

EXAMINING THE POTENTIAL FOR MUSLIM-
FRIENDLY INTERNATIONAL SPORTS
TOURISM EVENTS IN MALAYSIA

BY

ASHSYAMIM BINTI AHMAD ROSY

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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degree of Master of Halal Industry Management

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International Islamic University Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the potential of establishing Muslim-friendly international sports tourism events in Malaysia, a country renowned as a premier Muslim-friendly destination with robust tourist infrastructure and expertise in organising global sporting events. Despite these strengths, a notable deficiency persists in the thorough incorporation of Islamic principles within international sports tourism, characterised by policy inconsistencies, insufficient promotion of Muslim-friendly services, and a lack of knowledge among industry stakeholders. This study seeks to identify the essential components of Muslim-friendly sports tourism, examine successful tactics to establish Malaysia as a desirable destination, and assess the possible advantages of such development. A qualitative research methodology was utilised through semi-structured interviews, supplemented by library research then processed using thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke's framework. The results indicate that key elements encompass the provision of halal food, prayer facilities, considerations for modest attire, and event management consistent with Islamic principles, while strategic promotion, stakeholder collaboration, and policy standardisation are vital for effective positioning. The research emphasises economic expansion, enriched tourism experiences, and an elevated global reputation as principal results. The implications indicate that policymakers, industry stakeholders, and event organisers must augment knowledge, establish clear norms, and comprehensively incorporate Muslim-friendly practices to bolster Malaysia's competitiveness in the global sports tourism sector.

ملخص البحث

تبحث هذه الدراسة إمكانية إرساء فعاليات سياحية رياضية دولية صديقة للمسلمين في ماليزيا، البلد المعروف بوصفه وجهة رائدة صديقة للمسلمين وتتمتع ببنية تحتية سياحية متينة وخبرة في تنظيم الفعاليات الرياضية العالمية. وعلى الرغم من هذه المقومات، لا يزال هناك قصور واضح في الدمج الشامل للمبادئ الإسلامية ضمن السياحة الرياضية الدولية، يتجلى في تضارب السياسات، وضعف الترويج للخدمات الصديقة للمسلمين، ونقص المعرفة لدى أصحاب المصلحة في القطاع. وتسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد المكونات الأساسية للسياحة الرياضية الصديقة للمسلمين، ودراسة التكتيكات الناجحة لترسيخ مكانة ماليزيا بوصفها وجهة مرغوبة، وتقييم المزايا المحتملة لهذا التطور. واعتمد منهج بحثي نوعي من خلال إجراء مقابلات شبه منظمة استُكملت بالبحث المكتبي، ثم عولجت البيانات باستخدام التحليل الموضوعي وفق إطار براون وكلارك (Braun and Clarke's framework)، وتشير النتائج إلى أن العناصر الأساسية تشمل توفير الطعام الحلال، ومرافق الصلاة، ومراعاة اعتبارات اللباس المحتشم، وإدارة الفعاليات بما يتسق مع المبادئ الإسلامية، في حين يُعد الترويج الاستراتيجي، والتعاون بين أصحاب المصلحة، وتوحيد السياسات عناصر حيوية لتحقيق تموضع فعال. وتُبرز الدراسة التوسع الاقتصادي، وإثراء التجربة السياحية، وتعزيز السمعة العالمية بوصفها النتائج الرئيسية. وتشير الدلالات المترتبة إلى ضرورة أن يعمل صانعو السياسات، وأصحاب المصلحة في القطاع، ومنظمو الفعاليات على تعزيز المعرفة، ووضع معايير واضحة، والدمج الشامل للممارسات الصديقة للمسلمين، من أجل تدعيم القدرة التنافسية لماليزيا في قطاع السياحة الرياضية العالمي.

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 thesis for the degree of Master of Halal Industry Management.


.....
DR. BETANIA KARTIKA
International Institute for Halal Research & Training
International Islamic University Malaysia
Betania Kartika Muflih
Supervisor (IROM)


.....
Nur Shuhadah binti Mohd
Co-Supervisor

I certify that I have 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 thesis for the degree of Master of Halal Industry Management.

.....
Mazni binti Saad
Internal Examiner

.....
Lina Munirah binti Kamarudin
External Examiner

This thesis was submitted to the INHART and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Halal Industry Management.

.....
Noor Faizul Hadry bin Nordin
Deputy Dean of Postgraduate,
Research and Innovation

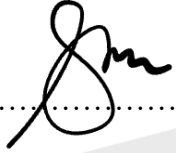
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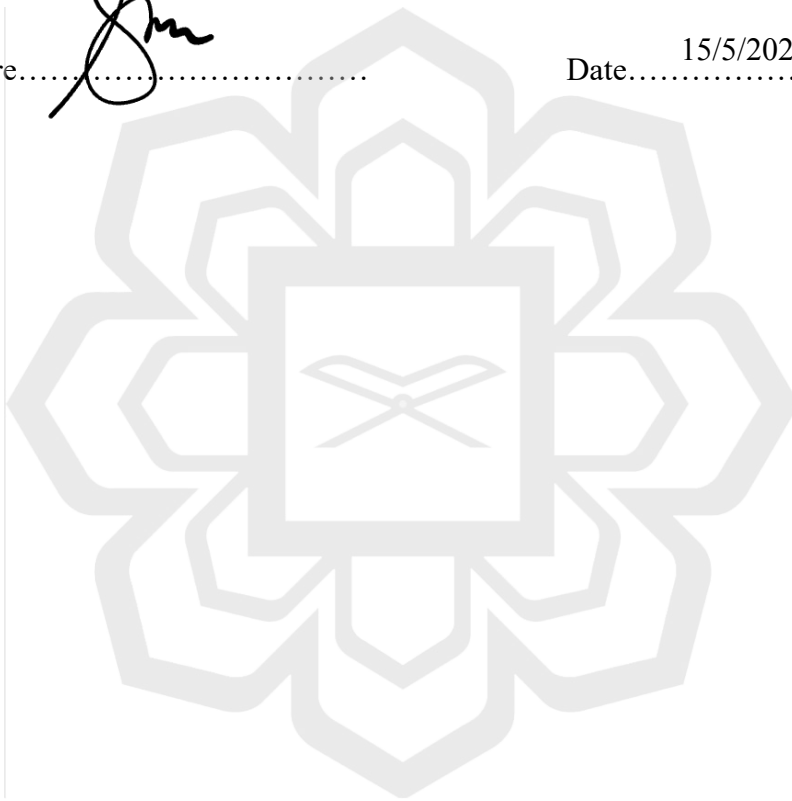
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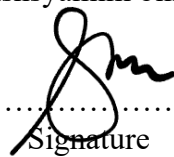
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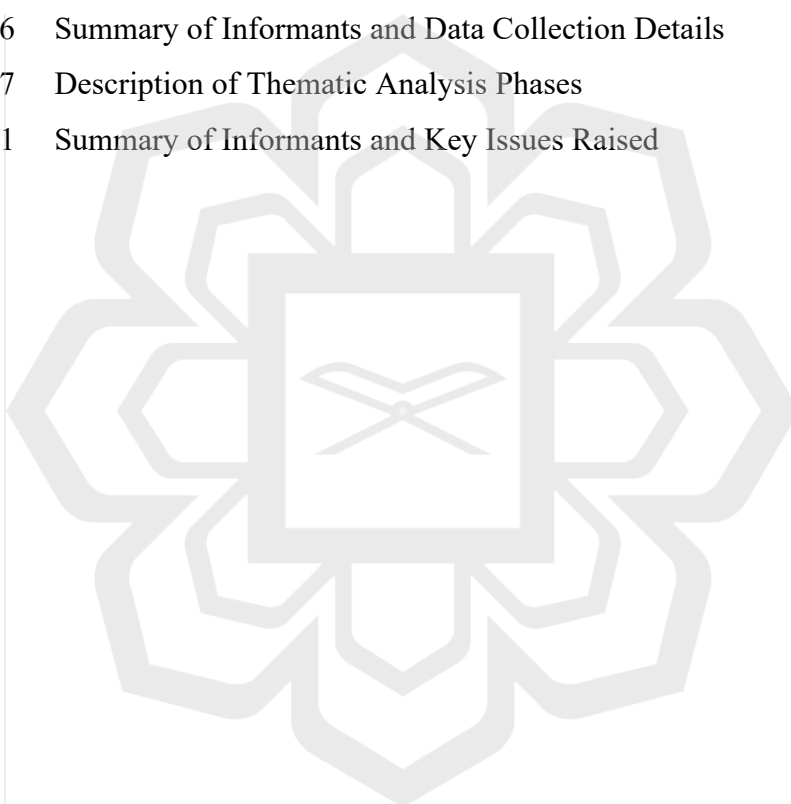
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Malaysia organises numerous athletic events at national and international levels, underscoring its emerging status as a sports tourist hub. Nevertheless, although Islam is the official religion, several sporting events in the country do not entirely integrate extensive Islamic or Muslim-friendly components. This raises questions about Malaysia's capacity to align international athletic practices with Islamic beliefs and principles. Simultaneously, Malaysia is widely acknowledged as one of the premier Muslim-friendly places globally, bolstered by numerous aspects that enhance its attractiveness. Muslim-friendly tourism attracts both Muslim tourists and non-Muslim visitors in search of cultural and ethical experiences (Muslim & Harun, 2022).

Malaysia proficiently accommodates Muslim tourists by providing halal meals, prayer facilities, and Islamic attractions (Tourism Malaysia, 2025). Apart from that, Malaysia has retained its top position as the most popular halal tourist destination in the MasterCard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2022. The country offers a wide variety of Muslim-friendly tour packages for visitors to enjoy its history, mosque architecture, heritage, gastronomy, nature, arts, and culture. It is also renowned for its accessibility to a wide variety of halal food, immaculate beaches, diverse culture, and incredible shopping experiences (Azuar, 2022). Malaysia has a trendy Islamic legacy that gives Muslim visitors a positive Muslim-friendly travel experience (Bangsawan et al., 2019). Consequently, Malaysia has regularly ranked as one of the most favoured travel destinations for Muslims, with its leading position in the Global Muslim Travel Index underscoring its robust dedication to offering Muslim-friendly amenities and services (Adinugraha et al., 2023).

Moreover, Malaysia is known among ASEAN nations for its efficacy in advancing halal tourism. Malaysia has implemented a variety of strategies to promote halal tourism in order to bolster this position. These strategies include the development of brand identity and communication strategies, the establishment of destinations with suitable amenities and attractions, and the provision of training programs for industry players, entrepreneurs, and institutions (Adinugraha et al., 2023). Moreover, the integration of sustainable development principles into tourism strategies can increase the appeal of a destination to Muslim travellers and foster long-term sustainability (Pongsakornrungrasit et al., 2024). These endeavours suggest that Malaysia has the potential to establish itself as a Muslim-friendly destination for international sports tourism that is accessible to both Muslim and non-Muslim visitors.

In contrast, Qatar served as a compelling illustration of how Islamic principles can be seamlessly incorporated into international sporting events. The most prestigious and extensively followed sporting event in the world, Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup 2022, was hosted in Qatar and garnered global attention. The World Cup was hosted by a Muslim-majority country for the first time, and Qatar incorporated significant Arab and Islamic elements throughout the event, making it a unique experience (Ebrahim & Lawati, 2022). Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) also emphasised the enthusiasm of Malaysians in following the tournament (Media Baharu, 2022).

Furthermore, Qatar implemented additional Islamic-based regulations during the event, such as prohibitions on public conduct, attire codes, and alcohol consumption (Putra, 2023). The World Cup also improved Qatar's global image and tourism appeal by providing extensive media coverage (The Brussels Times, 2022). On this basis, this is how Qatar promotes its tourism sector. Qatar used the World Cup as a platform to enlighten and dispel misconceptions about Islamic traditions among non-Muslims (Ruba & Lina, 2022). For example, at the opening ceremony for the World Cup 2022, Quran reciter and FIFA World Cup ambassador, Ghanim Al Muftah delighted the audience by reciting verses from the Holy Quran (Desk, 2022). Simultaneously, the World Cup has opened up an opportunity for Muslims in Qatar to convince thousands

of visiting fans to convert to Islam or change their views about the religion (France-Presse, 2022).

Given this context, Malaysia has the capacity and potential to emulate Qatar, particularly in light of its extensive experience in hosting a variety of international sporting events, including the Royal Langkawi International Regatta, Ironman Triathlon, Formula 1 Grand Prix Malaysia, FEI Showjumping World Cup, Petronas Primax 3 Merdeka Millennium Endurance Race, Super GT, Malaysian Motorcycle Grand Prix, A1GP Malaysia, Monsoon Cup, and Petronas Malaysia Open (Mapjabil et al., 2015). Ibrahim et al. (2016) have identified the necessity of providing Muslim-friendly sports and recreation facilities in order for Malaysia to establish itself as a global halal center, particularly in light of the growing number of international sporting events that draw tourists to the country. Additionally, Malaysia is acknowledged as possessing one of the most sophisticated Muslim-friendly tourism ecosystems, particularly in the areas of transportation, accommodation, food and beverage, and tourism infrastructure, in conjunction with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Aziz, 2018). A study by Kamarudin and Nizam (2013) stated that Malaysia's Islamic tourism sector has the potential to expand rapidly, as it is supported by political and economic stability.

