that face-to-face conversation is not possible; the researcher opted for an interview over the Internet, using the Telegram channel. It is particularly useful when the person taking part is unknown and cannot be reached offline. Also, online interviews give the researcher more freedom, less time and money, less nervousness from the participants, and more self-disclosure, or anonymity, for the participants. Before doing any online interviews, the researcher developed a protocol for ensuring ethical online researches.

3.6.1 Protocol for Interview

The interview protocol for this research methodology comprises a systematic process involving five steps to ensure a structured and organized approach to collecting qualitative data.

3.6.1.1 Step 1: Online Survey

The research begins with an online survey conducted through various methods. This includes reviewing articles, leveraging contacts who serve as tour guides, and obtaining relevant data from credible sources such as the Islamic Tourism Center and the Ministry of

Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC) websites. This step ensures that preliminary data is gathered to identify potential respondents and develop a foundational understanding of the research subject.

3.6.1.2 Step 2: Contact by Email, Phone, or Message

After gathering preliminary data, the next step involves reaching out to potential respondents. Official letters detailing the study, along with invitations, are sent to tourism agencies, tour guides, and selected lecturers via email. As mentioned by Roller and Lavrakas (2015), the initial step in the interview process involved obtaining informed consent from the informants. This included asking their willingness to participate in the study and seeking permission to audio-record the session. To ensure that informants feel comfortable and informed, five minutes were allocated at the beginning of each interview for them to ask any relevant questions regarding the study, its purpose, and their involvement. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance in this research; therefore, all informants will be assured that their responses will be treated with the highest level of secrecy (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). This commitment to confidentiality is essential for building trust between the researcher and the informants. Additionally, the informants were informed they had the right to withdraw from the study without any negative consequences. This transparency was to respect their autonomy and foster a supportive environment where informants feel safe to share their insights openly.

3.6.1.3 Step 3: Feedback from Respondents

Once contact is established, feedback from the respondents is collected within a week after the initial email is sent. This step helps determine the willingness of potential respondents to participate in the research. It also provides an opportunity to address any queries or concerns they may have regarding the interview process.

3.6.1.4 Step 4: Set Up a Date for the Interview

After receiving feedback, discussions are held to agree on a suitable date for the interview. If a respondent is unable or unwilling to participate, another participant from the backup list is selected. This step ensures that the interview schedule is finalized efficiently while maintaining flexibility to accommodate the respondents' availability.

3.6.1.5 Step 5: Interview Session

The final step involves reconfirming the interview time and date with the respondent a day before the agreed-upon date. About face-to-face interviews, there are no such issues such as technical hitches hindering the flow of the interview, the interviewer and the interviewee are able to converse directly. As mentioned by Opdenakker (2006), interviewer can look perceptual signals, eye movement, posture of the candidate and other nonverbal societal signals. Still, another advantage is a possibility to reach an agreement on ensuring the welcoming and safe environment during personal meetings (Opdenakker, 2006). All these characteristics may be more or less important depending on the goal of the research and the given study issue.

If the interviewer cannot attend the face-to-face interview, online or video interview will take place. The video interview is expected to come closest to the in-person interview of all the interviewing methods. The fact that interviewees could flexibly participate in this study wherever they were made this study easier (Krouwel et al., 2019).

Table 3.1: Question for tourist guides

| |
|--|
| First part: |
| a) <i>Can you share about your background?</i> |
| b) <i>Can you share about the background of your agency?</i> |
| c) <i>Have you ever attended a MFTG course organized by any organization? If yes, which year and which organizer?</i> |
| d) <i>Have you ever heard about Muslim-friendly tourist guides?</i> |
| Second part: |
| e) <i>Can you share, what is your view on the concept of Muslim-friendly tourism and Muslim-friendly tour guides?</i> |
| f) <i>What knowledge or skills do you already perceived as a tourist guide?</i> |
| g) <i>In your opinion, can these points make someone a potential and reliable tourist guide?</i> |
| - Cultural and religion knowledge |
| - Destination knowledge |
| - Familiarity of halal options |
| - Communication barrier |
| - Professionalism around tourist, equal treatment |
| - Adaptability to emergency cases and on the spot situation |
| h) <i>Apart from what has been discussed, are there any other recommended competencies that you think a tourist guide should have.</i> |
| i) <i>Do you have experience in managing travel packages with a Muslim-friendly concept?</i> |
| Third part: |
| j) <i>What are the common challenges experienced as a tourist guide?</i> |
| k) <i>Do you have any improvements in terms of the tourist guide's readiness to carry out the task?</i> |
| l) <i>What suggestions or recommendations can you share?</i> |

Table 3.2: Question for academicians

| |
|---|
| <p>First part:</p> <p>a) <i>Can you share about your background?</i></p> <p>b) <i>Can you share about the background of your academic?</i></p> <p>c) <i>Do you expert in the field of Tourism or Islamic Tourism?</i></p> |
| <p>Second part:</p> <p>d) <i>What is the difference between Tourism and Islamic Tourism in your view?</i></p> <p>e) <i>Can you share, what is your view on the concept of Muslim-friendly tourism and Muslim-friendly tour guides?</i></p> <p>f) <i>In your opinion, can these points make someone a potential and reliable tourist guide?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Cultural and religion knowledge- Destination knowledge- Familiarity of halal options- Communication barrier- Professionalism around tourist, equal treatment- Adaptability to emergency cases and on the spot situation <p>g) <i>Apart from what has been discussed, are there any other recommended competencies that you think a tourist guide should have.</i></p> |
| <p>Third part:</p> <p>h) <i>What challenges do you experience as an academician in this field?</i></p> <p>i) <i>Do you have any improvements in terms of the tourist guide's readiness to carry out the task?</i></p> <p>j) <i>What suggestions or recommendations can you share?</i></p> |

Table 3.3: Question for authority

| |
|---|
| First part: |
| a) <i>Can you share about your background?</i> |
| b) <i>Can you share about the background of your agency?</i> |
| c) <i>Have you ever heard about Muslim-friendly tourism and tourist guides?</i> |
| Second part: |
| d) <i>Can you share, what is your view on the concept of Muslim-friendly tourism and Muslim-friendly tour guides?</i> |
| e) <i>Does your agency provide training for MF tourist guides? If so:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>what syllabus is used</i>- <i>training cost</i>- <i>trainer's background</i> |
| f) <i>In your opinion, can these points make someone a potential and reliable tourist guide?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Cultural and religion knowledge- Destination knowledge- Familiarity of halal options- Communication barrier- Professionalism around tourist, equal treatment- Adaptability to emergency cases and on the spot situation |
| g) <i>Apart from what has been discussed, are there any other recommended competencies that you think a tourist guide should have.</i> |
| Third part: |
| h) <i>What are the challenges experienced?</i> |
| i) <i>Do you have any improvements in terms of the tourist guide's readiness to carry out the task?</i> |
| j) <i>What suggestions or recommendations can you share?</i> |

3.7 DATA COLLECTION PLAN

The goal of this qualitative data collection plan is to gather insights on the core competencies of Muslim-friendly tour guides in Islamic tourism. The plan includes conducting interviews with three different groups: tour guides, academicians, and authorities or experts in the industry.

The first group that was interviewed were the tour guides who have up to 5 years of experience in leading tours and someone who is registered under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC) Malaysia. Data of tourist guides was obtained by surveying the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) website, and there was a list of tour guides from different states in Malaysia. Around 6 respondents were chosen from this group.

The second group were academicians who specialize in tourism and the Islamic tourism industry. From this group, 3 respondents were able to be interviewed. One was the lecturer from International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) that specialised in Halal/Islamic tourism, and the other two, also from IIUM, specialised in tourism study. The third group who was agreed to be part of this study were the authorities who are responsible for managing the tourism industry, which were the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC) and Tourism Terengganu. The other one was the one that caters to Islamic tourism in Malaysia, such as the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC). They were chosen based on what they have offered in their tourism agencies and shared their respective ideas.

In addition, interviews were conducted in person and via video conferencing, but both can be used to gather more in-depth information about the experiences and knowledge of Muslim tour guides. The interviews were semi-structured and the data collection plan aims to gather rich and diverse insights on the effective competencies for Muslim-friendly tour guides to cater to all the Muslim tourist demands, also from the perspectives of tour guides, academicians, and authority or experts.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Previous interviews were transcribed to provide a written source (McMullin, 2021). In order to transcribe the audio recordings into meaningful contexts, the researcher listened to them multiple times. The information, originally in Malay, was transcribed into English. Respondents' privacy was not compromised in any way; thus, any identifying details were redacted.

Both deductive and inductive approaches are useful in a study on core competencies of Muslim-friendly tour guides in Islamic tourism. A deductive approach would be suitable if the researcher has a clear set of hypotheses or research questions to test (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). On the other hand, once the researcher has established the category of data using deductive analysis, an inductive approach can also be used to collect data and seek for themes or patterns that support or contradict the hypothesis.

Inductive analysis is a type of analysis that first analyses data for patterns and then formulates theories or hypotheses based on these patterns (Saldana & Omasta, 2017). This was unlike a deductive form of analysis where the received theories or hypothesized options that are fairly theoretical in nature are tested using the data. For a comparative form of analysis, the data obtained is further compared across predefined different groups or other context. This leads to another point in the plan: how the data will be analysed several times in order to abduct potential themes and patterns, which was an inductive approach (Miles et al., 2020). Given the real-life and contextual nature of problems to be addressed, the dominant type of analysis used in this study is mainly inductive, though deductive analysis is also employed in cases where the specific research questions and hypotheses are grounded in relevant theories.

According to Azungah (2018), the texts should be read from start to end of the text before marginalising codes against parts of the text which are useful for analysis. We will

then have to go through each interview transcription several times in order to code it and pinpoint the various patterns that correspond to answers to the research objectives.