Nevertheless, it has been discovered through research conducted in various countries that hosting major big sporting events like the Olympics, FIFA World Cup, and Formula One (F1) race has a considerable economic impact on the host country (Saari, 2017). Therefore, despite Malaysia's numerous advantages as a Muslim-friendly destination, there is still a deficiency in the entire integration of Islamic principles into international sporting events. This study was undertaken to examine Malaysia's capacity to integrate Muslim-friendly elements into sports tourism, drawing inspiration from Qatar's experience, in order to ensure that the country's competitiveness in the global sports tourism industry is enhanced while also aligning with Islamic values.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to The Sun (2022), the presence of Muslim-friendly amenities was one of the factors luring Muslim visitors to Malaysia, where Muslims make up the majority of the population. Malaysia's Islamic tourism sector is expanding at a constant and rapid pace, solidifying its status as a premier destination for Muslim travelers. The expansion of the global Muslim travel market, the development of distinctive Islamic tourism offerings, well-established supporting infrastructure, the availability of Muslim-friendly hospitality services, and a growing level of awareness and demand for Islamic tourism experiences are all contributing to this strong potential (Abd Wahab et al., 2025). Besides, in the sports tourism view, Malaysia is also well-known for hosting a number of world-class sporting events nowadays starting with the success of staging the Le Tour de Langkawi in 1996 (Ibrahim et al., 2016). This provides a diverse perspective on the concept of Muslim-Friendly Sports Tourism on a global scale. However, in order to execute such a concept, there are also questions that arise and necessitate consideration.

1.2.1 Problem Statement 1

Firstly, in relation to the identification of key elements of Muslim-friendly sports tourism, the first main problem is the lack of integrated approach by the authority, which is the government in developing Muslim-friendly sport and recreation facilities despite Malaysia has made Islam as an official religion. As stated by Ibrahim et al. (2016), if Malaysia tends to declare such sport events to be qualified as Muslim-friendly, certain elements such as advertising, food, beverages, premises, operation, operator, services, praying facilities, timing of events so that do not conflict with prayer hours, dress that complies with Shariah, and facilities that are separate for men, women, and families must be included. For example, as specified by Hanrahan (2016), an Australian driver won the Malaysian Formula 1 Grand Prix and celebrated in classic style by sipping champagne from his shoe in a sports venue in Sepang, Malaysia. In this case, Since it is not viewed as an offence, the sports venue has received no complaints and no action

was taken by the respective authority. Although these practices are widely acknowledged as integral to international sporting traditions, they may not be entirely consistent with the principles of Muslim-friendly tourism. This underscores the more extensive challenge of reconciling global sports culture with local religious expectations. Over the year, more recent developments further indicate a shift in policy direction. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim stated that the Malaysian government has emphasized a firm stance against the supplying of alcohol at official functions without exception (Channel NewsAsia, 2025). As opposed to Qatar that the sale of alcohol within stadium perimeters were prohibited under its interpretation of Islamic law during the World Cup (Smith, 2022). This is because the Qatari government is highly concerned about this matter and taking any such action will result in consequences.

In addition, concerns about modesty and awrah also draw attention to the difficulties in establishing Muslim-friendly sports tourism. Particularly in sports like gymnastics and diving, where conventional uniforms do not comply with Shariah regulations, female athletes in Malaysia have regularly faced criticism for their apparel (Free Malaysia Today, 2024). But, for example in Terengganu, according to Hishamuddin Abdul Karim, the state administration released guidelines in March 2020 that outline moral criteria for tourism and sports, including what sportsmen must wear. While non-Muslim athletes are urged to refrain from wearing skimpy clothing, Muslim athletes must follow Islamic dress regulations by covering their awrah and dressing modestly (Scoop, 2023). He added that the strategy has changed from being completely “Shariah-compliant” to being more adaptable and flexible “Shariah-friendly” concept. This indicates that the requirements for the modest clothing code policy vary throughout different states in Malaysia. Consequently, there is an urgent requirement for the development of comprehensive and standardized policies regarding modest attire codes that are in accordance with international sporting standards and Islamic principles. The absence of such guidelines contributes to ongoing inconsistencies and public debate, ultimately undermining efforts to position sports tourism as Muslim-friendly. Not only would the implementation of adaptable and sport-specific modest attire standards enhance inclusivity, but it would also strengthen policy coherence in the promotion of an authentically Muslim-friendly sports tourism environment.

For instance, international athletic competitions held in Malaysia, like the Ironman Triathlon, highlight the difficulties of adhering to Muslim-friendly ideals. Athletes must wear form-fitting clothing, such as swimsuits and tri-suits, for performance in order to comply with international competition rules (World Triathlon, 2023). Additionally, these events are held in mixed-gender settings, which reflects global standards for gender integration and inclusivity (International Olympic Committee, 2023). Nevertheless, these practices may not be entirely consistent with Islamic regulations regarding gender segregation and modesty (awrah). The absence of Muslim-friendly attributes, such as considerations of modesty and religious requirements, has been suggested in previous studies to potentially diminish the appeal of a destination to Muslim tourists and influence their travel options. (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Besides, Robbi and Yunus (2024) in prior study stated that it can be challenging for women in particular to observe awrah. This is because choosing a vocation that needs a dress code that does not adhere to Shariah presents a number of difficulties for some of them. Some Muslim women who work in the sports business also strongly support the awrah problem. The Muslim community responds to challenges like upholding modesty, juggling religious commitments, and overcoming cultural hurdles with fortitude and creativity.

Aside from that, the concept of Muslim-friendly venues also encompasses the maintenance and level of cleanliness of restrooms, which is a reflection of the overall quality of facilities that are given at sporting events. According to Zulkifli (2022), Stadium Shah Alam, which was the location of the Commonwealth Games in 1998 and hosted a number of other international events, was badly maintained and constantly faced troubles, notably with its public facilities. Additionally, according to prior study by Daruis et al. (2024), the absence of designated ablution facilities in public restrooms in Malaysia frequently forces Muslims to use conventional sinks that are not properly designed, resulting in water splashing, inconvenience for other users, and the establishment of unhygienic conditions, such as slippery and unclean floors. Considering that badly managed facilities have the potential to impact the level of comfort and overall experience that users have, this circumstance underscores the need of adequate maintenance and hygiene. According to Abdul Rahim (2005), maintaining cleanliness is one of the most essential and fundamental habits that may be followed by

Muslims. This is because it is intimately connected to the daily religious requirements that Muslims are expected to fulfil.

1.2.2 Problem Statement 2

Furthermore, when it comes to strategies for presenting Malaysia as a Muslim-friendly sports tourism destination, Malaysia held a lot of international sport events but missed the opportunity to promote Muslim-friendly services. This can be observed in the accommodation sector, where several challenges limit the implementation of such strategies. For instance, Abd Razak et al. (2019) claimed that many accommodation operators assert that adhering to the Islamic-friendly criteria will put them at danger of alienating non-Muslim visitors, which will cause them to lose business and reservations because there is no alcohol to be served on the premises based on the guidelines of Shariah-compliant accommodation. In addition, service providers generally refrain from expensive alterations, such as changing the position of beds and toilets in a hotel room away from the direction of Mecca because to the associated time and costs (Karim et al., 2017). As a consequence of these limitations, the availability of suitable Muslim-friendly accommodation remains an issue.

Moreover, the difficulty in locating halal hotels is one of the reasons Muslims detest visiting overseas, according to El-Gohary (2016). However, despite these challenges, there is also growing demand and acceptance of such concepts. The idea of an Islamic hotel that adheres to Halal standards has gained popularity among both Muslim and non-Muslim travellers worldwide (Abdrakhmanova & Moghavvemi, 2022). This indicates that the concept itself is viable, provided that it is supported by proper implementation. According to Islamic Tourism Centre (2023), Muslim-friendly includes hotels, resorts, restaurants, and airlines that provide Muslim-friendly services that do not provide alcohol, also provide cuisine that has a halal certification, have separate wellness centers for women, offer spaces for praying, and otherwise maintain an environment that is welcoming to Muslims. In a broader context, this issue also

reflects a gap between Malaysia's tourism growth and its strategic positioning. Mapjabil et al. (2015) in prior study looked at the growth of sport tourism in Malaysia and how it has grown to be a well-liked segment of the travel and tourist business.

1.2.3 Problem Statement 3

Furthermore, as claimed by Ariff Irshad et al. (2022), lack of comprehension and expertise among service providers is one of the problems that could prevent the implementation of Muslim-friendly tourism. In this setting, the necessity for Muslim-friendly services is still unknown to service providers including hoteliers and restaurant proprietors. Malaysia may struggle to maximise the potential benefits of drawing Muslim sports tourists and hosting international sporting events, including economic growth, social development, and international recognition, if tourism stakeholders lack sufficient knowledge and preparedness. Abdrakhmanova and Moghavvemi (2022) stated that some business people purposely overlook Muslim-friendly markets, either out of concern for their non-Muslim clients or a lack of knowledge on how to enter this profitable new market. This circumstance suggests that the potential benefits of Muslim-friendly sports tourism are not entirely acknowledged or comprehended by industry stakeholders. Yet in actuality, this matter can be resolved because Malaysia currently has the means to host frequent international sporting events.

Other than that, Abd Wahab et al. (2025) explained that one major obstacle that can prevent Muslim travellers from exploring or visiting particular places is the lack of awareness and comprehension among Muslim-friendly tourism service providers. Despite Malaysia's widespread recognition as a top Islamic travel destination, there are still recurring problems with some tourist industry operators' lack of knowledge and comprehension of Muslim-friendly services and the facilities that ought to be made available. Furthermore, while an inclusive strategy has the ability to draw tourists from a variety of backgrounds, some commercial entities still view Islamic tourism as an exclusive notion meant only for Muslim travellers. Besides, one of the main obstacles

to the expansion of Islamic tourism in Malaysia, according to Suhailah et al. (2024), is the absence of sufficient knowledge and comprehension of Shariah-compliant concepts among tourism industry operators. For this reason, the poor awareness and comprehension of Muslim-friendly standards among Malaysian service providers in several sectors can hinder the efficacy of initiatives aimed at developing and sustaining Muslim-friendly international sports tourism. In the context of sports tourism, Ibrahim (2017) claimed that promotion by travel companies, local governments, and the media is critical for attracting domestic and international tourists. Based on this, all tourism industry participants, including the sports sector, must play an active role in promoting the Muslim-friendly idea.

Moreover, implementing measures that target Muslim needs can boost visitor arrivals and economic prosperity. For instance, in Qatar, there is a significant halal ecosystem including halal food availability, prayer facilities in malls, more than a thousand mosques, and Muslim-friendly hotels (Tintin, 2017). During World Cup 2022, visitors can take bilingual tours of local mosques, and a virtual reality trip of Mecca was offered, free copies of the Quran, and booklets about Islam are accessible in hotel lobbies (Henao, 2022). This example illustrates how Muslim-friendly practices can improve the image of a destination and contribute value to the experience of tourists. Although Malaysia has not yet attained this level, it has begun to encourage foreign visitors to visit mosques as stated by Zainudin (2019), one method of spreading knowledge and accurate information about Islam to both local and foreign visitors is through efforts to develop the tourism mosque programme. Hence, in this manner, Muslim and non-Muslim tourists can discover about Islamic culture, enjoy good services and facilities offered and learn knowledge about Islam. Therefore, understanding and emphasising these benefits is essential in encouraging stakeholders to adopt and invest in Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research will try to answer the following questions:

1. What are the key elements of a Muslim-friendly international sports tourism?
2. What strategies can be adopted to effectively market and position Malaysia as a preferred destination for Muslim-friendly sports tourism on the global stage?
3. What are the potential benefits of developing Malaysia as a Muslim-friendly sports tourism destination, particularly in the context of hosting international events?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In general, this study explored the potential for Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia. With that, the specific objectives of this study are presented in the following:

1. To identify key elements of a Muslim-friendly international sports tourism.
2. To observe strategies that can be adopted to effectively market and position Malaysia as a preferred destination for Muslim-friendly sports tourism on the global stage.
3. To find out the potential benefits of developing Malaysia as a Muslim-friendly sports tourism destination, particularly in the context of hosting international events.

1.5 SIGNIFICANT OF STUDY

All players in the tourism industry believe that the concept of Muslim-friendly hospitality services is more practical and acceptable whether they are offering services to Muslims or non-Muslims (Zawawi & Ramli, 2017). This study is significant and important to a number of parties, including:

1.5.1 Service Providers

Firstly, this study is conducted in order to help service providers such as hoteliers and food providers tap into a niche market with specific preferences and requirements. Firstly, this study can assist hoteliers in gaining a thorough grasp of the market dynamics, inclinations, and expectations of Muslim travellers. It can also help them learn and follow the guidelines for Muslim-friendly services that cater to the needs and requirements of both Muslim and non-Muslim visitors. Secondly, the results of this study can be helpful to food providers, who are essential in providing halal food and making sure that food preparation follows halal guidelines and requirements. Malaysia's food industry is also capable of producing delicious halal dishes that are distinctive and embody the country's cultural variety. In this context, both service providers like hoteliers and food providers can modify their offers to meet the special requirements of Muslim tourists.