3.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter detailed the methodological approach undertaken in this research, which employed a qualitative design underpinned by interpretivism. The study aimed to explore the core competencies of Muslim-friendly tour guides in Malaysia through in-depth interviews with tour guides, academicians, and tourism authorities. Purposive sampling was utilized to select a sample size of 8-10 participants, deemed sufficient to reach data saturation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather rich qualitative data, which will be analyzed using a combination of deductive and inductive approaches to identify key themes and patterns related to the research objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the thesis explores a comprehensive analysis of data about the concept and theory of a Muslim-friendly tour guide, delving into the essential elements that constitute competence in this specific context. The examination extends to the ethical considerations associated with being a Muslim-friendly tour guide. The chapter culminates in the presentation of a proposed model, outlining the core competencies required for tour guides catering to Muslim tourists.

4.2 BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

The primary objective of the background description was to introduce the participants to the readers and provide an overview of their qualities based on three different backgrounds: tour guides, academicians, and government officials. This study utilized a qualitative approach, conducting interviews with a total of 12 people from various organizations. The purposive sampling is essential for achieving the research objectives. Purposive sampling is a method that involves the deliberate selection of individuals based on the researcher's expertise, in order to include those who can provide valuable information. The details of the participants along with the codes of reference, are presented in Table 4.1:

Table 4.1: The Codes of Reference for the Participant

| Interviewee's Codes | Justification/Background | Category |
|---------------------|---|-------------|
| TG1 | Private Tour Guide/Mutawwif | Tour Guide |
| TG2 | Private Tour Guide | Tour Guide |
| TG3 | Private Tour Guide | Tour Guide |
| MF1 | Private Licensed Muslim-friendly Tour Guide | Tour Guide |
| MF2 | Freelance Licensed Muslim-friendly Tour Guide | Tour Guide |
| MF3 | Freelance Licensed Muslim-friendly Tour Guide | Tour Guide |
| A1 | Assistant Professor Kulliyah Of Sustainable Tourism And Contemporary Languages, IIUM Pagoh | Academician |
| A2 | Assistant Professor Kulliyah Of Architecture And Environmental Design, IIUM Gombak | Academician |
| A3 | Academic Fellow Kulliyah Of Sustainable Tourism And Contemporary Languages, IIUM Pagoh | Academician |
| G1 | Assistant Senior Administrative Officer, Tourism Licensing and Enforcement Unit, MOTAC Terengganu | Government |
| G2 | Senior Executive, Research And Training Division | Government |
| G3 | Assistant Director, Promotion And Corporate Unit, Tourism Terengganu | Government |

4.3 CONCEPT OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOUR GUIDE

The researcher initiated the interview sessions by inquiring about the participants' familiarity with the Muslim-friendly Tour Guide idea. The average participant clarified the distinction between the concept of being Muslim-friendly and the role of the tour leader. Therefore, the researcher will discuss the analysis of this question in three sub-topics.

4.3.1 Tour Guide

All participants possess a clear understanding of the term tour guide. Half of them, particularly from the tourism sector, have a deep understanding of the true essence of being a tour guide. On average, all the participants believe that tourist guides serve as representatives of the country.

“They are typically the initial point of contact for tourists and are frequently the final individuals to say goodbye to them upon their departure from the country”. – TG²

However, according to the definition given by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC):

“Tour guide is a person who provides services to tourists (local or foreign) or any other person by way of driving them while traveling for remuneration or payment - (Act 482) Tourism Industry Act 1992”. – G¹

As stated by TG¹, TG³, MF¹, MF², MF³, G², and G³, a guide is considered an authority in their field, hence requiring extensive expertise and often possessing a related academic qualification. On the other hand, MF³ and G¹ also mentioned that guides can provide a variety of durations, ranging from one hour to a half day or even a full day. Guides can operate either on-site or in a designated place. Guides may even work with the same individuals or groups for numerous consecutive days, returning to their headquarters at the end of each day. They have a vital role in enriching the travel experience by imparting

knowledge, providing historical context, and presenting intriguing facts about the destinations they explore. As TG¹ mentioned that:

“If we ask the general public, what is the definition of a tour guide? Typically, they will respond that tour guides possess extensive knowledge of the culture, history, geography, and attractions, and they excel in efficiently conveying this information (means the one who is excellent in communication)”. TG¹

Moreover, one participant (G¹) highlighted that there is a difference between the job of a tour guide and a tour manager. He said:

“The role of the tourism manager is usually more complicated because he is often faced with various situations to meet the needs of tourists. Consequently, the tour manager must possess extensive knowledge in several subjects such as history, economics, art history, and social history, not limited to a single region but including multiple countries”. – G¹

Additionally, the tour manager must handle additional administrative responsibilities. Certain individuals only engage in the occupation of tour managers or guides. Some individuals engage in a dual occupation, alternating between serving as a full-day guide on certain days and performing managerial tasks on another day.

Although both tour guides and tour managers contribute to enhancing the tourism experience, it is important to note that their jobs are separate and unique. Tour guides prioritize furnishing intricate knowledge and facilitating a cultural immersion at designated points of interest, whereas tour managers adopt a broader perspective, overseeing the organization and smooth progression of the entire tour. Some participants (TG1, MF2, and MF3) discussed this statement, stating that in terms of interactions with tourists, the tour guide is the closest one to them. MF³ said:

“Tour guides interact with tourists frequently. They join in trips, answer questions, and give unique attraction viewpoints. Their function is more participatory and informative. However, tourism managers work with tourists to handle logistics, ensure comfort, and resolve issues. They usually talk about tour management, packages, itineraries, hotel options, etc”. – MF³

A tour guide's scope of job encompasses a wide range of activities. Among some mentioned by the participants are:

“Tour guides furnish comprehensive and pertinent details regarding the visited locations, encompassing historical context, cultural importance, and indigenous traditions. They ensure that travellers acquire a more profound comprehension of the sites”. – TG³

“Tour guides prioritize the safety of their groups by offering guidance on safety protocols, and emergency procedures, and vigilantly monitoring the well-being of the tourists”. –TG¹ and MF²

“They strategize and coordinate the itinerary, guaranteeing that the group follows the timetable and maximizes their time at each destination”. – TG¹, TG² and MF³

“Tour guides promote interaction among tourists, cultivating a feeling of camaraderie and enabling talks among group members”. – G³

Essentially, a tour guide is responsible for a diverse array of tasks, including imparting knowledge, guaranteeing safety, and enhancing the entire trip experience. They play a crucial role in directing and enhancing the experiences of travellers in different locations.

As highlighted by all tour guides with Muslim-friendly licenses (MF¹, MF², and MF³), most of them are mainly freelance, and self-employed.

“Work is seasonal, involving unsociable hours, and usually obtained by direct contact with tour operators and other agencies, so you must be self-sufficient and able to market yourself”. – MF²

There are also some companies looking for tour guides in terms of maturity, outstanding personality, intelligent appearance, physical stamina, good general knowledge, organizational ability, flexibility, and genuine interest in people and tourism.

Subsequently, to become a tour guide, one needs to go through training and get a certificate of recognition from the Malaysian government. G² mentioned:

“International organizations like the World Federation of Tourist Guides Associations (WFTGA) define a tourist guide as someone who interprets cultural and natural heritage in their preferred language, often with area-specific qualifications. The relevant authority normally issues and/or recognizes such specifications. In Malaysia, the one who gives certification or licenses for tour guides are ITC and MOTAC”. – G²

A person needs to obtain certification from MOTAC for the basic badge. A basic badge is divided into 4 as stated by G¹:

“Green badges are for nature guides. If it's blue, it's for the city guide. While the pink color indicates that he is a temporary tourist guide (according to certain seasons). In addition, for Langkawi, the color of the badge consists of a combination of green and blue”. – G¹

4.3.2 Muslim-friendly

All 12 participants are aware of the use of Muslim-friendly terms. However, only 9 of them could explain more about the concept of Muslim-friendly. 3 of the participants, which are TG², TG³, and G¹, said they only heard about Muslim-friendly concepts on food products or restaurants before. They are still not clear about what Muslim-friendly tourism means. Furthermore, what is meant by Muslim-friendly concepts as expressed by A¹:

"Muslim-friendly pertains to products, services, or locations that specifically accommodate the requirements and preferences of Muslim individuals while adhering to Islamic principles and values. The initiative recognizes the variety of individuals within the Muslim community and strives to offer choices that are per their religious and cultural convictions.”. – A¹

Plus, it might be associated with the preparedness of specific establishments to accommodate Muslim guests. This statement is further reinforced by A², which states that the implementation of the Muslim-friendly idea aims to concentrate solely on the amenities offered rather than altering the complete management structure. Do the facilities cater to the requirements of Muslim guests, such as the provision of prayer rooms and bidets in

public toilets. The objective is to improve this service further to cater to the needs of the Muslim community in the industrial sector.

It can be applied in diverse situations and can be advantageous for businesses, organizations, and individuals seeking to offer inclusive and accommodating choices for Muslim consumers or guests. Following is a guide on the appropriate usage and context for the term Muslim-friendly that was mentioned by MF³:

“If they follow halal dietary rules, restaurants, cafes, and food products can be Muslim-friendly. Use it on menus, signage, and marketing materials to indicate halal options. For hotels, they advertise halal food, prayer facilities, and Islamic housing on their websites and marketing materials. Hotels, resorts, and accommodations may designate rooms or facilities that provide amenities such as prayer mats, qibla direction indications, and gender-segregated swimming pools or spas”. – MF³

“Transportation Services, such as airlines, buses, and public transportation providers can provide services that cater to the needs of Muslim travellers, such as offering halal meals, designated prayer rooms, and lodgings that accommodate Islamic rituals. Lastly, websites and apps focused on travel, dining, and shopping might incorporate filters or categories specifically designed for Muslim-friendly options, facilitating users in discovering appropriate selections”. – MF³

To summarize, when employing the term Muslim-friendly, it is crucial to verify that the products, services, or surroundings satisfy the requirements and anticipations of Muslim consumers. Spurious assertions or distortion of facts might result in customer discontent and potential legal ramifications.

In addition, some participants explained the differences between Muslim-friendly Tourism and Halal Tourism. Participant A¹ mentioned that:

“Halal Tourism is more focused on halal food, between pious and non-pious, and it also appeared earlier than Muslim-friendly Tourism. To conclude, Muslim-friendly is one of the branches of Halal Tourism”. – A¹

Moreover, according to the view of participant A²:

“The emergence of these phrases originated from a broader concept known as Islamic Tourism. Religious-based tourism is more prevalent and pervasive. To further augment the Islamic approach, it is necessary to construct Halal Tourism, which encompasses activities that are permitted (halal) and avoids those that are not permissible (haram). Another criterion that emerges from HT is Muslim-friendly Tourism, which aims to improve facilities to cater to the specific demands of Muslim travellers. The rise of MFT awareness can be attributed to the growing population and migration of Muslim tourists in non-Muslim majority countries”. – A²

Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Halal Tourism are interconnected notions that specifically address the requirements and inclinations of Muslim voyagers however they possess certain differences. Listed below are some of the differences between HT and MFT described by the participants:

“Muslim-friendly Tourism encompasses not only halal food and prayer facilities, but also takes into account additional aspects such as gender-segregated amenities, modest dress standards, and cultural awareness. Halal Tourism primarily emphasizes the provision of halal meals and ensures strict adherence to Islamic dietary regulations in all food-related parts of the trip”. – MF¹

“Muslim-Friendly Tourism offers prayer facilities and qibla direction indications to facilitate the daily prayers of Muslim travellers. Halal Tourism: Incorporates prayer amenities, with a heightened focus on guaranteeing their availability and ease of access”. – TG¹

“Muslim-Friendly Tourism focuses on promoting cultural awareness and demonstrating respect for local customs and traditions while also catering to the needs of Muslim travellers. Meanwhile, Halal Tourism may not prioritize cultural sensitivity as its main emphasis is on the halal features of the trip”. – G²

“The term "Muslim-friendly" is frequently employed in marketing with a broader scope and may not necessarily necessitate official accreditation. It includes a diverse array of services and amenities. Even so, Halal Tourism necessitates the presence of official halal certification for food services and the rigorous observance of halal standards. The phrase is more precise and standardized”. – G³

To put it briefly, although both Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Halal Tourism share the goal of accommodating Muslim travellers, Muslim-Friendly Tourism has a more comprehensive focus that extends beyond halal food. It includes factors like prayer facilities, cultural awareness, and a variety of dining choices. Halal Tourism is a style of tourism that emphasizes strict adherence to Islamic dietary restrictions. It involves ensuring that all aspects of a traveller's experience, particularly food services, meet the requirements for halal certification. The selection between the two options relies on the inclinations and necessities of the Muslim voyager, as well as the particular objectives of enterprises or locations in accommodating this market.

Next, one participant (A¹) also explained a brief about Muslim-friendly tourism hospitality. Muslim-friendly tourism hospitality refers to the practice of providing a welcoming and accommodating environment for Muslim travellers while respecting their cultural and religious preferences. It involves a range of services, facilities, and practices aimed at enhancing the travel experience for Muslim tourists. She said:

“Muslim-friendly tourism hospitality caters to the increasing need for travel experiences that conform to the religious and cultural principles of Muslim travellers. It enables destinations and enterprises to access this market segment and provide comprehensive and considerate services to a wide range of tourists”. – A¹

4.3.3 Muslim-friendly Tour Guide

A Muslim-friendly tour guide is thus a person who has adopted the concepts of Muslim friendliness while offering touring services to Muslim tourists with the intention of creating appropriate and knowledgeable tours for Muslims. The relationship between these two terms and their contribution to the notion is as described by some of the participants, which are:

“A Muslim-friendly tour guide ensures that the tour includes stops at restaurants or food places that provide halal options, taking into account the dietary requirements of Muslim travelers. In addition, they strategically design the schedule to incorporate designated intervals for daily prayers and

may furnish details regarding the proximity to mosques or prayer amenities in the vicinity”. – MF¹

“Before imparting knowledge, a tour guide who is considerate of Muslim needs helps organize collective prayers, directs tourists on prayer timings and the direction of Qiblat, and ensures that the tour itinerary allows for religious duties”. – TG¹

“A Muslim-friendly tour guide possesses extensive knowledge of the culture, history, and attractions of the countries they take tours in. Additionally, they have a profound awareness of Islamic culture and traditions”. – MF²

In addition, according to A¹, she stated that individuals who want to utilize Muslim-friendly tour guide services tend to come from more affluent backgrounds. This is because utilizing this service can escalate the expenses and travel allocation of the individual. This is because there is a lack of enterprises abroad that were established on the premise of being Muslim-friendly. Therefore, the price will be slightly higher, corresponding to the specific requirements of Muslim travelers.

Next, the researcher also comes across the certification for Muslim-friendly tour guides when conducting the literature review before. Based on Table 4.1, 3 participants are licensed with a Muslim-friendly Tour Guide. One of them stated that:

“I am applying for a Muslim-friendly tour guide certificate of my own free will. I chose it because I think it's interesting to go deeper into what is said with Muslim-friendly tourism”. – MF²

Apart from that, participants MF¹ and MF³ opted to obtain the MFTG license in order to concentrate on the Islamic tourism market exclusively. Recently, there has been a surge in the influx of Muslim visitors seeking to explore different destinations. Furthermore, there is a significant need for the services of a tour guide who is accommodating to the needs and preferences of Muslim travelers.

Furthermore, one must consider the rationale behind not utilizing the branding of a “Halal tour guide” or an “Islamic tour guide”. Participant G³'s perspective is that the use of

"Muslim-friendly" branding is more suitable and favoured by tourists, particularly those who do not practice Islam.

“If we employ the branding of "Halal Tourism" or "Islamic Tourism", our target market will primarily consist of Muslim tourists. Non-Muslims may hesitate to interact with us due to their fear or prejudice against Islam, known as Islamophobia. Hence, I assert that promoting a "Muslim-friendly" brand resonates more deeply with travellers or tourists”. – G³

She also added that the term "Muslim-friendly" does not exclusively cater to the interests of Muslims. She explained:

“Simultaneously, it emerged as a significant advocate for promoting Islam. To effectively serve as a Muslim-friendly tour guide, it is essential to possess the necessary knowledge and skills to cater to the demands of both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists. The display of Islamic values by the tour guide, such as punctuality, cleanliness, and politeness, can potentially influence non-Muslim tourists. Non-Muslim tourists will gain respect for the greatness and beauty of Islam through their observation of the tour guide's exemplary character. Unofficially, the tour guide already preached or gave ‘dakwah’ to non-Muslims”. – G³

In addition, Malaysia is home to the Islamic Tourism Center (ITC), an entity that offers training and grants licenses for individuals aspiring to become Muslim-friendly tour guides. Participant G², the interviewed representative from ITC, elucidated that ITC undertook the licensing project upon recognizing the burgeoning Muslim tourist industry, which exhibited distinct travel requirements and preferences. She expressed:

“In order to improve the quality of guiding services provided to Muslim visitors in Malaysia, ITC is collaborating with its partners to develop modules and provide training for licensed tour guides. The aim is to ensure that these guides have a comprehensive understanding of the unique religious requirements of Muslim tourists”. – G²

4.4 ELEMENTS OF A COMPETENT MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOUR GUIDE

For the following inquiry, participants were presented with 6 elements that the researcher had proposed in an interview questionnaire. According to the data collected from all participants, everyone agreed with the aspects proposed by the researcher, but some improvements can still be added to make it more perfect. Table 4.2 below indicates the elements by the researcher.

Table 4.2: Elements of a Competent Muslim-friendly Tour Guide

| No | Elements of a Competent Muslim-friendly Tour Guide |
|----|---|
| 1 | Cultural and religion knowledge |
| 2 | Destination knowledge |
| 3 | Familiarity of halal options |
| 4 | Communication barrier |
| 5 | Professionalism around tourists (equal treatment) |
| 6 | Adaptability to emergency cases (on the spot situation) |

The subtopic is subdivided into three distinct parts, specifically knowledge, skills, and qualities. This is intended to facilitate comprehension for researchers and readers regarding the elements being discussed.

4.4.1 Knowledge

Knowledge encompasses the intellectual comprehension of information, concepts, principles, and facts, which is obtained through the process of learning, education, or personal experience. It is frequently abstract and might manifest as factual information, ideas, or notions. Therefore, sensitivity is the capacity to recognise and respond to the cultural and/or religious needs of the people you are serving in an equal manner, while cultural and religious knowledge is a measure of how well a tour guide knows or is acquainted with the culture, beliefs, and history of the people they are serving (Viken et al, 2021; Prakash et al, 2010).

Based on the literature review, knowledge refers to the information and comprehension that an individual possesses. Participant A² expressed that acquiring knowledge is possible through activities such as reading, learning, observing, or being exposed to information. Knowledge serves as the fundamental basis for comprehending and resolving problems, making informed choices, and obtaining expertise. It functions as the cognitive structure upon which abilities can be developed.

According to the conducted interviews, all participants disclosed that possessing an understanding of religious law or Islamic jurisprudence is the paramount qualification for someone to be considered a Muslim-friendly tour guide. As cited by TG¹:

“What is the additional feature that the Muslim-friendly tour guide has to know first and foremost is the Islamic law or hukum. For example, the way of jama' qasar, halal food, etc. For me, this MFTG is more about taking care of the Syariah law, starting from getting on the plane until returning to their respective homes”. – TG¹

In addition to that, participant MF¹ emphasized the importance of mastering the religious knowledge shared when attending the MFTG training organized by the Islamic Tourism Center (ITC). She said:

“I am indeed a Muslim, but there are many things I have just learned after attending the MFTG training session that day. Among them is the difference

between shops that have a halal certificate and shops that only use 'no-pork' or 'pork-free' signage”. – MF¹

According to the experience of participant MF³, he said:

“I once brought a Chinese Muslim group from China, and they rented somewhere in Petaling Jaya. Coincidentally, one evening a tourist's shoe was licked by a dog. They asked me what they need to do but I couldn't answer. At that time, I was confused and struggled to open Google and find a way to cleanse it. Not long after, when I took the MFTG course that day, they prepared this topic, which for me is very useful for people like me”. – MF³

Therefore, it can be concluded that knowledge about Islam should be prioritized to ensure the competency and credibility of a Muslim-friendly tour guide. This is due to the fact that persons with certain needs may be having a difficult time travelling, thus any aspect of their culture, spiritual beliefs, or other specific needs that may need to be taken into consideration for any of them should be respected and satisfied (Viken et al. 2021). Religious knowledge and even basic things need to be emphasized. At the same time, the tour guide can spread preaching (dakwah) and share knowledge with the tourists.