1.5.2 Athletes

This study is important for athletes in various ways, including how it might help them deal with potential Muslim fans and tourists more empathetic and respectfully. By knowing the standards and guidelines about the Muslim-friendly services, athletes travelling to Malaysia for sporting events can improve their attitude and response

towards the locals. They could also likely promote Muslim-friendly services globally. Additionally, this research can assist athletes in becoming more culturally aware, interacting with a wider fan base, and ensuring a positive experience for themselves and their supporters at international sports events in Muslim-majority countries like Malaysia.

1.5.3 Government

This study holds several significant implications for the government of Malaysia. By gaining an understanding of the potential for Muslim-friendly sports tourism, the government will be better in planning the strategies to market Malaysia as a destination for both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists during major sporting events. Other than that, this research can help the government decide what infrastructural improvements are required, including halal food establishments, prayer rooms, and cultural accommodations to improve the overall visitor experience. Generally, this research could help the Malaysian government make better use of major sporting events to promote Muslim-friendly services and enhance the country's tourism industry, economic growth, and international relations.

1.5.4 Tourism Sector

This study may also be useful to Malaysia's tourism sector because it sheds light on a particular target market for sports tourism that caters to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This can assist the tourism industry in diversifying its services and luring a new group of travelers with specific preferences. The tourism sector can obtain a competitive advantage by adjusting services and accommodations to both Muslim and non-Muslim visitors who are attending international sporting events. The popularity of Malaysia as a location that welcomes and accommodates Muslim tourists can increase the country's

appeal as a centre for sports tourism, drawing more international events and tourists from different backgrounds.

1.5.5 Audiences

Potential tourists and sports enthusiasts are among many audiences for whom the study is relevant. It facilitates Muslim tourists themselves to plan their visit as they are informed of the number of Muslim-friendly service and accommodation that is available in Malaysia during major sports events. In addition, this research could promote cross-cultural understanding by educating audiences on the cultural characteristics and practices of countries with a predominantly Muslim population. In summary, this study serves as an insightful guide for different generations on their path to becoming internationally responsible tourists in relation to sports tourism and fostering cultural sensitivity in the socio-cultural context of Malaysia.

1.5.6 Academic Community

Other than that, the academic community will benefit from this study, which also adds to the body of knowledge by carefully examining the possibilities for the development of Malaysia's tourism industry. Additionally, this study can provide valuable insights for scholars working on projects in the fields of cultural studies and sports tourism. Verily, this study's findings could broaden current knowledge by discovering the potential for Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia that can be utilised as a reference by future researchers.

1.5.7 Policy Makers

Furthermore, this study was conducted in order to contribute ideas to the policy makers which are authorities related to Halal, sports and tourism. By identifying the issues, authorities such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Malaysia (KBS), Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC) and Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) can collaborate to develop guidelines that will have a positive impact on the tourism sector in Malaysia. This information can assist the government in determining which Muslim-friendly products to emphasize and efforts can be demonstrated to help Malaysia stay ahead of rivals in luring the Muslim market. In addition, Malaysia can provide a wide variety of sporting events and activities for potential both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists by discovering and advertising new and extra attractions.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Muslim-friendly tourism: Halal cuisine, prayer facilities, and Shariah-compliant environments are all examples of Muslim-friendly tourism, which encompasses tourism products, services, and experiences that are designed to meet the religious requirements of Muslim travellers (CrescentRating & Mastercard, 2022).

Muslim-friendly event: A Muslim-friendly event is an event that is organised in accordance with Islamic principles, ensuring that all attendees are provided with halal-certified cuisine, prayer facilities, modesty considerations, and the avoidance of non-permissible elements (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2019)

Sports tourism: Sports tourism encompasses travel that entails the observation or participation in sporting activities, as well as visits to sports-related attractions (UNWTO, 2016).

Tourism sport: Tourism sport is the term used to describe the confluence of sport and tourism, in which sport serves as the primary motivator for travel and contributes to the development of a destination (Higham, 2005).

1.7 SUMMARY

The study on the potential development of Muslim-friendly international sports tourism events in Malaysia is introduced in this chapter. The chapter examines Malaysia's advantages as a premier Muslim-friendly tourism destination with a wealth of experience in hosting international sporting events. It also emphasises the challenges that Malaysia faces, including the inconsistent implementation of Islamic principles, the absence of standardised Muslim-friendly policies, the limited promotion of Muslim-friendly services, and the insufficient awareness of stakeholders. The study endeavours to examine the potential benefits of Muslim-friendly sports tourism, identify the key elements, and investigate strategies to position Malaysia as a preferred destination, all of which are inspired by Qatar's successful integration of Islamic values during the FIFA World Cup 2022. The chapter also elucidates the study's importance to a variety of stakeholders, such as the government, tourism sector, service providers, athletes, policymakers, and academic community.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to explore and study the literature related to the promising progress of Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia. It lays the groundwork for the research by pointing out the trends, theories, and debates within the fields of Muslim-friendly tourism and sports tourism that need further consideration and exploration. This chapter provides a theoretical framework and contextual understanding of the topic through a detailed literature review and critical analysis. The study explores people's views on a potential Muslim-friendly international sport tourism available in Malaysia. This study aims to investigate these perspectives, taking into account the influence of the FIFA World Cup 2022, and how Qatar managed to successfully blend Muslim-friendly tourism into a large-scale sports event. As a result, to locate how successfully Malaysia will supply offerings, it will be carried out among the target audience, athletes and government body on Muslim pleasant services in sporting events like 2022 FIFA World Cup. Considering that Malaysia is an Islamic country with Muslim-friendly tourism promotion and numerous international sport event hosts, its potential in the this niche market also needs to be explored.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF SPORTS AND TOURISM

Sutula (2018) in the study defines “Sport” as a unique socio- cultural phenomenon. Sport is a historically established human activity that involves physical activity and is intended to prepare participants for and to participate in a particular system of competitions as well as to produce personal and societally relevant outcomes. Sports

have been an integral part of human society and culture for centuries, serving various purposes such as entertainment, recreation, social bonding, and promoting physical fitness. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (2023), sports are defined as “recreational activity that requires physical exertion or expertise and is typically carried out in a designated area with set guidelines”. Sports currently span a wide range of disciplines due to their evolution over time. These include team sports like soccer, basketball, and cricket, individual sports like tennis, golf, and athletics, as well as niche sports and extreme sports like skateboarding, surfing, and rock climbing. Sports have a considerable economic influence in addition to their recreational and entertainment features, contributing to job creation, tourism, and cash generation through ticket sales, sponsorships, and broadcasting rights (John, 2023).

On the other hand, “Tourism” refers to both people's transient, short-term movements to locations other than their usual residences and places of employment, as well as their activities while at these destinations (Dilek & Dilek, 2018). When people deliberately leave their home environments to visit another one, they are considered tourists (Camilleri, 2017). Tourism benefits not only the traveller but also the country when there are more prospects for it. In fact, tourism is one industry that has the potential to increase employment and economic growth. According to the UNWTO (2023), there are three primary types of tourism depending on the destination and the country of origin: domestic tourism, inbound tourism, and outbound tourism. Domestic tourism refers to the activities that a person engages in while on a vacation within their own country of residence. Meanwhile, inbound tourism refers to the one who travels to a place from another country to engage in tourism. Outbound tourism refers to travel made outside of one's home country.

2.3 INTRODUCTION TO SPORTS TOURISM

Sports tourism is defined as travel that involves either seeing or participating in a sporting event while remaining away from the visitors' typical environment. It is a key

component of the tourist business, integrating elements of travel, sports, and recreation. According to Mazza (2022), sport tourism is seen as a collection of services due to its nature, diversity, and composition. The demand for these services is divided to represent the variety of vacationers. In addition, sports tourism boosts the local economy by generating revenue for accommodations, dining, transportation, and entertainment. As well as major events can help the host city or country build its infrastructure and gain global exposure. On the other hand, a fun method for people to indulge in their love of sports and discover new locations, cultures, and experiences is through sports tourism. Growing interest in sports and travel around the world is reflected in its growth.

2.3.1 Definition and Scope of Sports Tourism

Sports tourism can be specified as traveling away from one's home residence for the goal of engaging in a sport activity for recreation or competition, as well as travelling to see sporting events or go to sporting sites at a specified period (Dolintina et al., 2015). According to Ministry of Human Resources (2011), sports participation travel (travel for the purpose of participating in sports, recreation, leisure, or fitness activity) and sports spectatorial travel (travel for the purpose of watching sporting, recreational, leisure, or fitness activities or events) are the two main categories of products from a sport marketing and sport management perspective.

UNWTO stated that sports tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in tourism and more tourists are interested in sport activities during their trips whether sports are the main objective of travel or not. Gozalova et al. (2014) claimed that sports tourism attractions are locations that provide the traveller activities and sights associated with sports. For example, general characteristics of sports tourism include visits to unique sports facilities (stadiums, arenas and domes), sports museums and hall of fame dedicated to sports heritage and to honoring sports heroes, sport theme parks (water parks, summer ski jumps, bungee jumping), hiking trails and sports retail stores.

Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) (2023) specified that sports tourism can be categorised into two. Firstly, hard sports tourism which draws a sizable international audience, and people frequently travel in groups to the host nation for these events. For example, competitive international sports events such as Formula 1 Grand Prix and SEA Games. Secondly, soft sports tourism which describes retreats or leisurely sporting activities like scuba diving, water rafting, and golf. In a nutshell, sports tourism is a combination of travel with sporting events.

2.4 THE CONCEPT OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY

The term "Muslim friendly" generally refers to a service, a facility, products or a place, and denotes that some of the religious requirements and preferences of Muslim have been met, according to Crescent Rating (2016). For instance, this can include aspects that are in line with Islamic beliefs and practises, such as halal food, prayer areas, modest dress codes, and other related aspects. As observed in the realm of travel, hospitality, and food services, it is frequently used to denote that a business or organisation is sensitive to the needs and preferences of Muslim clients or guests. In addition, Muslims are constantly on the go, needing to travel for both business and pleasure. To meet the needs of this mostly unexplored but valuable niche market, there is an expanding need for Shariah-compliant goods and services. In addition, travellers around the world, especially Muslim consumers, are looking for more meaningful connections with local communities, genuine cultural experiences, wellness and sustainability in travel, and itineraries that respect not only leisure objectives but also personal and spiritual values, according to recent research and industry observations (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2026).

2.5 MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOURISM

2.5.1 Overview of Muslim-Friendly Tourism Concepts

A form of tourism that upholds Islamic principles is referred to as "Muslim-friendly tourism". It is advised in Muslim-friendly hospitality that all product development and marketing initiatives are created with and targeted at Muslims (Jaswir, 2021). According to Cetin and Dincer (2016), Muslim-friendly tourism consists of Islamic tourism, Shariah compliant tourism and Halal tourism. Islamic tourism may refer to travelling for religious reasons. For instance, visiting Mecca for pilgrimage. Ab Rahman and Laderlah (2018) defined that Islamic tourism may be regarded as ibadah, or worship in Islam if it is carried out in conformity with Islamic beliefs. Thus, the benefits of tourism to Muslims are also affirmed by the Qur'an and Hadith. Travel and tourism are prescribed in Islam based on the directives of Allah S.W.T:

“He is the One who made the earth easy for you, so walk in all directions and eat some of His sustenance. And only to Him are you (returned after)”
(Al-Mulk: 15)

Hajj, umrah, hijrah and jihad were all forms of travel for the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. Rasulullah S.A.W stated, according to Abu Huraira:

“Go on a journey you will be healthy and fight you will be rich!” (Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 17470)

Then, Shariah-compliant tourism would be regarded as the most stringent. Abdullah et al. (2022) stated that Shariah-compliant tourism can be summed up as travel and hospitality that adheres to Islamic principles in both production and consumption. For instance, a hotel that adheres to Shariah principles will not provide alcoholic beverages and will instead have a separate swimming pool and spa for men and women. Lastly, halal tourism might be defined as travel that adheres to fewer restrictions and different global product adaptations that would meet the needs of the majority of Muslims.

Firdaus et al. (2021) explained that halal tourism is not an approach to tourism that adheres to Islamic Sharia as it is practised in Aceh, but rather one that focuses on providing hospitality for Muslims. The most basic form is the provision of easily accessible mosques for Muslims, halal cuisine, and the segregation of forbidden goods like alcohol. Halal tourism is not a new phenomenon in the tourism industry market. Chandra (2014) claimed that it is necessary to provide specialised halal tourism goods and services to meet the demands of this burgeoning industry because the global Muslim population is expanding quickly. Halal products and services are popular not only among Muslims but also among individuals of other religions because of the quality and the halal business is built on mutual respect and sincere cooperation. According to the Islamic perspective, any tourism practise or activity that is acceptable in accordance with Islamic teachings is referred as Halal (Battour & Ismail, 2015).

Therefore, the term “Muslim friendly tourism” refers to Islamic tourism, halal tourism, Muslim tourism, shariah tourism, and Islamic hospitality (Hasanah & Harun, 2020). Aziz (2018) stated in the study that Muslim-friendly tourism concentrates on offering services in the tourism and hospitality sector which is one of the service sectors that heavily emphasises accommodations, food and drink, as well as travel-related activities.