Moreover, knowledge regarding the destination encompasses several areas of expertise. This knowledge involves multiple facets of the place, such as its historical background, cultural practices, geographical features, tourist attractions, amenities, and local traditions. As A¹ mentioned:

“possessing extensive knowledge of destinations is crucial for tour guides as it amplifies their capacity to deliver informative and captivating tours to guests”. – A¹

Additionally, both TG² and MF¹ believed that acquiring knowledge about the tourism site would enable the tour guide to have a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of the location. According to TG²:

“A tour guide who possesses extensive knowledge about the destination can offer precise details regarding historical buildings, landmarks, and attractions that might be appealing to Muslim travellers. They possess the ability to provide a comprehensive and profound understanding of the importance of these locations from both a historical and Islamic standpoint”. – TG 2

Meanwhile, MF² explained that:

“By possessing destination expertise, a tour guide can modify the schedule to cater to the interests and requirements of Muslim tourists. If necessary, they might provide alternate attractions or activities that are in accordance with Islamic teachings. For example, when entering prayer time, tourists will not be anxious to find a place to pray because it has been shown or prepared by the tour guide”. – MF²

Regarding the third aspect of the proposed element, once it has been studied, the researcher will categorize it as destination knowledge. This is due to the fact that 7 out of 12 participants specifically noted this element while discussing their point on destination knowledge. As stated by Pizam et al (1978) that destination knowledge was the extent of familiarity with the tour areas also the historical and cultural aspects of the regions. One of them, TG³, highlighted that:

“Destination knowledge encompasses details like the presence and accessibility of halal restaurants and prayer facilities within the vicinity. An informed guide can suggest appropriate dining establishments and assist Muslim travellers to nearby mosques or prayer facilities”. – TG³

Lastly, G¹ further elucidated the significance of destination information in relation to cultural sensitivity. It is essential for a tour guide who is Muslim-friendly to have a solid understanding of the local culture and traditions. The tour guide is able to ensure that the trip respects and coincides with the cultural sensitivities of Muslim tourists by knowing the cultural norms and values of the region.

4.4.2 Skills

Skills encompass the tangible utilization of acquired knowledge or the aptitude to execute particular jobs or activities with competence and efficiency. They possess practicality and a focus on action, demonstrating the capacity to complete tasks or carry out actions effectively. Skills are commonly developed through the process of practising, gaining practical experience, and repeatedly applying learned knowledge. They frequently

necessitate physical or mental agility. Skills encompass various actions or behaviors. As supported by A², he said that:

“Skill is what we practice. As for knowledge, what we know, learn, read. So if you want to have skills, you have to have knowledge about something first. For example, if you want to have skills in 5 languages, so the person has to learn 5 languages first, then practice. After that, that will become a skill”. – A²

For a Muslim-friendly tour guide, the most important thing is that they have proficiency in multiple languages. TG¹, TG², and TG³ conveyed the same view that if someone only knows one language (which is Malay), then he is marketed only to Malay people. Participant TG³ added that:

“English has now become something mandatory for us to practice. Everyone, not just tour guides, will learn English as a second language. However, if he only has these 2 languages, I think he's a little behind”. – TG³

In addition, participant MF¹ provides insights from the perspective of an individual who has obtained a license as a Muslim-friendly Tour Guide. She stated that:

“Given the proliferation of MFTGs nowadays, individuals are inclined to favour those that possess a greater range of capabilities, such as proficiency in many languages. They will prioritize individuals who possess proficiency in more than four or more languages, rather than those who are simply fluent in English and Malay”. – MF¹

She added also:

“I learn Korean as my other language. Why Korean? The reason is to penetrate the Korean market. So I will bring Korean tourists because my focus is on the Korean market”. – MF¹

Moreover, all three professions that were interviewed emphasized the need for communication skills, particularly in the tour guide industry. On the other hand, poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, mis communication and clients' dissatisfaction, all of which have direct relationship with poor quality of services (Cetin &

Oter, 2016; Guzel & Sezerel, 2020). This exemplifies the significance of effective communication abilities in interactions with tourists. One participant (MF³) stated that:

“We don’t just focus on tourists, we also have to communicate with the person in charge near attractions places, bus drivers, street vendors. The way we communicate is important so that there are no problems throughout the trip”.
– MF³

Participant TG³ also highlighted that:

“The use of polite language is also necessary. There is no need to curse, or shout, we have to relax”. – TG³

In addition, efficient communication is crucial for comprehending the tastes and requirements of Muslim tourists, effectively transmitting information, and upholding a favorable ambiance throughout the tour. As noted by Sulaiman et al., (2016), it is worth to note that proper communication with the customers can improve the quality of services due to proper and timely information, feedback, and updates about the status of the customers’ requests or complaints. Participants, TG¹, MF¹, and MF³ expressed that ensuring the proper dissemination of desired information to tourists is essential for effective communication. Participant MF² stated that:

“Let's say we ask them to gather under the hotel lobby at 3 pm, make sure all our tourists know about that. Communication does not necessarily mean we speak using our mouths, our voices. By WhatsApp, messages, and phone calls you have to practice effective communication skills”. – MF²

Furthermore, the subsequent aspect is professionalism, which pertains to the demeanor, conduct, and mindset of a tour guide that exemplifies a superior level of proficiency, morality, and commitment to their position. The professional tour guides with ethical behaviours and good personal conduct can assist in empowering travellers and create a trusting relationship between the two (Ap and Wong, 2001; Lin et al. , 2017). They also can offer safety to the travelers who is a very important factor for Muslim people who feel insecure during their travel to another country. The trip requires individuals to conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful, responsible, and reliable. TG¹, TG², MF², and

MF³ highlighted that the concept of professionalism is extensive and significant. There are other aspects to consider, such as punctuality, dress code, ethical conduct, crisis management, customer service, and so on. Here are the other participants' opinions about professionalism:

“Time management is applicable to more than only travellers, you should be aware. A competent tour guide must exhibit punctuality by arriving 30 minutes prior to the scheduled time”. – MF²

“It is necessary for him to provide assistance to both Muslim and non-Muslim guests. For instance, if a non-Muslim guest invites you to accompany them to a club, what is the most appropriate response to decline the request without offending the guest? This falls under the category of professionalism”. – TG¹

“Professional tour guides adhere to all local laws and regulations. They ensure that the tour group adheres to regulations, including photographic restrictions, environmental preservation, and the safeguarding of cultural artifacts”. – TG³

“A skilled tour guide demonstrates impartiality and politeness towards all tourists, irrespective of their background or interests. They refrain from making insulting remarks or participating in rude conduct”. – TG²

“Demonstrating preparedness for unexpected events, such as medical problems or natural disasters, is indicative of professionalism. Tour guides should possess the requisite resources and connections to address any situation properly”. – MF³

“Adhering to ethical principles is a fundamental aspect of professionalism. Tour guides must strictly adhere to ethical norms, encompassing principles of honesty, transparency, and integrity, in all their contacts with both visitors and locals”. – MF¹

Subsequently, participant MF² explained that the skills of adaptability pertain to a tour guide's capacity to promptly modify their approach in response to shifting circumstances, diverse group interactions, and unforeseen occurrences throughout a trip. Thus, a tour guide who meets these needs and who is helpful and attentive to such a client segment can further improve the overall tour experience of Muslim travellers (Cetin and Oter, 2016). It requires adaptability, ingenuity, and attentiveness to guarantee the convenience and contentment of travellers. He added that:

“In the event of unexpected events, such as abrupt weather changes or the closing of an attraction, a flexible tour guide can quickly adjust the scheduled schedule to offer alternate activities or attractions that are just as captivating and appropriate for the group”. – MF²

Other than that, tourists may possess distinct requirements or necessities, such as dietary limitations, mobility considerations, or particular areas of interest. Participant MF¹ shared her experience that:

“I once brought delegates from Bangladesh, they asked 'Okay Azeema 30 minutes before Azan (prayer time) please bring us to the mosque'. They are very punctual”. – MF¹

Moreover, participant MF³ mentioned that Muslim-friendly tour guides can use different methods of storytelling; for instance, adjusting the tempo of the tour to correspond with the energy levels of the group is an option that they have. That way, the tour guide in charge will not have to give monotonous tours of the area.

Meanwhile, the weather can be difficult to anticipate. An adaptable tour guide can modify activities that take place outside or suggest alternatives that take place indoors in response to modifications in the weather conditions, so ensuring that the trip continues to be entertaining. As expressed by TG³, he said that:

“Regarding the weather, we really can't expect it. So we have to always be prepared for weather changes. Maybe before going somewhere, call the people there and ask what the weather is like today”. – TG³

Lastly, all the participants agreed and supported that first aid skills are very important and give a lot of use to the tour guide. As highlighted by TG¹, he said:

“The tour guide should possess a fundamental understanding of first aid in the event of an emergency. Suppose the guest is unwell, so the tour guide must determine whether to transport him to the hospital or administer preliminary

medical care or conduct a preliminary medical assessment to determine the severity of the situation and decide on the appropriate course of action”. – TG¹

Furthermore, participant MF³ provides support for this claim by stating that a tour guide who possesses first aid abilities is capable of immediately administering basic first aid for common ailments such as small cuts, bruises, or bug bites that visitors may experience while on the trip. He stated that:

“At the worst point, we should know how to help people who are choking on food”. – MF³

4.4.3 Qualities

Qualities are natural traits and features that contribute to a person's behaviour, attitude, and overall approach to their position as a tour guide who is accommodating and respectful towards Muslims. As mentioned by TG¹, she said:

“Qualities are distinct from skills and knowledge in that skills are acquired and honed via training and practice, whereas qualities are more innate and frequently mirror an individual's personality and ideals”. – TG¹

Participants commonly highlighted patience as one of the most important criteria when determining whether someone is a good Muslim-friendly tour guide or not. One of the participants (MF²) mentioned that when interacting with tourists who might encounter language problems or need additional time for movement, a good tour guide ensures that all individuals feel respected and provided for. Patience is the ability to maintain a state of calm and composure, even when faced with difficult or irritating circumstances. A Muslim-friendly tour guide must exhibit patience in order to address diverse needs and preferences with empathy effectively.