2.5.2 Key Features of Muslim-Friendly Tourism Services and Facilities

The first guideline in Malaysia created specifically for the Islamic tourism industry is called MS 2610:2015 Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services (MFHS). MFHS are goods or services in the travel and tourism sector that are catered to or offer accommodations suitable for Muslim travellers and are governed by Shari'ah regulations. In the context of contemporary business, MFHS also refers to the act of extending a warm welcome to a visitor or customer and considering their basic needs for food, drink, and accommodation as well as any additional needs to meet their religious obligations, such as a place for them to pray and food free of any ingredients that are forbidden by Islam.

Along with these, it also offers services for hotels, airlines, amusements, cuisine, wellness, and health (Zawawi & Ramli, 2017).

2.6 ISLAM AND SPORTS

As time goes on, a growing number of people are exposed to athletic activities these days. Every time a new sport is introduced, it piques people's interest in engaging in recreational and competitive sports. Similar to this, Islam strongly promotes sports and leisure as a way for people to be healthy on a regular basis. Furthermore, the aim of Islamic teachings and practices is to improve a person's balanced well-being. Islam supports sports as a way to promote physical fitness and mental stimulation, so long as it does not include sin or interfere with other religious obligations (Wabuyabo et al., 2015; Abdulati, 1999). Thus, Islam's stance on sports reflects a holistic approach to health and well-being, striking a balance between religious beliefs and the advantages of physical activity. Based on Sahih Muslim, The Prophet (PBUH):

“A strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer” (Sahih Muslim 2664, Sunan Ibn Majah 79)

This hadith demonstrates how Islam actively promotes physical activity to maintain health and asserts that a healthy individual is always better than a weak one. Overall, the relationship between Islam and sports emphasises a holistic way of living that enhances both the lives of the individual and society as a whole by encouraging physical health, moral behaviour, and a sense of community.

2.6.1 Religious Guidelines and Physical Activity

Islam, of course, has its own causes and qualities and has its own viewpoint on the matter of physical activity. A major part of Islamic beliefs is preservation of one's

bodily wellbeing. Islam encourages its followers to live a healthy lifestyle and constantly care for their bodies. As an arab proverb says “a healthy mind is in a healthy body”. This scripture teaches that if you have a sound body, you have a sound mind. A healthy body and mind allow people to perform many acts, such as worshiping God, without a doubt. Umar et al. (2023) highlight that, in Islam, the human body is considered a trust to be protected and preserved. Thus, the purpose of physical education is not only to keep fit but also as a way to provide an appreciation of the body as a form of gratitude for Allah’s blessings.

Similarly, Marwat et al. As per (2014), instances of involvement in sports are allowed in Islam if procedures meet Islamic regulations and abide by prescribed religious guidelines. This includes wearing modest clothing, covering the required body parts, not participating with members of the opposite gender, and not allowing sports activities to disrupt the practice of the five daily prayers. Moreover, there are sports will benefit the body, some of which the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to do, and encouraged, including walking, running, wrestling, swimming, archery, throwing a spear, horse racing, and camel racing. In the historical dialogue of "Jihad," a struggle, toward Islam, these elements of the body hold a central role with their implications on maintaining physical health to make sure that we are capable of being physically able in the act of Jihad. The Prophet (PBUH) himself encouraged Muslims to practise archery as a skill, as in the hadith that has been narrated by Salama bin Al-Akwa.

“The Prophet said, "O Bani Isma'il! Practice archery as your father Isma'il was a great archer. Keep on throwing arrows” (Sahih al-Bukhari 2899)

The hadith below demonstrates that learning to swim and ride a horse does not fall under the category of things that are pointless or neglected. As cited in Imam al-Tabarani’s Mu’jam al-Kabir, 1785:

“The Messenger of Allah SWT said, ‘Everything (that) is not from the remembrance of Allah (Mighty and Majestic is He) is (either) idle entertainment or oversight, except for four: walking between the two targets (archery), training one’s horse, entertaining one’s family and learning to swim.” (Mu’jam al-Kabir, 1785)

2.6.2 Ethical and Moral Conduct in Sports

Islamic principles encourage honesty, justice and dignity inside and outside of the sport. Participants in sports are encouraged to observe these principles, and to set the example of honesty, humility and sportsmanship, and a friendly, fair and decent attitude in case of any violation, which in turn will contribute to building an atmosphere of mutual respect in sports. Islam highly emphasizes justice in every aspect of life including sports to avoid injustice towards either party. An understanding of physical education regulations and ethical principles is necessary in order to support a safe, healthful, and morally responsible learning environment for learners.

The ethical aspects of sport and physical education involve moral values and behavior that contribute to students learning to respect game rules, opponents and peers. Some of the key aspects of this are fairness, sportsmanship, and a positive mindset during games and competition. Ethical principles promote honesty, accountability, and teamwork, encouraging students to respect differences, refrain from cheating, and maintain a higher moral standard through all aspects of physical activity. Supervising teachers and coaches need to enforce the ethical standards and can play a pivotal role for the success of the policy. They are tasked with ensuring that students follow rules and principles, as well as extending appropriate penalties for violations. Such an organized monitoring can create a more fair, respectful, and disciplined environment in the classroom and on the field (Umar et al., 2023).

There are differences between moral (Akhlaq) and ethics in sports. Morality is behavior based on the Al-Quran and Sunnah, while ethics is based on sources other than the Al-Quran and Sunnah. Islamic ethics across time and place, always consistent. Examples of morals that need to be shown that are close to sports are clothing and the desire to cover the private parts. Islamic moral principles are fixed and do not change according to human will. In Islam, the concept of *Habluminannas* (the relationship between a human with other humans) and *Hablumminnallah* (the relationship between a human with the god) does not circulate according to place and time. Morality has a strong impact in Islam because it is worship and belief because there is a concept of

divinity. Ethics is centered on the local community. Ethics is independent from the concept of divinity and only takes into account *Habluminannas* (the relationship between a human with other humans) (Dev et al., n.d. ; Salleh, 2001). But in this particular situation, Islam places a strong emphasis on morality and ethical behavior, fair competition, and mutual respect among people involved in sports.

Islam also emphasises the ban on destructive behaviours. Islam prohibits participation in any sports activity that can be interpreted as harmful, sinful, or having an adverse effect on one's health, such as doping or violent behaviour. Doping is the practice of athletes using physical steroids in sports, which is a clear moral transgression of the idea of fair competition in sports. One could argue that it is a dishonest tactic that erodes the idea of fair play (Al-Dafrawi, 2020; Ahmad, 2015). As specified by Kizar (2018), Islam views athletics as a way to exhibit both physical and rhythmic health, and it strives to be more beneficial than just watching sports. Furthermore, Islam forbids not only violent sports like camel, bull, and cock wrestling, but also dangerous hobbies like motorbike races and car crashes. Because harming someone and their surroundings, as well as dealing with injury in a harmful way, are prohibited by our Prophet (PBUH). In addition, gambling, cheating, and drug usage are also harmful to one's health. Both health education and Islam forbid any actions that endanger or damage people's health (Khan et al., 2020). Sports are permissible; nevertheless, people must avoid the haram and the flaws listed earlier. Islam recommends its followers to protect the body, to enjoy full health and also prohibits them from endangering their own soul (an-Nafs) which is within their body.

2.6.3 Historical and Cultural Perspectives

The historical roots of the relationship between Islam and sports date back to the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) lifetime. As stated by Manaz (2005), some effects of different kinds of sport activities were seen in Islam religion during the setting up period. Wrestling, jogging, archery, camel or horse races had already been done by the

Prophet (PBUH) and advised to all Muslims all around the world. The sports that the holy Prophet (PBUH) himself or his companions participated in included strolling, running, wrestling, swimming, archery, spear-throwing, horse racing, and camel racing, as is clear from the sport records that are currently available. From the standpoints of fitness and health, these athletic competitions held significance in relation to participating in "Jihad," which is the holy conflict waged for the sake of Islam. According to Marwat et al. (2014), the purpose of these sporting events was to help the general public develop their critical battle-oriented skills. During the Prophet (PBUH) period, not only doing sport was important but also watching and praising the winners were also important. As written in the Quran:

“We have created the man in the most beautiful shape!”
(Surah at-Tin: 4)

The body which has been created in the most beautiful way should be well protected. The best way to protect it is to do sports. Different branches of sport which have been in improvement throughout history, has proved a different talent for each sport. For instance, memory sports improves the mind, jogging legs are important, whereas arms are important in tennis, in archery and marksmanship eyes are important. In winter sports the balance of the body is more important. However, in body sports, all parts of a person's body should be in good condition (Manaz, 2005). Muslim societies have made significant contributions to the development of various sports throughout history. These contributions can be observed across a wide range of activities, from ancient practices to modern organized sports. For instance, archery was highly esteemed in Islamic culture, not only as a means of defence but also as a recreational activity. Other than that, horse riding and equestrian sports. The significance of horses in Islamic society can be seen in the development of various equestrian sports, including horse racing and polo. According to Marwat et al. (2014), limited sporting events were popular among the general public during the time of the arrival of Islam. Since then, a significant number of brand-new sporting events have emerged that have gained popularity across the globe. The scale of Islamic teachings can be used to assess and decide whether these recently created sporting activities are lawful from an Islamic standpoint. That is to say, participation in any sporting event that is in line with the spirit of Islam and in which the participant does not contravene Islamic rules regarding

sports participation, such as gambling, mixing genders, breaking the Islamic dress code or ignoring the "Fard" which are obligatory religious practices like five daily prayers, fasting during the Islamic month of Ramadan, and more.

Furthermore, a study by Insaf and Ashath (2024) said that sports' significance in Islamic holidays goes beyond customs from the past and provides insightful information for modern multicultural cultures. Sports' position in religious festivities creates a bridge between many cultural practices and ideals as Muslim communities expand and assimilate into various cultural contexts. Sports and physical activities are frequently incorporated into Islamic holidays, such Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, as a way to promote harmony, happiness, and physical well-being. There are many instances of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) participation in and support of sports in his traditions, which are documented in different hadith collections (Insaf & Ashath, 2024; Lone, 2017). Consequently, throughout several Islamic dynasties, the custom of holding athletic games on festival days persisted. Muslim societies still make large investments in sports in modern times, highlighting their national and cultural identities (Taylor et al., 2023). This commitment is demonstrated by Muslim athletes' involvement in important international multisport competitions, such the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, where they represent their nations and display their skills to a worldwide audience. This involvement shows how contemporary sports practices are entwined with cultural and national pride, in addition to highlighting the sport's ongoing significance in Muslim countries (Insaf & Ashath, 2024).

2.7 SPORTS TOURISM IN MALAYSIA

Travelling and enjoying sporting events and activities are combined in sports tourism, a rapidly expanding sector of the global travel business. Malaysia has become a top sports tourism destination because of its advantageous position in Southeast Asia, rich cultural legacy, and varied natural settings. Sports tourism in Malaysia includes a diverse range of activities that draw visitors from both local and foreign markets.

Numerous sports are perfectly suited to the nation's tropical environment and diverse topography.

2.7.1 Historical Development and Current Status of Sports Tourism in Malaysia

Sports tourism has gained popularity and is developing into a significant economic sector in Malaysia (Yusof et al., 2008). Sport and tourism development opportunities associated with mega-sports events have been expanded with the professionalization of the events industry in Malaysia. In this point, the 1998 Commonwealth Games, the biennial sport event of Malaysian Formula One Grand Prix, the biennial sport event of Malaysian Motorcycle Grand Prix and the 2001 SEA Games had large attendance records in Malaysia (Zarei, 2014). In the study, Zarei (2014) stated that the 1998 Commonwealth Games were held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia drew on 70 nations competitors including 3,638 participants and 100,000 sport spectators as well as the 2001 Southeast Asian Games (the SEA Games) brought 773 athletes, 50,000 spectators and 7000 volunteers from 10 Southeast Asian countries. Malaysia has anticipated several international sport events since 1996 with the success of staging the Le Tour de Langkawi. Nonetheless, the success of the Commonwealth Games 1998 in Kuala Lumpur highlighted the value of hosting international events (Ibrahim et al., 2016).

Despite the fact that an international sport event is planned at least once a year somewhere in the world, these occasions demonstrated how Malaysia participated in international sport events. Due to the importance of modern tourism as a component of the country's economic development, Malaysia works to make its numerous athletic events more globally recognised (Watanabe et al., 2018). This shows Malaysia's enormous potential and the numerous chances it offers to grow the travel and tourism sector through major sporting events. As stated by Yusof et al., (2010), there are several tourist destinations in Malaysia that can be exploited to draw tourists that enjoy adventure and sport. It is also possible to employ natural landmarks like waterfalls, rivers, rainforests, mountains, caves, and lakes to draw more sports tourists. There are

possibilities to draw fishing enthusiasts or vacationers who enjoy the outdoors by organizing events like fishing tournaments or canoe trips. Other than that, according to a study by Ahmad et al. (2019), the growth of extreme sports locations is closely tied to the involvement of visitors and people from other countries. Traveler flows associated with sporting events are varied and diversified that may include various types of categories such as fans, athletes, media team, family and more (Gratton, Shibli & Coleman, 2004; Yusof et al., 2008).

2.8 THE CONCEPT OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY SPORTS TOURISM

Exercises in religion and morality should be combined with sports. If it is permitted, sports should not take a Muslim's attention away from religious considerations (Malchrowicz-Mosko, 2021). To sum up, the concept of Muslim-Friendly Sports Tourism dictates that all athletic events must comply with Muslim-friendly standards, as well as with facilities and other requirements. For instance, as can be seen during the World Cup in Qatar, the Qatari government offers many Muslim-friendly facilities that are pleasant for everyone to use, even non-Muslims, and also incorporates many components of Islam and da'wah throughout the event.

Malchrowicz-Mosko (2021) in the same article explained, it may be necessary to undergo a process of social and cultural evolution when non-secular Islamic nations host these sporting events in order to maintain the integrity of the hosting country and the appeal of the sporting event to both existing western markets and new markets from the Islamic world. Muslim-friendly tourism has gained significant attention in recent years as a niche market within the broader tourism industry. With the increasing number of Muslim travelers seeking destinations that cater to their religious and cultural preferences, the concept of Muslim-friendly tourism has emerged as an important consideration for destinations worldwide. In Malaysia, a country with a predominantly Muslim population, the potential for Muslim-friendly tourism is particularly significant. In addition, one sector that has witnessed remarkable growth and global appeal is sports

tourism. In this context, exploring the potential for Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia becomes crucial for capitalizing on this growing market segment.

2.9 MALAYSIA AS A MUSLIM-FRIENDLY DESTINATION

Malaysia is frequently listed as one of the top travel destinations for Muslims and has maintained a high ranking on the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI). The country's dedication to meeting the demands of Muslim tourists is reflected in this ranking. Mardhiah (2024) claims that Malaysia cemented its position in 2023 by winning the Halal in Travel awards "Muslim-Friendly Destination of the Year" and "Muslim Women-Friendly Destination of the Year" titles. In addition, Malaysia is well-known for its unique culture, stunning beaches, vast range of Muslim-friendly tour packages, easy access to a huge selection of halal food, and amazing shopping opportunities (Shukor et al., 2023).

Ibrahim (2017) asserts that for the range of Muslim-friendly travel packages and products to be deemed Sharia compatible, they must adhere to Islamic standards. It is a duty of all parties involved in the Muslim-friendly tourist sector, including the government, local government, and tourism industry participants. This covers the tourism operators, service providers, sports event organisers, and travellers themselves in order to maintain it within the bounds of Islamic law. Furthermore, a Malaysian Standard (MS 2610:2015) on Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services (MFHS) specifies particular standards to guarantee that hospitality offerings are in line with Islamic values and appropriate for Muslim tourists which are meant to create a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere during the visit.

In Malaysia, for instance, Muslim-friendly tourism allows non-Muslims to enjoy the same services. Travelling to Malaysia is not restricted for non-Muslims because the Muslim-friendly tourism idea is suitable for both Muslim and non-Muslim

visitors. Malaysian society is profoundly rooted in Islamic customs and beliefs, as the country has a Muslim majority. This guarantees a pleasant and comfortable experience for Muslim travellers. By showcasing its Islamic architecture, Malaysia further highlights its beauty and distinctiveness. Beautiful mosques may be found all over the country, including the well-known Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Mosque (Blue Mosque) in Shah Alam and the National Mosque (Masjid Negara) in Kuala Lumpur. This aligns with Ibn Khaldun's perspective, which holds that architecture is a hallmark of civilization and a representation of a nation's or country's splendour. A civilisation advances in this area as more and more structures are created to suit societal demands (Aziz & Mat Zin, 2021). In addition to that, Malaysia has a predominantly Muslim population, the demand for halal food is high. As a result, most local restaurants and eateries ensure their food is halal-certified, meaning it adheres to these religious standards.

Apart from that, the element of Muslim-friendly tourism in Malaysia can also be seen in the existence of Shariah-compliant hotels. Certain hotels in Malaysia have facilities like prayer mats, qibla directions, and non-alcoholic minibars that are particularly made to accommodate Muslim visitors. A Muslim-friendly services are not limited to Muslim only but to non- Muslims as well. According to a study by Muslim and Harun (2022), non-Muslim tourists must adjust their palates and refrain from consuming pork and alcoholic beverages during a Muslim-friendly tour, whereas Muslim tourists are willing to substitute fish and vegetarian meals for their halal meat needs while travelling. Thus, one of the reasons non-Muslim tourists travel to Muslim-friendly tourist locations is to explore a new culture. In several foreign places, the concept of being "Muslim-friendly" is starting to gain traction. This concept emphasises how crucial it is for service providers to accommodate the requirements and offer facilities to both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists.

According to a recent global economic assessment, Malaysia is among the top five travel destinations in the world for Muslims. Standards and guidelines to strengthen the Muslim tourism and hospitality service delivery have been developed by Islamic Tourism Centre (Chin, 2022). Additionally, one of Malaysia's main sources of

economic growth is the provision of Muslim-friendly hospitality services (Abas et al., 2017). The production of Halal food and clean accommodations will give hotels a competitive advantage in luring both domestic and foreign visitors, particularly those from the Middle East, West Asia, and other Islamic countries, according to previous literature by Zailani et al. (2011).

Some Muslim travellers are becoming more sensitive and want access to more upscale vacation spots and Halal restaurants. In light of that, this element has an impact on Malaysian hoteliers' non-compliance to halal. Due to the country's diversity of arts, heritage, and distinctive Muslim culture, Malaysia's tourism and hospitality sector has the potential to grow as a Muslim-friendly destination (Samori & Rahman, 2013; Yusof et al., 2019). In addition, in Malaysia, there is a standard that indicates the Muslim-friendly tourism concept which is the MS 2610:2015 Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services (MFHS). MS 2610:2015 Muslim-Friendly Hospitality Services is Malaysia's first standard that is aimed towards the travel sector that serves Muslim tourists. Thus, the management of tourist facilities, goods, and services is governed by this standard.

Furthermore, the study by Yan et al. (2017) highlighted that most Muslim-majority countries have made an attempt to create Muslim-friendly travel environments by making investments in things like raising the number of hotels that adhere to Shariah law, shariah-compliant restaurants, and prayer facilities, as well as promoting the local Muslim culture. The efficacy of Muslim-friendly tourism destinations can be accessed via rankings among member nations of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The premier locations indicate the degree of advancement, amenities, and services that accommodate Muslim tourists. Figure 2.1 illustrates the ten premier destinations within the OIC according to latest rankings.

GMTI 2025 Rank	Top 10 Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Destinations
1	Malaysia
2	Türkiye
2	Saudi Arabia
2	United Arab Emirates
5	Indonesia
5	Qatar
7	Oman
7	Kuwait
9	Jordan
9	Iran

Figure 2.1 Top 10 Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Destinations

Source: *KiniHalal (2025)*

Trends in international visitor arrivals to Malaysia can be better understood through official tourism data. The statistics provided by Tourism Malaysia offer insights into visitor patterns and growth over time. Figure 2.2 illustrates the statistics dashboard for international visitor arrivals.

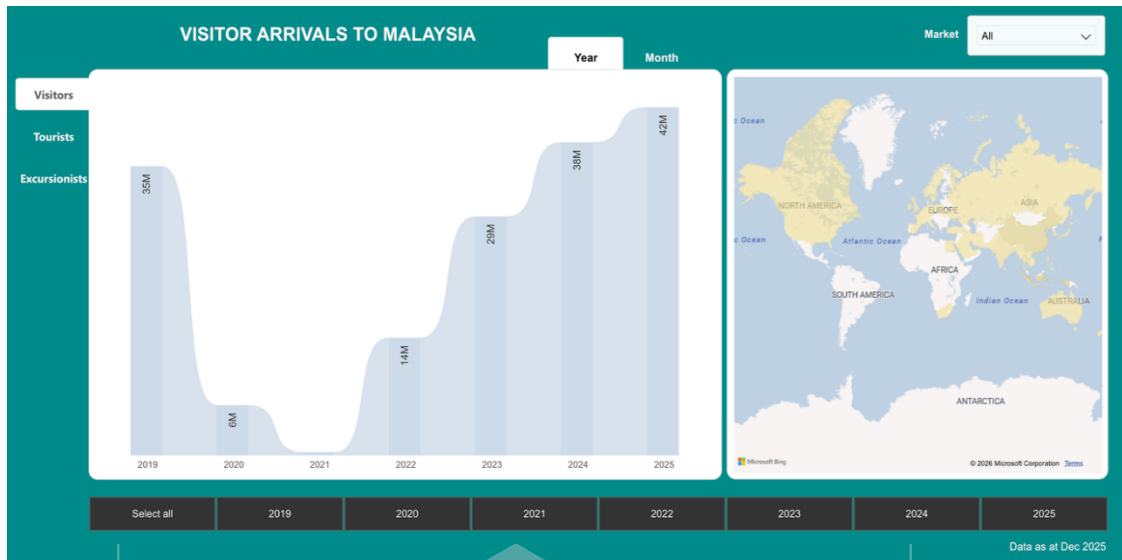


Figure 2.2 Statistics dashboard for international visitor arrivals sourced from the Strategic Planning Division of Tourism Malaysia.

Source: *Malaysia Tourism Statistics*

Given the variety of halal food available, the Muslim-friendly services provided, and other factors, it makes sense for Malaysia to capitalize on the potential to attract more tourists by planning and staging athletic events. Malaysia is one of the nations that encourages travel that is friendly to Muslims, yet there are a number of reasons why it can be difficult to develop Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia.

2.9.1 Halal Food

A study's findings by Dealwis et al. (2022) stated, some of the non-Muslim travellers believe that because of the distinct societal norms, they may feel pressured to purchase halal products and adhere to Muslim dietary customs. Some of them stated that they would prefer to stay in hotels that could provide cuisine for everyone, possibly without pork and alcohol. Furthermore, a prior study by Annisa et al. (2022) proved that non-

Muslims are more interested in the benefits of things and will purchase them if they believe they would be useful and necessary.

2.9.2 Muslim-Friendly Sport Facilities

Malaysia has competition from its neighbours, Thailand and Singapore, which have more popular sports tourism sites and superior infrastructure, when attempting to attract tourists to sporting events (Yusof et al., 2010). Aman et al. (2020) stated that sports facilities are locations where sports activities take place. These locations include stadiums, halls, fields, courts, and support amenities including parking lots and cafes.

2.9.2.1 Accommodation

Many hotels make an effort to meet the demands of Muslim visitors by offering temporary halal services and meals for Muslim visitors but not all business players adopt this strategy, as many of them purposefully avoid this sector for a variety of reasons (Abdrakhmanova & Moghavvemi, 2022). For example, according to Rosenberg and Choufany (2009) as cited by Abd Razak et al. (2019), the difficulties of operating Shariah-compliant hotels is increased by the loss of revenue from the sale of alcoholic beverages, and its restriction has an impact on the decline in the number of visitors who come to the hotel just to eat and dine. According to the study by Dealwis et al. (2022), non-Muslim tourists may not go to destinations that practice halal tourism where restrictions such as banning alcoholic beverages in hotels apply. As a result, there are many difficulties with establishing Muslim-Friendly Hospitality Services in hotels that adhere to Shariah, which the hotels must commit heavily to, and costly remodelling work is necessary (Abd Razak et al., 2019). Abdrakhmanova and Moghavvemi (2022) in the past study also claimed that promoting services that are welcoming to Muslims

occasionally poses new difficulties for service providers because it raises the potential of losing non-Muslim clients.

2.9.2.2 Sports Venue

A prior study by Harun et al. (2013) stated that more money is required for substantial repairs, replacement, or possibly the construction of new sports facilities due to Malaysia's substandard maintenance of its sports facilities. Therefore, facilities at sporting arenas need to be improved in order to promote Muslim-friendly sporting events in Malaysia. For instance, the prayer room in a state stadium in Sarawak was damaged when the ceiling flooded and the water pipes, despite having seven taps, did not function. This made it difficult for worshippers to utilise the prayer room (Ahmad, 2017). Hence, enforcing the idea of Muslim-friendly sporting events has grown difficult due to such concerns. Furthermore, the Ministry of Youth and Sports develops a design for sporting facilities, coordinates planning, and distributes significant facilities based on the goal of having both high performance sport and mass sport for all societal strata in accordance with National Sports Policy (Barghchi et al., 2011).

2.10 ATTRIBUTES OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY INTERNATIONAL SPORT TOURISM IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia should carefully seize the chance to advance its tourist sector by establishing the idea of Muslim-friendly international sports tourism as a result of the country's regular hosting of major sporting events. As stated by Fajriyati et al. (2020), destination marketers must assure the availability of features that cater to Muslim tourists' needs in addition to generic attributes that are typically present at the location in order to provide Muslim-friendly tourism and draw Muslim visitors. Furthermore, in order to create a wealth of economic prospects, the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC) was introduced as a significant player in Malaysia's halal market. HDC has the aspirational

goal of making sure that halal is the accepted global standard and fits with other standards that are widely accepted, such as corporate social responsibility, sustainability, traceability, food safety, and environmental protection (Zubairi & Ghani, 2007).