Other than that, respect serves as the fundamental basis for fostering a constructive exchange. A conscientious tour guide respects the cultural, religious, and personal convictions of tourists, guaranteeing the preservation of their dignity. A thoughtful and respectful Muslim-friendly tour guide abstains from making evaluative remarks or jests that may provoke offence to the tourists' convictions or principles. Participant MF³ highlighted that:

“Avoid making frivolous jokes that may come out as disrespectful to individuals, regardless of their presence or absence”. – MF³

Next, half of the participants expressed that the tour guide must be responsible, assuming accountability for one's position and guaranteeing the welfare and security of tourists during the duration of the tour. Participant (TG¹) stated that a responsible guide performs thorough safety inspections, monitors the group's whereabouts, and promptly responds to emergencies.

4.5 CURRENT LEVEL OF COMPETENCIES AMONG TOUR GUIDES

4.5.1 Definition of ‘Competency’

Competency of the tour guides in handling Muslim tourists has issues with Islamic tourism. Competency can be described as the behavior patterns which are derived from knowledge, skills, abilities and other relevant personal characteristics inherent professionals. These elements allow for an individual to perform beyond expectations of his/her duties and responsibilities as stated by Ninpradith et al. (2019). Tour guides need to have a set of professional competencies to be able to fulfill their duties and perform service that will address the requirements of the Muslim tourists (Lin, 2017).

Islamic tourism is unique tourism segment due to the peculiarities of cultural, religious, and social needs of Muslim customers. Some of these are food that are preferably

Halal, availability of praying places and facilities, and conduct or awareness of Islamic norms and ethics. As the travel and tourism market of Muslims increases in its growth, people who are specialized enough to tend to all the needs of the Muslim travelers in their travels are more important. Information more specifically, tour guides play essential roles on Muslim tourists; the extent to which these needs are met influences tourists' perceptions, appreciation, and, ultimately, destination images of Muslim friendliness.

In assessing the current competency levels of tour guides, this research focuses on two key domains: knowledge and skills. Knowledge includes the guide's ideas and awareness of the Islamic culture, with focusing on prayer times, proper diet observation by Muslims in Ramadan or the meaning of Islamic festivals. For instance, knowledge of what is demanded from clients at the time of Ramadan or Eid can help for well-managed planning and communication.

Indeed, real-world competencies include the guide's capability of referring tourists to the halal eateries, a search of the Muslim-friendly accommodation, or answering questions about certain religious rituals discreetly. Organization in dealing with Muslim consumer and flexibility in various scenarios must also be adopted, to meet the needs of the Muslim traveler and is not inconvenience to the non-Muslim customers.

Based on these factors, the study establishes that guides' training should be put under a systematic process of tutelage. It is crucial for guides to acquire competencies that would enable them to satisfy the needs of Muslim tourists, and this is why training programs including specifically for Islamic tourism for example, provided with centers including the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) should be encouraged. They offer real information on the Prophet's teachings, integrating the religion into employee's working lives and efficient ways of managing different cultural diversity.

4.5.2 Key Findings

The present study was therefore designed to investigate and evaluate the knowledge and practical performance of local authorities of tour guiding services regarding Muslims tourists owing to their competency. Some of the research findings made from the study highlighted strong areas such as cultural knowledge and communication. It emerged that in general, cultural knowledge was relatively good, which included tour guides distancing themselves from any impropriety in front of the Muslims clients and such things as been overly polite and hospitable. Another important strength was organizational communicative competence, which included helpful and clear explanations delivered to tourists. All these competencies play a crucial role in marketing satisfaction and comfort of Muslim tourists thereby giving them an appealing environment to tour.

These gaps, therefore, call for a need for designing an individual training programs for the various departments. Knowingly, the programs which are designed on the necessities of Islamic tourism in accordance to emphasize on understanding of halal tourism and awareness of practices can help the tour guides to deliver more adequate services. This is especially important now that the segment is growing, and it is important for guides to be able to effectively target and sell to this segment.

Furthermore, the research plays significant importance to competency frameworks of Islamic tourism. If these gaps are identified and improvements made based on strengths already apparent, tourist guides can not only meet, but also go beyond the expectations of Muslim travelers and improve the quality of the service offered to make the destinations more well known as Muslim-friendly. All these outcomes are not only economic healthy for the tourism global industry but also ethnical diversity adaption internationally.

4.5.3 Challenges in Preserving Muslim-friendly Tourism

There are a number of challenges that tour guides must overcome in order to preserve the genuineness of Muslim-friendly tourism. It is of the utmost importance to respond to the specific needs and wishes of Muslim visitors, despite the fact that tour guides face a number of challenges while attempting to ensure that they provide those tourists with a consistent and enjoyable experience that meets their expectations.

One of the participants (G¹) mentioned that there are not many premises related to tourism that are aware of or using tour guide services. For example, a museum. Many people go to the museum by themselves and explore it without anyone helping to explain. In addition, G¹ also stated:

“Tour guides don't have a fixed salary, so on tourists. If he gets tourists or customers, so he gets his income. That's why many people do this part-time”.
– G¹

Continuing from that point, participant MF¹ stated that she spends a significant amount of money on certifications and training. She added that:

“It costs a lot to be a Muslim-friendly tour guide. You have to pay for the license, you have to pay for the cert, you have to pay for the training. 1 CTRE training RM 50, times with 6 sessions, RM 300. Then you have to pay RM 200 to the ministry. You have to pay another RM 300 to the association. So a total of RM 800, another 200 for your petrol, journey cost, and places to stay”.
– MF¹

On top of that, a few of the participants brought up the fact that the majority of the tour guides that are now in operation are elderly individuals. According to TG³, the majority of the tour guides are senior citizens. It is necessary to devise a strategy that will pique the interest of young boys in enrolling in a tour guide training program. Added point from MF³, which he said:

“Due to the lack of advertising, many individuals are unaware of the presence and purpose of a Muslim-friendly tour guide. And that is why young people never come across this type of career”. – MF³

Participant G² from ITC also expressed that:

“Currently, the world is becoming increasingly complex. Technological advancements have also progressed. Occasionally, elderly tour guides may struggle to keep pace with modern technologies”. – G²

Apart from that, despite the availability of tour guides who are fluent in specific languages, the language barrier remains a persistent issue for travelers. Participant TG³ highlighted that to enhance language proficiency and stimulate interest in learning another language, it is necessary to offer classes. This statement is further corroborated by A¹, A², and A³, which assert that acquiring proficiency in another language is not only crucial for tour guides but also beneficial for individuals in their everyday lives.

Lastly, participant G³ conveyed the opinion that there is a need for improvement in the current access to facilities. This is due to the insufficient capacity of the current infrastructure to meet the growing influx of tourists. She added:

“Imagine taking a Muslim tourist to the zoo, and when it's time for prayer, everyone rushes to the prayer hall, regardless of whether it's a local or a tourist. However, the prayer hall or surau provided is small, and not clean, so it cannot cater to Muslim needs”. – G³

4.6 CORE COMPETENCIES MODEL FOR MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOUR GUIDE (MFTG)

Upon completion of this study, in accordance with the fourth objective in this study, the researcher developed a model that can serve as a standard for evaluating the effectiveness of a Muslim-friendly tour guide. Based on the collection of data and information obtained

from interview sessions with responsible authorities, it can be concluded that the study findings are as shown in the Figure 4.1 below.

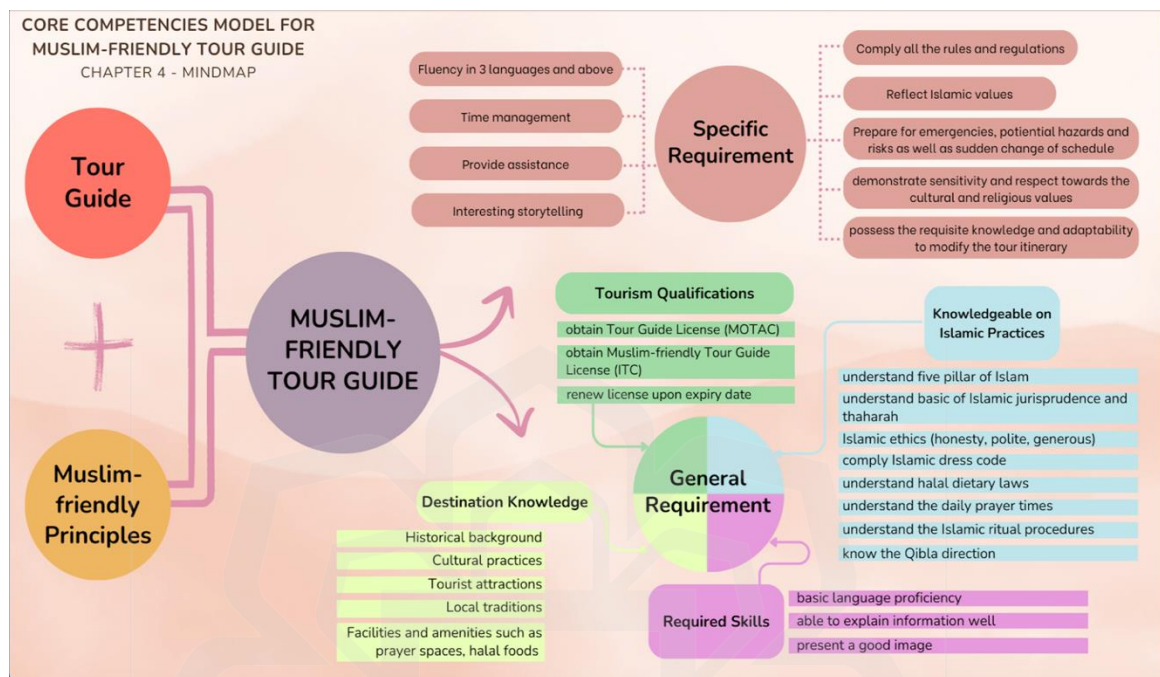


Figure 4.1: Mind map of the core competencies model for a Muslim-friendly tour guide

To qualify as a Muslim-friendly tour guide according to the aforementioned paradigm, it is necessary to possess expertise in two crucial domains: tour guiding and obtaining Muslim-friendly principles. A tour guide is a person who offers guided tours to tourists or visitors at different locations, including cities, historical sites, museums, natural monuments, and cultural attractions. Their main use is to enrich the visitor’s experience by offering knowledge, insights, and context to the places the visitor is observing. On the other hand, Muslim-friendly principles refer to a set of principles that include a number of rules and regulations that Muslim travellers require and are okay with, as well as observing their religious beliefs and cultures. These are important in diverse sectors within the tourism value chain for aspects like hotel and food services, transport services, and tourist activities for Muslim tourists during their holiday sessions.

Moreover, a Muslim-friendly tour guide refers to an official tour guide who, aside from mastering the necessary knowledge about the destinations and being experienced in the field of tourism, is aware of all of the needs and wants of Muslim guests, as well as fully respecting their faith and staying loyal to the basic tenets of Islamic culture. Having a Muslim tour guide is essential in enhancing the tourist's experience at a certain destination, assuring them that they will gain a culturally delightful experience that is equally acceptable per Islamic laws. Thus, to learn relevant skills and information enabling one to become a professional pilot of a tour bus that meets the needs of Muslim tourists, one must undergo certain requirements. The following consists of 19 criteria of general requirements as well as 9 criteria of specific requirements.

4.6.1 General Requirement

General prerequisites encompass the qualifications and traits that are universally anticipated by all tour guides, irrespective of their area of expertise.

- i. Have tourism qualifications:
 - a. needs to obtain a tour guide license and complete a mandatory course organized by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) – (MOTAC, 2023 & ITC, 2023)
 - b. apply for a Muslim-friendly tour guide license issued by the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) to get the MFTG badge – (ITC, 2023)
 - c. a person who has been licensed must always renew the license after the expiry of the period – (MOTAC, 2023 & ITC, 2023)
- ii. Knowledgeable about Islamic practices
 - a. encompasses the understanding of the Five Pillars of Islam (Shahada, Prayer, Zakat, Fast, Hajj) – (TG¹, 2023 & MF², 2023)
 - b. understand the basics of Islamic jurisprudence and taharah – (TG^{2&3}, 2023; MF^{2&3}, 2023 & ITC, 2023)

- c. treat tourists and locals according to Islamic ethics, including honesty, politeness, generosity, and humility – (TG^{1&2}, 2023 & MF¹, 2023)
 - d. complying with Islamic dress regulations – (MF³, 2023)
 - e. understanding halal dietary laws, including halal-certified food, restaurants, and ingredient restrictions – (all respondents)
 - f. ensure accurate prayer time – (MF², 2023; A^{2&3}, 2023; ITC, 2023 & Kamaruddin & Ismail, 2018)
 - g. understand the Islamic ritual procedures – (MF³, 2023 & ITC, 2023)
 - h. ensure the accurate Qibla direction (Jamaluddin et al., 2023 & Mahliza et al., 2021)
- iii. Knowledgeable about the intended destination
- a. Historical background – (TG², 2023 & MF¹, 2023)
 - b. Cultural practices – (MOTAC, 2023)
 - c. Tourist attractions – (A¹, 2023)
 - d. Local traditions – (MOTAC, 2023)
 - e. Facilities and amenities such as prayer spaces, halal foods – (TG³, 2023 & MF², 2023)
- iv. Have a good interpersonal skills
- a. Language proficiency - must fully master at least one language – (TG^{2&3}, 2023 & MF^{1&3}, 2023)
 - b. able to explain information well – (MF³, 2023; Jamaluddin et al., 2023)
 - c. present a good image - clean, neat, tidy – (Mahliza et al., 2021)

4.6.2 Specific Requirement

Specific requirements refer to the qualifications and attributes that are distinct to a tour guide who is accommodating and knowledgeable about Muslim customs and practices.

- i. Fluency in 3 and above languages frequently used, such as Arabic or Urdu, other additional foreign languages such as Chinese, Japanese, German, and others – (All MF and TG)
- ii. Important to prioritize tasks, set realistic goals, and allocate sufficient time for each activity while also being flexible and adaptable to changes in the itinerary or schedule (A^{1,2,3} & MF^{1,2})
- iii. Ensure that every tourist receives assistance, whether it is in the form of answering questions, providing recommendations, or addressing concerns, while also being attentive to their needs and preferences, and treating them with respect and kindness – (TG^{1,2}, MF^{1,3} & G^{1,2})
- iv. Complying with all rules and regulations as a Muslim-friendly tour guide, it is necessary to stay informed about the local laws, customs, traditions, policies, and procedures of the destination while also being mindful of the safety and well-being of the tourists – (All A and G)
- v. To prepare for emergencies, potential risks, and hazards, also adaptable to the sudden change in itineraries – (TG^{1,3} & MF^{1,2,3})
- vi. Honesty, openness, and integrity reflect Islamic values and develop trust and credibility with tourists, the tour organization, and the community – (MF^{2,3} & A¹)
- vii. Essential to demonstrate sensitivity and respect towards the cultural and religious values of Muslim tourists, which includes adhering to modest clothes and acceptable behavior – (A^{1,2})
- viii. Must possess the requisite knowledge and adaptability to modify the tour itinerary to accommodate the daily prayers, Friday prayers (Jumu'ah), and other religious duties of Muslim tourists – (All participants)
- ix. Possess multiple concepts to effectively communicate the narrative in a captivating manner, ensuring the avoidance of boredom – (MF³ & G¹)

4.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The data analysis chapter presents a thorough summary of the study's results, derived from interviews conducted with 12 participants. The content includes information about the participants' origins, an elucidation of the concept of a tour guide who caters to the needs of Muslim travelers, crucial aspects of a skilled tour guide who is knowledgeable about Muslim-friendly practices, difficulties in maintaining Muslim-friendly tourism, and a suggested framework outlining the necessary general and specific requirements required for Muslim-friendly tour guides. Within the third subtopic of this chapter, the researcher categorizes it into three distinct elucidations: the tour guide concept, the Muslim-friendly concept, and the Muslim-friendly tour guide concept.

Next, the following subtopic is organized into three distinct categories: knowledge, skills, and qualities. This chapter offers developed knowledge in relation to Muslim-friendly tourism areas and presents useful advice on how tour guides can be trained and developed. Subsequently, this section presents the self-accounts of the respondents on the challenges experienced concerning the protection and promotion of tourism for the Muslim travelers' segment. This chapter focuses on some of the typical challenges, such as language, lack of information, religion, and other related issues. At last, it is in this chapter that a recommended set of skills and competencies for the Muslim tourists' tour guide is brought to the table. This is a model developed by considering the analysis of the gathered data and including the previously identified components. It serves as a utilitarian model of how education and the formation of tolerant tour guides with regards to Muslim tourists occur.

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research, therefore, has effectively matched the purpose of assessing the competencies of Malaysian tour guides with special reference to the needs of the Muslim tourist market. The study shows that Malaysian tour guides signify some qualities which is in consistent with previous studies of the required competencies tour guides. However, the respondents still seem to have isolation in their awareness of the halal related services and the accommodation that is require for practicing their faith. More to that, these findings indicate the necessity of a comprehensive and specific competency framework to cover these loopholes.

Unlike past research, this work recognizes a different and precise list of the core competencies necessary for Muslim-friendly tour guides (MFTGs). These include cultural sensitivity, halal awareness /Islamic practices awareness which previous scholars have referred to but have not elaborated much about. With these elements in consideration, this study contributes to the construction of the field of Islamic tourism and the filling of gaps identified in previous research. In addition, six of tour guides used in this study represent diverse levels of competence, which could serve as an enlightening sample within the general pool of tour guides in Malaysia. The results are specific to this group only but reveal generalizable lessons for competency development in other MFTGs, as long as challenges and benchmarks apply uniformly.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

In more detail, the research looks at issues relating to the idea of appropriate Muslim tour guides in the realm of Islamic tourism. This entails understanding specific aspects of a tour guide that will satisfy the needs and wants of Muslims tourists. Therefore, analysis of the concept of Muslim-friendly tour guide means understanding how and within what ways such specialists are capable of handling cultural concerns, respecting the Shariah principles, and providing the Muslim travelers with as pleasurable and courteous an experience as feasible. Each and every one of the participants described the Muslim-friendly notion and their function unlike of the tour guide. Therefore, the researcher discusses the analysis of this question in three different concepts, namely, the tourist guide concept, the Muslim-friendly concept, and the Muslim-friendly tour guide concept.

Additionally, expanding the globalization trend in the tourism market has highlighted the need for professional tour guides for people with special needs and the necessary qualifications to address the growing Muslim tourism market demand. This research finds out the essential competencies and proficiencies that attending tour guides requires in order to deliver timely and efficient services that address the specific needs of Muslims solo travelers. In satisfying cultural needs and demands that involve Muslim travelers, these tour guides need to be armed with a wide variety of skills and qualities that include in meeting the dietary and religious mostly to Islamic travelers' needs.