This is due to the fact that the government has implemented the Halal Park idea in practically every state in Malaysia as a strategy to encourage local manufacturers to engage into Halal product production (Hamid et al., 2017). This demonstrates that Malaysia has the opportunity to present itself as a Muslim-friendly tourism destination, as well as its numerous participation in international sporting events.

2.10.1 Halal Food

International sporting events are attended primarily by visitors from abroad and they may not all be Muslims. In that case, providing more halal food was imperative wherever it might be available in hotels, restaurants and further dining facilities. The reason is that halal food is a must for both Muslims and non-Muslims. The finding of a study conducted by Quantaniah et al. (2013) found that the concept of halal food is understood and recognisable by all informants whether Muslims or non-Muslims irrespective of race or religious views. A prior study by Annisa et al. (2022) mentions that halal food has been increasingly becoming popular among non-Muslim society because they believe halal food is healthier and safer.

Halal food is often served at halal restaurants, which are popular in Malaysia, providing patrons with the option of dining in accordance with Islamic Sharia law. In Malaysia, halal restaurants are abundant and halal products are available easily in any place. Furthermore, the Trade Description Act 1972, Food Act 1983 and Food Regulation 1985, and the Malaysia Standard: Halal Food Production Preparation,

Handling and Storage- General Guide (MS 1500: 2019) are among the examples that assure reputable legal framework, laws, and regulations (Ibrahim, 2017).

2.10.2 Muslim Travellers' Needs

According to COMCEC, The primary areas for Muslim tourists have been recognised as six faith-based needs which are Halal food, prayer facilities, Ramadhan services, water friendly washrooms, no non-halal activities, and recreational facilities and services with privacy. According to Aziz (2018), the expansion and recognition of the Malaysian tourism industry are at its highest point.

The tourism industry in Malaysia has garnered positive recognition and feedback for its usage of the Muslim-friendly tourism concept. For instance, mosques and musallahs can easily be found in every district, prayer rooms at public places, most food and beverage outlets serve JAKIM-certified halal food and many hoteliers provide Qibla direction and prayer mats in their guest rooms (ITC, 2016; Aziz, 2018).

2.10.3 Sport Facilities

Muslim-friendly sport and recreational activities could be one of the attractions for Muslim-friendly tourism package. Apart from that, public facilities and infrastructures have a positive and considerable influence on people's participation in sporting events (Delamere, 2001; Ahmad et al., 2019). In fact, in Malaysia, Muslim-friendly sport and recreational activities could be one of the attractions for Muslim-friendly tourism package. According to study by Ibrahim (2017), if Malaysia wants to assert that such sporting events meet the criteria for being Muslim-friendly, it must take into consideration a number of factors, including advertising, food, beverages, premises, operation, operator, services, praying facilities, timing of events that does not conflict

with prayer times, Shari'ah-compliant attire, and separate facilities for women, men, and families.

2.10.3.1 Availability of Muslim-friendly Accommodation

Muslim visitors have several options to select from, with over 102 hotels accredited by JAKIM and an even greater number of non-accredited hotels that strive to provide halal services in Malaysia (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Waehama et al., 2018). Yet, this is a general necessity that must be met for the benefit of all guests, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. According to Crescent Rating (2022), sharia-compliant accommodation is required for the majority of Muslim guests where the main emphasis is on not offering alcoholic beverages, social practices, Muslim prayer rooms, Islamic attire and a gender-segregated gym and swimming pools. On the other hand, in past study, on-Muslim travellers concurred that Muslim-friendly hotels were more reasonably priced because the proprietors ran their establishments in accordance with Islamic principles rather than seeking immediate financial gain.

Additionally, they believed that because these halal packages and services should have received approval from Muslim religious institutions, they were safer and cleaner (Dealwis et al., 2022). Therefore, hotels with a Muslim-friendly concept should be provided for both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists that visit the country for sport purposes. In Malaysia, there is a standard for Muslim-friendly hospitality which is MS 2610:2015 Muslim-Friendly Hospitality Services. The management of tourist facilities, goods, and services is governed by this standard. Islamic tourism emphasises on standard hospitality services that non-Muslims can also enjoy, rather than being exclusive for Muslims only. This standard is made available to hoteliers, tour guides, cruise directors, manufacturers of tourism-related goods, and homestay operators by SIRIM QAS International (SIRIM QAS International, 2023).

2.10.3.2 Availability of Muslim-friendly Sports Venue

In Malaysia, a lot of sports venues now have prayer rooms specifically designed to help athletes and spectators easily accomplish their religious obligations. For example, a prayer room at Shah Alam Stadium has been provided for the nearly 80,000 Muslim spectators by the Selangor government who came to see the Sea Games (Zulkiffeli, 2017). Yusof et al. (2019) claimed that, in order to meet the demands of visitors, particularly Muslim visitors, the presence of Muslim-friendly amenities at the destination is crucial. To demonstrate that a location is welcoming to Muslims, good sports facilities need to be fully equipped with a variety of amenities.

2.11 THE IMPACT OF THE FIFA WORLD CUP ON COUNTRY'S IMAGE AS TOURIST DESTINATION

Since the FIFA World Cup has been held every four years since 1930, numerous studies have been done to determine how much of an influence it has on the host country's tourism industry. According to Bob and Popgieter (2013), the study examines that foreign visitors generally enjoyed their time in South Africa and thought the nation was a desirable travel destination. Same as the case with the FIFA World Cup in 2002 hosted by South Korea.

According to a previous study, travellers visiting South Korea from Japan, Mainland China, and the United States have distinct perspectives of Korea, and a significant global event has the ability to significantly influence how a tourism destination is perceived (Kim & Morrision, 2005). Such sporting events are also recognised by Qatar as a tourism resource with the potential to attract large numbers of visitors and enhance the reputation of the destination, which justifies their inclusion in policies for tourism development and economic diversification, according to a previous study (Henderson, 2014). This proves that a mega sport event like the World Cup is the reason why visitors are interested in visiting a country. Most prior studies describe how

international sporting events like the World Cup alters foreign tourists' perceptions and has an impact on a country's tourism economy. However, research on a country becoming an attraction for Muslim-friendly tourism due to international sport events is limited because Qatar is the first Muslim country to host this worldwide event and promote Muslim-friendly hospitality and services.

2.11.1 Case Study: 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar

In Qatar, halal tourism is one of the five critical areas prioritized for tourism development. Qatar is a Muslim country with a halal ecosystem, such as the availability of Halal food, mosques, prayer facilities in malls, Muslim-friendly hotels with prayer rooms, Qibla signs marked in rooms, toilets with sprayers, and other relevant facilities. Most of the hotels provide basic Islamic features in their hotels not advertised on their websites (Abdrakhmanova & Moghavvemi, 2022). Sand dunes, museums, traditional souqs (markets), beaches, sports grounds, exposition and conference facilities, as well as native Qatari and Arab culture, are just a few of the attractions and resources that Qatar has to offer (QTA 2014; Musinguzi et al., 2015). As a source of development, the government has focused on the meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibits industry. Besides, sports tourism and cultural tourism are two other specialised tourism sectors gaining significant attention (COMCEC, 2016). The study by Luerdi (2022) stated that the estimated \$220 billion spent by Qatar to host the mega-event makes it the most expensive football match in World Cup history. The majority of the money was spent on supporting infrastructure, such as hotels and public transportation facilities, rather than stadiums.

In addition to being the safest World Cup, the FIFA World Cup in Qatar has been marketed as being family-friendly and women-friendly. In Qatar, the government's attempts to create a healthy society are strongly supported by the religious encouragement of sports as well as the well-being of the body and soul (Mohammed & Qoronfleh, 2022). Additionally, The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has

named Qatar as the top-performing destination for the period of January to July 2023 due to the country's tremendous boost in tourism following the staging of the 2022 World Cup. According to information provided by Qatar Tourism, as of August 25, 2023, the nation had received over 2.56 million visitors, which is more than the total number of arrivals recorded the previous year. The same stated that a 157 percent increase in visits from the same time period in 2022 to this high number in 2023 (Bleona, 2023). The influence of major athletic events on tourism demand is evident in the fluctuations of visitor arrivals subsequent to international competitions. The 2022 FIFA World Cup is anticipated to have impacted travel trends throughout the region, especially among Muslim-majority locales. Figure 2.3 depicts the pattern of international tourist arrivals following the 2022 FIFA World Cup

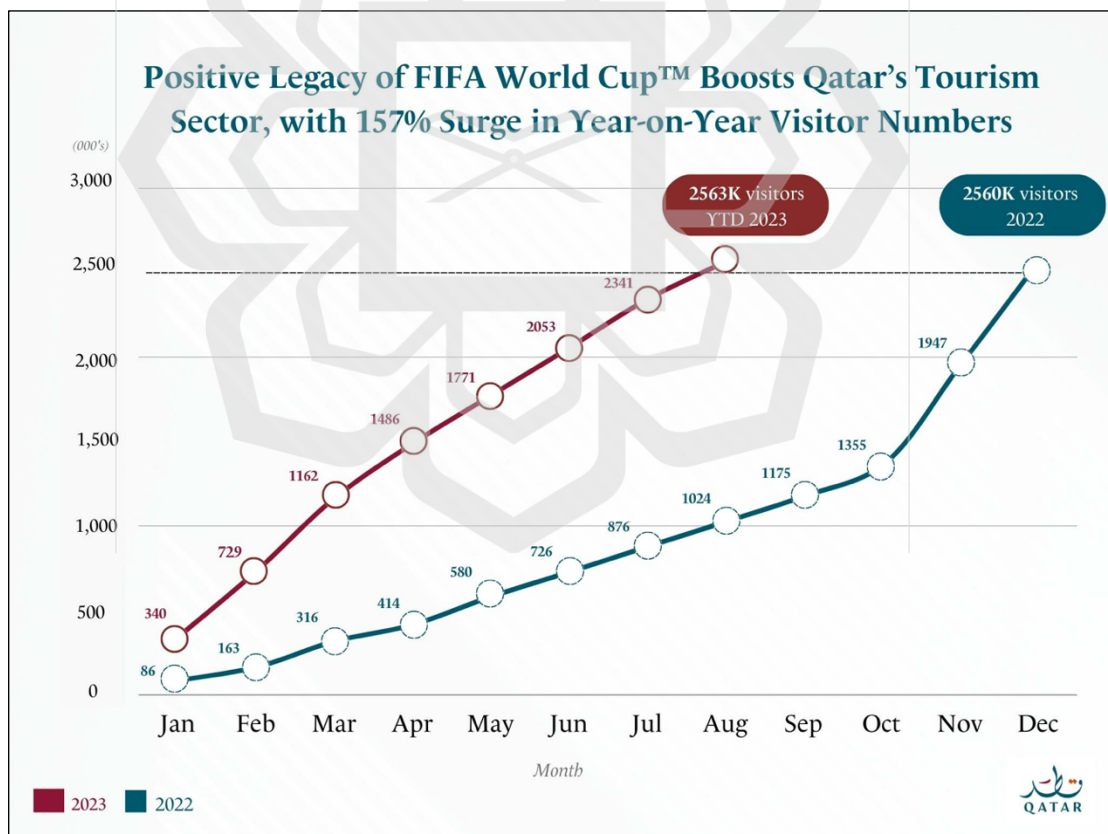


Figure 2.3 Visitors Arrival After the FIFA World Cup 2022

Source: *ILoveQatar.net*

2.11.2 Challenges of Implementation on Islamic Concept during FIFA World Cup in Qatar

The Islamic principles that Qatar has incorporated into the World Cup's planning have earned it praise from other countries. However, Qatar also faces criticism from the public particularly from western countries, who believe that Qatar's actions violate human rights and cause problems. Almarri (2020) believes that the way that Muslims and the Arab world are portrayed in the western media greatly adds to the bad stereotypes that westerners have of these groups in general.

Almarri (2020) also added, Islamophobia has been strongly associated with how the West views the Middle East, Middle Eastern people, Arabs, Muslims, and others. Then, Dun (2014) explained that it was a daring move to give Qatar the right to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022 due to the accusations of bribery, treatment of migrant workers, and limitations on the availability of alcohol which are among the major news headlines surrounding the decision as it swiftly sparked controversy. For example, Muslims are particularly troubled by alcohol consumption because they may feel extremely offended if they are near alcohol. Thus, many people would have had religious issues with alcohol consumption being more open in public places, as would have happened as a result of FIFA's demand for stadium sales (Dun & Rachdi, 2023).

Qatar's decision has faced criticism from certain fans, with a few expressing dissatisfaction due to what they perceive as a lack of understanding for their “drinking culture” (Al Jazeera, 2022). Other than that, Qatar FIFA World Cup appears to be one of the most successful World Cup events, despite concerns being raised about whether the international sporting event would operate smoothly given that it is only a small country with a limited number of residents, little football history, and unfavourable weather (Luerdi, 2022).

2.12 TREND AND HISTORY OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOURISM

Muslim-friendly tourism has evolved significantly over the past few decades, driven by the rapid growth of the global Muslim population and increasing demand for services that accommodate Islamic principles. Over time, the scope has expanded to include a more comprehensive ecosystem encompassing prayer facilities, gender-segregated amenities, modest recreation options, and Shariah-compliant hospitality services.