These competencies go beyond the ordinary guidance skills/paraphrasing and extend to an appreciation of the dynamics of Islamic tourism, managing mosque tours, explaining Islamic history/Arts, as well as ensuring a strict adherence to the Halal Code. Based on the data collected in the interview session with the tour guides, there is evidence here to suggest that even now they possess the aptitude to meet all of the needs of Muslim travelers. Still, some people believe that it is appropriate to develop other skills and then fine-tune them or, at least, try to hone them. Some of the contributions include but not limited to storytelling skills, language skills, emergency assistance skills and among others as elaborated in Chapter 4.

Moreover, this research also measures the present performance of the guides in meeting the stipulated needs and expectations of Muslims tourist. It involves conducting structured questionnaires and interviews to measure varied aspects of the performance of the existing tour guides as per the context of understanding Islamic culture, ability to accommodate Muslims needs and practices, interpreting and following the needs of the Muslim tourist and recognition of halal standards. Such a valuation is vital for identifying the current position of Muslim-friendly tourist services and the gaps that must be addressed to positively influence the tourist experience of Muslims.

Last, it develops an integrative model that identifies the key competencies that facilitate the fulfilment of tour guides' tasks for Muslim tourists in Malaysia. This model was arrived at after analyzing various elements from the interview that was conducted depending on various interrelated factors. It comprises knowledge of Islamic civilization, its practicing effective communication with diverse groups of Muslims, quite specific knowledge of the halal processes and opportunities, and the appropriate skills in perception and coverage of religious places. The approach also examines the importance of differentiation and providing Muslim with a complete and satisfying experience during their journey. The study is to forward a pragmatic framework that will likely help and shape the training and development of Malaysian tour guides. The objectives of the research are intended to enhance the Muslim friendly tourist services and promote Malaysia as a friendly country for Muslim tourists.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

These findings have professional implications at the level of individual, as well as potential application at the industry level. The competency model suggested above can be utilized in a tangible way to develop the MFTGs' skills and expertise so that they might better serve Muslim tourists' demand. The applicability and flexibility are apparent from this model that targets functional experience catering halal services and religious responses that

Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) can implement. Studying the core areas of knowledge and abilities necessary for developing Muslim-friendly tourist guides may lead to the discovery of possible jobs in the sphere of tourism. The experts who need to develop their improved strategies and ideas can examine the availability and importance of the professional advancement in the tour guiding profession. The particular persons who desire to become tour guides can define the knowledge and expertise required to work in the distinct tour guiding sphere.

They may include training measures, certification courses, mentorship and qualification pathways, or practical training. Besides, it may help to explore opportunities for the further career in the broader tourist field, including tour guiding, promotion, or tourism-oriented management, and the safeguarding of cultural values. Namely, it makes more people follow certain occupations, including the choice of becoming a tour guide that caters to the needs of Muslim travelers. Such move would not only help boost growth and sustainability of the tourism business but also meet growing needs of the Muslim tourists.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the research can be useful for designing and improving professional development programs for tour guides in order to update their competence and increase relevance to the topics and practices concerning Muslim-friendly tourism. Such can include those that comprise of workshops, seminars, and other continuing education sessions focusing on certain issues such as cultural diversity training and language proficiency, to mention but a few. This will mean that many destinations may complement the whole tourist experience for the Muslim traveler by focusing on the professional development of the tour guides, which would lead to a major improvement in the delivery of services.

The present research study's results can complement the current theoretical body of knowledge and academic debates regarding the interaction of tourism, culture, and religion. To this end, the research initiative has a noble intention for informing and benefiting scholars, instructors, and learners who are concerned with the topic of Muslim-friendly tour guides, mainly because the study addresses the proper documentation and assessment of

the skills and competence required for this profession. Besides, it can advance further study and research of related issues, including the interconnection of different fields, for example, cross cultural communication, religious tourism and methods in managing places. Also, the research can act as a guide for the academic institutions which are in the process of developing curriculum or programs of study in tourism studies, cultural heritage or Islamic culture and arts.

In addition, the research can be relevant for the development of policies and Standards concerning the provision of services in tourism that are expected to meet the needs of Muslim travelers. This includes guidelines regarding operations from the tour operators' point of view as well as standards for certification of the tour guides. It will be up to the destinations to ensure that Muslims have a favorable environment and are also able to protect the cultural and religious facets by having well stated and developed policies and also legal framework and amenities. They can also invest on constructions of infrastructures and other forms of promotional strategies that are targeted at the Muslim tourists.

Last but not the least; developing a core competencies model of tour guides exclusively for the Muslim clients will create a positive change in the level of satisfaction of the Muslim travelers. Muslim travelers should be able to feel welcome, valued and catered for throughout their trip and this can be achieved through preparing the tour guides adequately about Islamic culture, practices as well as the Islamic diets. The intention cannot be to deny or erase one's ethnic identity but rather to aim for an appreciation of that ethnic difference to be able to provide tourists with useful information, help in the provision of halal services and facilities and to be able to meet communication needs. This ultimately makes pleasant and satisfying travel to Muslim travelers than any other traveler in the world. Therefore, Muslim tourists are more likely to enjoy more satisfaction during the visit and consequently, they recommended the destination through word-of-mouth, they are more likely to visit the destination again, and hence, speaking to the perception of the destination as a friendly and welcoming place to Muslims travellers.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Thus while the research exploring the essential competencies of Muslim friendly tour guides in Islamic tourism might present useful findings for the development and enhancement of visitors' experiences, there are a few caveats that should be taken into consideration.

Subjectivity refers to such influence that springs from the internal characteristics of the particular persons, groups and societies with regard to the received and processed information or data. The assessment of Muslim-friendly tour guides is highly dependent on subjectivity since various stakeholders are involved, all with different perceptions of the situation and intentions. The most important actors of the tourism business are tourists themselves because their demands and choices create a highly important role of necessity in a tour guide. Thus, it can be suggested that for Muslim travelers the strict compliance with the religious rituals or expectations, profound understanding of Islamic history and culture, ability to speak the proper language and extraordinary sensibility to the standards in the destination country may be crucial. Some clients may consider it more significant to receive pure facts and educational entertainment and positive information about the past, others may stress the capacity to communicate with people and prepare meals with certain restrictions or perform special prayers.

Furthermore, the list posted on the website of ITC was not extending to the current date. Unable to obtain the MFTG certification or licenses have expired among some of the participants hence highlighting the inadequacies in this study. This occurs after the researcher obtains the respondent's consent to conduct the interview. In most cases, to acquire a MFTG certification or license, the candidate has to undergo a thorough program on the aspects of the Islamic culture, history, foods that are restricted, prayer techniques, and other behaviors that are acceptable. This helps to assure that guides have been endowed with the vital knowledge and skills so as to advance offers a near perfect excellent experience. Certification gives credibility to the competence, trustworthiness and professionalism of the guides and this makes them more employable and marketable in the

market; certification also gives the travelers and tour operators confidence in the guides. Also, trained guides enjoy more prospects of ongoing professional learning through occasions that inform them of updated trends and best practices.

Therefore, the stark scarceness of Muslim-friendly tour guides willing to agree to the research is perhaps the most critical weakness and limits the amount and depth of the collected information. It is likely that the control on the type of tour guides who were targeted and interviewed during this study to those who specialize in Muslim friendly tourism can lead to a biased sampling and a skewed picture of the differentiating factors regarding; experience, competence and view point in the tourism industry. Different tour guides have different background, ideas, and approach towards the profession which significantly influences the identification and focus on core competencies on. Therefore, when surveying and identifying the necessary competencies, expertise, and performance expected of proficient Muslim Friendly Tour Guide experts, exclusion of the needed perspectives due to inadequate enthusiasts taint a weak understanding of the course's requirements. This constraint may also lead to questions regarding the validity of the results having based the research on a particular pool of tour guides and not the overall population.

On the same note, due to time and financial limitations, the researcher did not get direct contact with the organized Muslim-Friendly Tour Guide (MFTG) learning, and hence, got a finite view of the complex dynamics involved in Muslim friendly tour guiding. These specialized courses are to give the personal knowledge, the practical skills, and the important perspectives which are required for a full study of the area. If the researcher had no this direct exposure, she or he might miss opportunities to establish direct communication with industry champions, get the relevant material, and gain the practical experience that is crucial for a more profound investigation. Thus, there will be ignorance about the complex aspects regarding the possibilities of meeting the expectations and needs of Muslim tourists in the context of the tourism sector.

Moreover, the absence of literature diagnosing the absence of Muslim-friendly tour guides in the Malaysian tourism sector is apparent in the literature. This could hamper the

researcher's ability to do an efficient job and place the results in the proper context. Since there is a scarceness of prior researching on the Malaysian tourism sector and providing service within the part of Islamic tourism for Muslim travelers, the researcher may find it hard to understand the various dynamic, factors and opportunities of the country. The lack of similar information and background information may limit the extent of analysis and understanding of other important factors that may affect Muslim-friendly tour-guiding approaches in Malaysia such as, cultural nuances, legal requirements, competition within the market and customer-sending tendencies. Thus, future studies should focus on filling this gap and enriching the general understanding of Islamic tourism within the Malaysian context.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

When assessing the competencies of tour guides, more especially in identifying their strengths and areas of deficit, the researchers need to employ reliable methods in data collection and minimize the influences of prejudice as well as employ multiple source of data to confirm on the results gotten. The techniques that are utilized in qualitative research include the use of interviews, focus groups, self-administered questionnaires, and consultation with other professionals can help to gather various perspectives and then examine whether the ideas are typical of that particular population or not. However, in the study of Muslim-friendly tour guide skills, there are four characteristics that need to be carefully addressed in the process, including the clear explanation of research findings, the emphasis on the researcher's position, and the respect for criteria that can provide valid and effective knowledge.