The development of structured indices such as the Global Muslim Travel Index further reflects the institutionalisation of Muslim-friendly tourism, highlighting its transition from a niche market to a mainstream segment within the global tourism industry. Additionally, countries such as Malaysia, and United Arab Emirates have positioned themselves as leaders in this sector by integrating Islamic values into tourism policies and infrastructure (Abdullah et al., 2025). More recently, the concept has extended into specialised areas such as Muslim-friendly sports tourism and events, indicating a continuous diversification of the market in response to evolving traveller expectations.

2.13 HISTORICAL EFFORTS OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY SPORTS EVENTS IN NON-MUSLIM MAJORITY COUNTRY

Beyond the efforts made by Malaysia and Qatar during major sporting events, inclusive practices were also demonstrated by the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and the London 2012 Olympics, where halal food options, prayer facilities, and accommodations for modest clothing were carefully incorporated into the planning of these significant events. Such efforts include the availability of facilities for prayer in duties within the organization of events, as demonstrated by the introduction of a mobile prayer space by CEO Yasuharu Inoue to support athletes and spectators in fulfilling their religious obligations (Tarrant, 2020). Inoue added that such accommodations are a way for host countries to not only allow athletes to compete with full motivation but also to recognize

different kinds of cultural and religious identities that exist, thereby contributing to a peaceful and inclusive Olympic movement.

In addition, Dell'Orto and Bharath (2024) demonstrate how this inclusivity was further illustrated by the participation of a devout Muslim athlete in the Tokyo Games, where she competed the women's 3,000-meter steeplechase while wearing modest attire, including a hijab. She trained through Ramadan, observing fasting yet meeting the lofty standards of a high-performance athlete. This case is a microcosm of the balance between religious observance and elite sports, and the increasing recognition of these competing demands have been found in international sporting competitions.

Moreover, The Olympic Games in South Korea provided a significant example of Muslim-friendly measures in a country with a non-Muslim majority. According to Fazira (2020), halal-certified meals were prepared in compliance with the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) guidelines. Shinsegae Food operates a dedicated "halal food zone" at the Athletes' Dining Hall, which has been officially certified by the Korea Muslim Federation. This event showed how a non-Muslim majority government successfully incorporated Muslim-friendly provisions in a global athletic setting.

2.14 LITERATURE GAP

The existing literature still contains numerous gaps, notably in the integration of Muslim-friendly tourism and sports tourism within international sporting events, despite the growing attention given to these two domains.

Initially, previous research on Muslim-friendly tourism primarily concentrated on general sectors, including hospitality, accommodation, and halal culinary services, with less emphasis on sports tourism contexts. Prior research studies like Battour &

Ismail (2015) on “Muslim Friendly Tourism and Halal Tourism in Islam”, Aziz (2018) on “Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality Initiatives in Southeast Asia” and Jaswir (2021) on “Muslim-Friendly Hospitality Services and Halal Tourism” have mainly highlighted the halal tourism services, Muslim-friendly hospitality as well as Islamic Practice of Muslims-tourism. However, these studies do not provide a detailed explanation of how Muslim-friendly attributes can be incorporated into international sporting events and sports tourism contexts. Although elements such as halal cuisine, prayer facilities, and Shariah-compliant environments have been extensively discussed, there is still a lack of research that identifies the specific elements that are necessary for international sports events to be recognised as Muslim-friendly.

Secondly, Malaysia is widely recognised as a top-tier Muslim-friendly tourism destination with a wealth of experience in organising international sporting events. However, the majority of current research concentrates on the strategic positioning of sports tourism in relation to the general expansion of tourism. The economic contribution and growth of sports tourism in Malaysia were the subject of discussion in studies such as "Sport Tourism in Malaysia: Current Situation and Prospect" by Yusof et al. (2008), "The Development of Sport Tourism in Malaysia" by Mapjabil et al. (2015), and "Muslim-Friendly Sports and Recreation Facilities" by Ibrahim et al. (2016). In the meantime, Adinugraha et al. (2023) and Shukor et al. (2023) conducted research on Malaysia's status as a Muslim-friendly tourism destination. However, there is a dearth of research that provides practical strategies or frameworks for integrating Muslim-friendly concepts into international sporting events. This underscores a deficiency in the areas of strategic development and implementation.

Furthermore, previous research has identified a variety of obstacles to the successful implementation of Muslim-friendly tourism, including a lack of awareness among service providers, inconsistent practices, and market acceptability concerns. Numerous studies, including "Shariah-Compliant Hotel Practices in Malaysia" by Abd Razak et al. (2019), "Challenges in Implementing Muslim-Friendly Accommodation" by Karim et al. (2017), and "Issues and Challenges in Muslim-Friendly Tourism Services" by Ariff Irshad et al. (2022), addressed concerns regarding the

implementation of Muslim-friendly practices by accommodation operators, tourism stakeholders, and service providers. The investigations, however, are often sector-specific and do not adopt a comprehensive perspective.

In addition, the vast majority of the existing literature is conceptual in nature, with only a small quantity of empirical evidence derived from real-world sporting event contexts. Malchrowicz-Mosko (2021) for instance, in her article "Can She Run or Scream while Travelling? Is Sports Tourism Halal or Haram?" explored the conceptual relationship between Islam and sports tourism, with a particular emphasis on Muslim women's sports participation. On the other hand, there is a dearth of qualitative, experience-based research that examines the implementation and perception of Muslim-friendly elements during international sporting events.

Consequently, the objective of this study is to address these deficiencies by conducting a comprehensive examination of Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia, with an emphasis on the key elements, strategic approaches and potential benefits from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders.

2.15 SUMMARY

This chapter examines the literature concerning sports tourism, Muslim-friendly tourism, Islam and sports, and Malaysia's status as a Muslim-friendly tourism destination. In this chapter, the concepts and scope of sports tourism, the principles of Muslim-friendly and halal tourism, and the significance of Islamic values such as modesty, ethical conduct, halal cuisine, and prayer facilities within tourism and sports activities are all explained. It also explores Islamic perspectives on physical activity and sports participation, which are substantiated by examples from Islamic teachings and history. Additionally, the chapter examines the concept of Muslim-friendly sports tourism by providing examples such as Qatar's FIFA World Cup 2022, while also

emphasising Malaysia's accomplishments in sports tourism and Muslim-friendly hospitality. In general, the chapter establishes the theoretical and contextual framework that underpins the investigation.



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research design served as an outline for conducting research. This functioned as an overall plan to get perspectives from people involved regarding the study title. This study was designed as a qualitative approach. Qualitative research provides a depth and richness of information regarding participants' feelings, thoughts, frame of references, experiences with their own words (Yilmaz, 2013). The qualitative method was more suitable for the purpose of this writing because it was a study to find out the potential of Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia.

This method was important to obtain key elements for Muslim-friendly international sports tourism, strategies that can be adopted to effectively market and position Malaysia as a preferred destination for Muslim-friendly sports tourism on the global stage and also potential benefits of developing Malaysia as a Muslim-friendly sports tourism destination. These three things were the objective of this writing and required further discussion. According to Mack et al. (2005), the capacity to offer intricate textual descriptions of how people feel a particular research issue was the strength of qualitative research. It offered details about the "human" aspect of a problem, or the frequently incongruous attitudes, convictions, feelings, and interpersonal interactions of people. In this research, people who had experienced events related to sports were required to fulfill the needs of this research. Their opinion regarding the current issues contributed to the success of this research and probably to the country.

3.2 DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

In this study, a descriptive case study was carried out. A case study is a qualitative design in which a programme, event, activity, procedure, or one or more people were thoroughly examined by the researcher (Priya, 2021). According to Patnaik and Pandey (2019), the goal of descriptive case study design was to provide a thorough explanation of a phenomenon in relation to its surroundings, and in this study, a case study of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar was used. This research focused on Malaysia's potential as a Muslim-friendly international sports tourism destination. The FIFA World Cup in Qatar served as a case study for this research since both Qatar and Malaysia are Islamic countries with Islam as their official religion, and Sharia law plays a vital part in the legal system and everyday life. Furthermore, Qatar and Malaysia place a high value on Muslim-friendly facilities and services for everyone, such as easy access to Muslim places of worship, a wide range of halal cuisine, and amenities that benefit Muslims, among other things. Qatar's popularity has grown since it hosted the 2022 World Cup. This demonstrates Qatar's astuteness in capitalising on opportunities presented by major events. As a result, the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar served as a descriptive case study for this article, given Malaysia's history of hosting huge events.

3.3 PHENOMENOLOGY APPROACH

This study was conducted in a Phenomenology approach. Phenomenology, a sort of qualitative study, focuses on analysing how people perceive the world in their daily lives (Neubauer et al., 2019). The perspectives from athletes, audiences and government body were used as a basis for developing the results. The qualitative approach was adopted in this study with the aim to identify the perspective of athletes, audiences and government body in Malaysia about the potential for Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia. This study highlighted the real-life experiences and perspectives of people engaged and offer deep, nuanced insights on the possibility for Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia through the use of a phenomenological approach.

3.4 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted among athletes, audiences and government body which is the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) to further investigate viewpoints and experiences in order to accomplish this goal. Semi-structured interviews combine elements from both structured and unstructured interview formats; it required informants to react to predetermined open-ended questions. The interview method was chosen for this study because it was considered a chance to discover new information from people and to produce a variety of insights and understandings that may be useful. Semi-structured interview method has much greater flexibility than the structured interview (Frances et al., 2009). These interviews were conducted with a person or a group only once and typically last between 30 minutes and an hour (Jamshed, 2014).

Conducting semi-structured interviews involved a series of careful and systematic steps to ensure that the data collected were both reliable and valid. There were seven informants interviewed for this study in order to satisfy the requirement and achieve the desired outcome. Subedi (2021) stated that the context and research problem dictate the number of participants in qualitative research. In certain instances, a single participant may be adequate to offer valuable insight. Consequently, researchers are granted the ability to select a sample size that may vary from one to twenty or more, contingent upon the nature of the inquiry and the profundity of information that is necessary. The selection of one to twenty or more participants is permissible in narrative inquiry, provided that it is adequately justified. Consequently, the number of informants was deemed appropriate.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study's data collection approach to get participants' detailed insights. Throughout the interview process, a methodical approach was used to guarantee consistency and dependability. The procedures for conducting semi-structured interviews are shown in Figure 3.1.

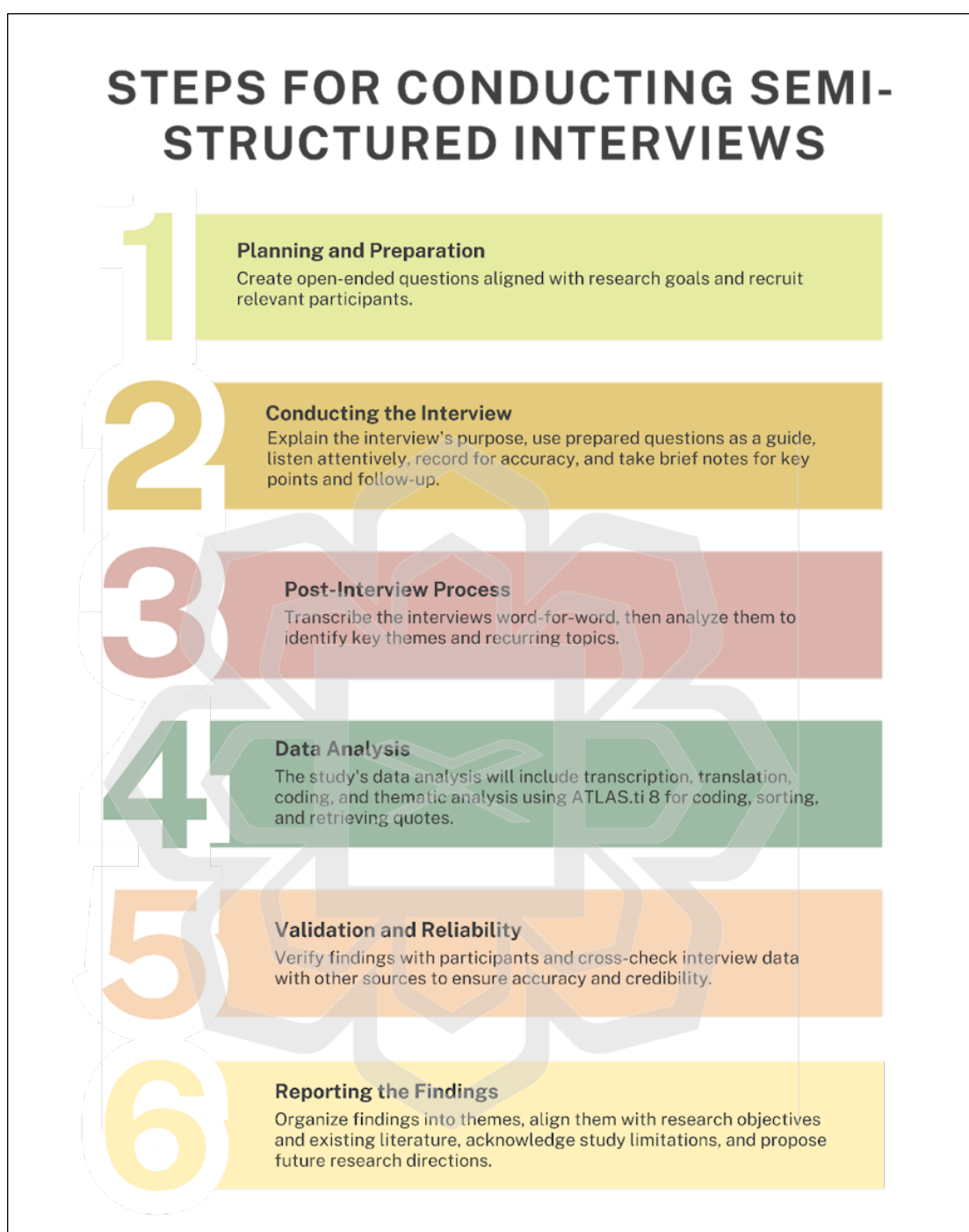


Figure 3.1 Steps for Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews

All interviews were conducted online as well as face-to-face. In the Audience category, the first informant was a high school student who was a spectator of a cycling event held at the Nilai National Velodrome. The second informant was a university

student who attended the football event at the Shah Alam Stadium, while the third informant was a university student who attended the badminton event at the Axiata Arena, Bukit Jalil. In the second category, which is Athletes, the first informant is a national fencing athlete. The second informant was a marathon runner who participated in an international running event in Malacca. The third informant was a Malaysian rugby player. The last category was Government Body. One government body, namely the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC), was approached, and three informants were nominated to participate in the interview. The informants were a director and two trainers.