Focusing on group discussion includes important and significant participants like Muslim travelers, local tour operators, local tour guides, and industry specialist offer a great opportunity of studying the perception of such participants regarding to the required skills and knowledge of tour guide who targets to the Muslim travelers. Most of the time, such talks involve a person who gets to sit in the middle of a group of people and then just gets

to talk while everyone is encouraged to share their opinions and insights with each other in a collaborative manner.

In the same vein, participation in training programs that are organized by reputable stakeholders like the ITC provides the researcher a good opportunity to immerse oneself in the field of Muslim friendly tour guiding. It is effective that academics can gain the direct experience of the subject matter by attending these training sessions and it gives them idea about the organization and instructional strategy of the tailored courses for tour guides dealing with Muslim travelers. Researching in such a way makes the researchers physically observe instructional approaches, interact with instructors and participants and do practice in what is learnt.

All these experiences together make them better understand and appreciate the required skills and knowledge that need to be mastered in the domain of Islamic tourism. In addition to this, participating in such training programs makes the researchers aware of such trends, efficient and benchmark practices, and emerging standards in Muslim-friendly tour guiding hence enhancing the relevance and applicability of their research findings. In order to foster confidence in the constructs developed by the research, the authors could become involved in programs that advance the links between academia and practice in the tourist industry, including training. This enables the gap in translation from theory that has been postulated to the actual use of the models to be filled hence ensuring that the models fit the dynamically changing needs of the stakeholders.

Furthermore, for the current researchers who are conducting the study to attract the attention of tour guides, one has to be creative. Getting in touch with the Muslim-friendly tour because the guides involve the use of the following methods Personnel cooperation and networking, use of online platforms, new operating systems and social media networks, engaging the tourism communities. Broadening the method of participant recruitment is to explore other ways of admitting the potential respondent than current practices mean.

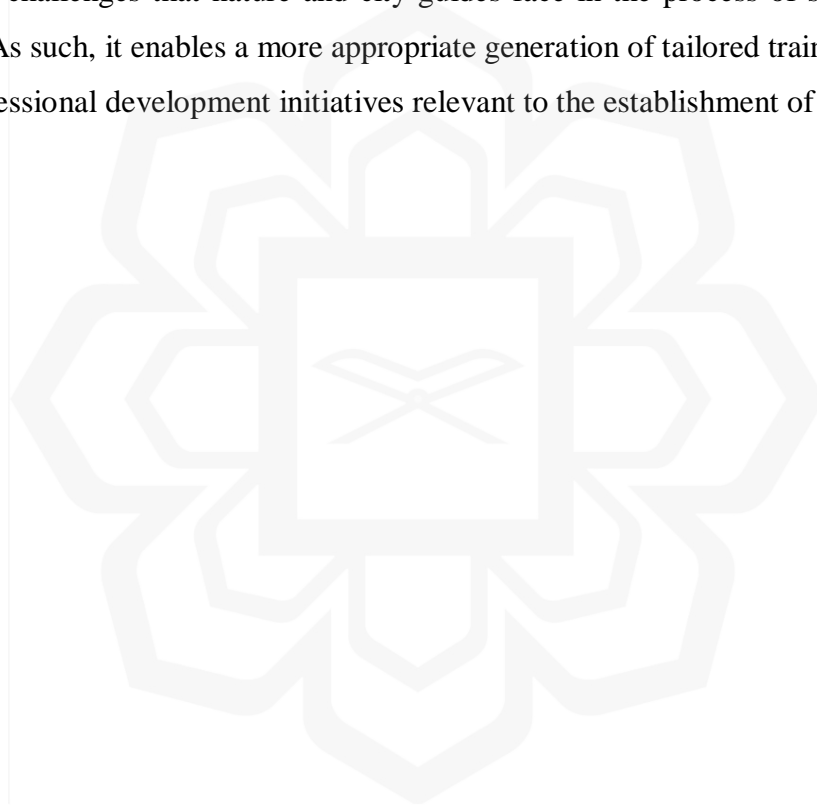
Reflecting on the use of other methods of accessing relevant data within the context of the study, means thinking beyond participant interviews and invites consideration of creative ways of sourcing data that do not solely rely on the participants. Informants could be practicing tour guides or workers in the tourism industry, or it could involve researching firsthand by observing tour guide activities in real life settings, examining the opinions of other users by analyzing online reviews or feedback from Muslim travellers, and effluent actual qualitative data gleaned from interviews with other actual customers. In an attempt to reduce the participant recruitment problems and improve the understanding of the appropriate Muslim-friendly tour-guiding skills, the researchers can complement and utilize the different types of data collection methods and sources.

Regarding the policy implications, one of the recommendation is to extend the sample size to encompass Muslim travelers. Such a qualitative exploration of published and unpublished works will help researchers get an understanding of the consumer behavior of Muslim travellers, their preferences and reasoning and their interactions with the tour guides. This evaluation involves an assessment of cultural imposition on the local people, communication, the quality of service offered, and experiences at the destinations. To make clients happy, the tour guides should have information about the culture and ethics of Muslims so that they nobody feels offended.

Furthermore, understanding the totality of the journey that tourists undertake when visiting a particular destination allows also investigation of the role and impact of tour guides in shaping the views and satisfaction. This assumption implies that understanding the existing consumer behavior patterns can help in defining what sorts of factors have the strongest impact on tourist satisfaction. This enables the competency model to be developed for the specific tour guides that offer their services to Muslims. In this way, they will be able to address the special requirements and expectations of Muslim tourists hence enhancing the quality of tour guiding services in the tourism market.

The last step is about scope specification whereby the research gets focused towards nature or city Muslim friendly tour guides only. Such specificity allows provided that,

specialists can adjust the investigation to address issues or concern, challenges, and opportunities related to guiding travelers in either alpine environments or cityscapes. For instance, nature guides should have specialized experience in hiking, animals and conservation at large while city guides should have experience in history, cultures, artifacts, and buildings. If more specific information on the groups in the target segment is collected while defining it, then researchers concerned can learn precisely what more is needed from each category of the guides and enhance the utility in different contexts of the competency model for numerous tourisms. This work enables one to gain a deeper understanding of the concrete challenges that nature and city guides face in the process of satisfying Muslim clients. As such, it enables a more appropriate generation of tailored training interventions and professional development initiatives relevant to the establishment of Islamic tourism.



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APPENDIX I: RESPONDENTS

| CATEGORY | CODE | NAME | POSITION | COMPANY |
|-------------|-----------------|---|--|--|
| TOUR GUIDE | TG ₁ | MR ASLAM HASNAN | TOUR GUIDE | INSAFF |
| | TG ₂ | USTAZAH HAJAH FATIMAH BINTI ISHAK | TOUR GUIDE | RAYHAR |
| | TG ₃ | USTAZ HAJI MAT KHOLID BIN KADIR | TOUR GUIDE | RAYHAR |
| | MF ₁ | MS NURAZEEMA HUSSEIN | LICENSED MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOUR GUIDE | FREELANCER |
| | MF ₂ | MS SITI NUR FATIMA BINTI MOHD FAUZI | LICENSED MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOUR GUIDE | FREELANCER |
| | MF ₃ | MR YM RAJA MOHD HAFIZ RAJA NASHARUDDIN | LICENSED MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOUR GUIDE | FREELANCER |
| ACADEMICIAN | A ₁ | DR NUR SYUHADAH BINTI MOHD | ASSISTANT PROFESSOR KULLIYAH OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGES | INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA, PAGOH |
| | A ₂ | DR KHAIRUSY SYAKIRIN HAS-YUN BIN HASHIM | ASSISTANT PROFESSOR KULLIYAH OF ARCHITECTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN | INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA, GOMBAK |
| | A ₃ | SIR MUHAMMAD ALI BIN A. RAHMAN | ACADEMIC FELLOW KULLIYAH OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGES | INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA, PAGOH |
| GOVERNMENT | G ₁ | MR WAN MOHD HISYAM BIN WAN MOHD | Assistant Senior Administrative Officer, Tourism Licensing and Enforcement Unit | MINISTRY OF TOURISM, ART AND CULTURE (MOTAC) TERENGGANU |
| | G ₂ | MS SITI SARAH BINTI HUSSIN | SENIOR EXECUTIVE, RESEARCH AND TRAINING DIVISION | ISLAMIC TOURISM CENTRE (ITC) |
| | | MR AMIR FIRHAN | STAFF MEMBER, RESEARCH AND TRAINING DIVISION | |
| | G ₃ | MRS NURUL MARDIANA BINTI ABDUL ALIM | PENOLONG PENGARAH, UNIT PROMOSI DAN KORPORAT | TERENGGANU STATE TOURISM DEPARTMENT (TOURISM TERENGGANU) |

APPENDIX II: LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

| NO | ARTICLE TITLE | JOURNAL/ CONFERENCE | DATE PUBLICATION |
|----|--|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Fundamentals of Tour Guide in Muslim Friendly Tourism | Journal of Halal Industry & Services (JHIS) | June 2023 |
| 2 | The Differences Between Islamic Tourism, Halal Tourism and Muslim-friendly Tourism | International Conference on the Quality of Halal Industry in Islam, Medical and Scientific Perspectives 2023 (HAPEX23) | July 2023 |
| 3 | A Study on Human Capital Development for Muslim-friendly Tourism | International Halal Science Conference 2023 (IHASC23) | August 2023 |
| 4 | Sustainable and Ethical Vicegerency in Halal Tourism Practices | Journal of Event, Tourism, Hospitality Studies | July 2024 |
| 5 | A Study on Micro-Industry Women Entrepreneurs in the Obtainment of Halal Certification: Challenges and Success Factors | Journal of Halal Industry & Services (JHIS) | November 2024 |
| 6 | Catering to Muslim Travelers: A Review on the Value of Muslim-friendly Tour Guide Services | HALALSPHERE Journal Publication | December 2024 |

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|---|--|--|---------------|
| 7 | Beyond Halal Cuisine: A Comprehensive Exploration of Shariah Compliance in Tourism and Hospitality | Tazkia Islamic Finance and Business Review (TIFBR) | December 2024 |
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