Table 3.1 Demographic Background of Athletes

Code	Gender	Sports Participation	Sports Event	Education
A1	Male	Rugby	Piala Agong	Degree
A2	Female	Fencing	Malaysian Open Fencing Championship, South-East Asian Fencing Federation Championship, Grand Prix, SUKMA, and others.	SPM
A3	Male	Marathon Runner	Melaka International Marathon	Degree

Table 3.2 Demographic Background of Audiences

Code	Gender	Spectated Sports	Sports Venue	Education
B1	Female	Cycling	Velodrome Nasional Malaysia	SPM
B2	Male	Football	Stadium Shah Alam	Degree
B3	Female	Badminton	Axiata Arena	Degree

Table 3.3 Demographic Background of an Government Body

Code	Gender	Agency	Position	Location
C1	Female	Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC)	Director, Research and Training Division	Putrajaya

3.4.1 Sampling Technique and Informant Selection

This study adopted a purposive sampling technique, which was appropriate for qualitative research as it enabled the selection of participants who possessed relevant knowledge and experience related to Muslim-friendly sports tourism. This research recruited seven informants: three athletes, three audience members, and one official from a government organization. Despite the participation of three individuals from the ITC (one director and two trainers) in the interview session, the format was a group discussion, and the responses were seen as a unified stance representing the organization. Consequently, the ITC was regarded as one institutional informant in the data analysis.

Informants in this study were selected based on specific criteria to ensure their relevance to the research objectives. Informants were chosen based on their pertinent experience and participation in international sports events to guarantee a range of viewpoints. The audience comprised individuals who had attended diverse sporting events at multiple places and under varying circumstances, facilitating a comprehensive comprehension of spectator experiences. Athletes were chosen according to their engagement in various sports. They were required to have participated in at least one local or international sporting event and to have had experience using sports facilities in Malaysia, with preference given to Muslim athletes in order to better assess Muslim-friendly needs and practices. Meanwhile, the government agency which is the Islamic Tourism Centre was not directly involved in specific international sports events; however, ITC was selected based on their expertise and institutional role related to

Muslim-friendly tourism and policy development. The inclusion of informants from ITC enabled the study to obtain policy-level and strategic perspectives, offering insights into national strategies, guidelines, and initiatives related to the development and promotion of Muslim-friendly tourism in Malaysia. This aligned with qualitative research principles, where participants are selected based on their relevance, knowledge, and ability to provide meaningful insights, rather than requiring all informants to have identical experiences. The combination of these informants allowed for data triangulation, thereby enhancing the credibility and depth of the findings by incorporating both user-based and institutional viewpoints.

The inclusion of these three distinct participant groups was intentional, as each represents a different stakeholder perspective that is essential for a comprehensive understanding of Muslim-friendly sports tourism. Audiences provide insights into user experience and satisfaction, particularly in relation to accessibility, comfort, and the availability of Muslim-friendly facilities during events. Athletes contribute perspectives based on their direct participation and performance environment, including training facilities, accommodation, dietary requirements (e.g., halal food), and the fulfilment of religious obligations such as prayer. Meanwhile, the ITC offers insights from a policy and institutional perspective, particularly in terms of planning, guidelines, and initiatives related to the development of Muslim-friendly tourism and sports in Malaysia.

3.4.2 Instrument Development

The research instrument in this study was developed in accordance with the research objectives and was based on pertinent literature on sports tourism and Muslim-friendly tourism. In order to investigate the primary components, strategies, and prospective advantages of Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed. The instrument was composed of open-ended queries that were meticulously categorised in accordance with the study's

objectives, thereby guaranteeing that the themes of Muslim-friendly services, stakeholder roles, and implementation challenges were addressed. The interview questions were predominantly intended to align with the research objectives; however, several additional questions were intentionally included that may not directly correspond to specific objectives. The purpose of these queries was to motivate participants to elaborate on their experiences, offer more profound insights, and encourage further contemplation. As a result, the depth and breadth of the data collected were improved by these supplementary queries.

In order to obtain a wide range of perspectives regarding the sports tourism ecosystem, the interview queries were customised to accommodate various groups of informants, including athletes, audiences, and representatives from governmental body. In general, the instrument was designed to enable comprehensive investigation while simultaneously preserving an adequate framework to guarantee consistency across interviews. The interview questions were customised for each informant group; athletes, audiences, and the Islamic Tourism Centre to accurately represent their distinct roles and perspectives. The interview guide underwent additional assessment to guarantee clarity, relevance, and connection with the study objectives, hence improving the reliability and validity of the obtained data.

Table 3.4 Mapping of Research Objectives and Informant Types

Research Objective	Athletes	Audiences	Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC)
1. To identify key elements of Muslim-friendly international sports tourism	Share experience on facilities and religious needs	Share expectations and satisfaction	Provide policy guidelines and standard requirements

Research Objective	Athletes	Audiences	Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC)
2. To observe strategies to market Malaysia as a Muslim-friendly sports tourism destination	Suggest improvements from athlete perspective	Share travel motivations and attraction factors	Explain national marketing strategies and initiatives
3. To identify potential benefits of developing Muslim-friendly sports tourism	Impact on performance and comfort	Impact on tourist experience	Economic, policy, and tourism development benefits

A set of semi-structured interview questions was specifically designed to direct the data collection procedure for audience participation. The questions aimed to investigate their experiences, attitudes, and expectations for Muslim-friendly sports tourism. Figure 3.2 displays a selection of interview questions for audience participants.

Audiences:

1. Which sports have you been tuning into, and where are they being hosted?
2. Do the facilities at the sports venue you visited meet the needs and comfort levels of Muslim visitors?
3. In your experience watching international sports events hosted in Malaysia, what shortcomings have you noticed regarding the implementation of Muslim-friendly concepts?
4. Are you familiar with Muslim-friendly travel services, and have you experienced them before?
5. Are you aware of Qatar's recent efforts to highlight Islamic themes at the 2022 FIFA World Cup? What are your thoughts, and how can Malaysia learn from them?
6. Considering the Qatar FIFA World Cup 2022 as an example, what potential advantages could Malaysia as Muslim-majority country gain from hosting international sports events?
7. What Muslim-friendly services or facilities are necessary to enhance Malaysia's appeal for international sports events?
8. In your opinion, what are the difficulties in advertising Malaysia as a welcoming sports tourism destination for Muslims, and if so, how do you think they can be resolved?
9. If you were visiting another country with the intention of watching sports, what Muslim-friendly tourism factors do you prioritize when choosing a destination?
10. Are there any specific recommendations or ideas you have for Malaysia to enhance its appeal as a Muslim-friendly sports tourism destination?

Figure 3.2 Sample Interview Questions for Audience Participants

A distinct set of semi-structured interview questions was created for athletes in addition to audience members in order to get their viewpoints and experiences in sports tourism settings. These enquiries sought to investigate topics like general contentment, religious needs, and facility utilisation. A sample of the interview questions for athletes is shown in Figure 3.3.

Athletes:

1. What sports are you involved in, and where are they being hosted?
2. As a Muslim athlete, what kind of needs and services do you need during your participation in a sports programme? Are the services provided in the sport programme?
3. Which event organiser was involved and what event had fulfilled your needs as a Muslim athlete?
4. Are you familiar with Muslim-friendly travel services, and have you experienced them before?
5. In your experience participating in international sports event hosted in Malaysia, what shortcomings have you noticed regarding the implementation of Muslim-friendly concepts?
6. Are you aware of Qatar's recent efforts to highlight Islamic themes at the 2022 FIFA World Cup? What are your thoughts, and how can Malaysia learn from them?
7. From your perspective as a Muslim athlete, do you believe Malaysia has the capacity and should follow Qatar's example in integrating Islamic values when hosting international sports events?
8. In your experience, how does the presence of Muslim-friendly amenities impact your performance and well-being as an athlete during international sports competitions?
9. When planning to attend a sports event abroad, what aspects of Muslim-friendly tourism are most important to you when selecting a destination?
10. What shortcomings and challenges do you observe and experience as a Muslim athlete before, when engaging in sports activities in foreign countries?
11. What suggestions or changes do you have as a sportsperson to increase the Muslim-friendliness of international sporting events held in Malaysia?

Figure 3.3 Sample Interview Questions for Athlete Participants

Semi-structured interview questions were also created for representatives of pertinent government agencies in order to get institutional viewpoints. The policies, plans, and programs pertaining to Muslim-friendly sports tourism were the main topics of these enquiries. A sample of the interview questions for representatives of government agencies is shown in Figure 3.4.

Government Agency:

1. How important do you think it is to consider the Muslim-friendly aspects when planning and hosting international sports events in Malaysia?
2. Do you see the Qatar World Cup as a benchmark for Muslim-friendly sports tourism? If so, how can Malaysia replicate or improve upon Qatar's model?
3. In your view, do you think Malaysia has the capability and should emulate Qatar by incorporating Islamic values when hosting international sports events?
4. Are Muslim-friendly sports events achievable in Malaysia, or is there still a long road ahead?
5. What specific Muslim-friendly services and facilities do you believe are crucial for making Malaysia an attractive destination for international sports events, and how do you plan to incorporate them into your event management?
6. Are there any examples of major sporting events held in Malaysia that complied with the SOP?
7. How significant is the availability of halal food, prayer facilities, and cultural sensitivity in ensuring a positive experience for athletes, teams, and spectators during international sports events?
8. Have you encountered any best practices or examples from other countries known for successfully accommodating athletes and sports enthusiasts from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds that you believe can be applied in Malaysia?
9. What are the main challenges in developing Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia, and how does the government plan to address them?
10. What are some practical steps that should be taken to ensure that Malaysia effectively caters to the needs of athletes and sports enthusiasts from various cultural and religious backgrounds during international sports events?

Figure 3.4 Sample Interview Questions for Government Agency Representatives

The classification of interview questions created for this study is shown in Table 3.5, matching each set of questions to the relevant research objectives. In addition to facilitating a methodical and cohesive analysis of participant responses, this planned arrangement guarantees that the data gathered through semi-structured interviews directly addresses the main objectives of the study.

Table 3.5 Categorisation of Interview Questions Based on Research Objectives

Research Objective	Informant Group	Interview Questions
Objective 1: To identify key elements of Muslim-friendly international sports tourism	Audiences	1. Do the facilities at the sports venue you visited meet the needs and comfort levels of Muslim visitors? 2. In your experience watching international sports events hosted in Malaysia, what shortcomings have you noticed regarding the implementation of Muslim-friendly concepts? 3. What Muslim-friendly services or facilities are necessary to enhance Malaysia's appeal for international sports events? 4. If you were visiting another country with the intention of watching sports, what Muslim-friendly tourism factors do you prioritize when choosing a destination?
	Athletes	1. As a Muslim athlete, what kind of needs and services do you need during your participation in a sports programme? Are the services provided in the sport programme? 2. In your experience participating in international sports events hosted in Malaysia, what shortcomings have you noticed regarding the implementation of Muslim-friendly concepts? 3. In your experience, how does the presence of Muslim-friendly amenities impact your performance and well-being

Research Objective	Informant Group	Interview Questions
		as an athlete during international sports competitions? 4. When planning to attend a sports event abroad, what aspects of Muslim-friendly tourism are most important to you when selecting a destination?
	Government Body	1. What specific Muslim-friendly services and facilities do you believe are crucial for making Malaysia an attractive destination for international sports events, and how do you plan to incorporate them into your event management? 2. How significant is the availability of halal food, prayer facilities, and cultural sensitivity in ensuring a positive experience for athletes, teams, and spectators during international sports events?
Objective 2: To examine strategies to position Malaysia as a Muslim-friendly sports tourism destination	Audiences	1. Are you aware of Qatar's recent efforts to highlight Islamic themes at the 2022 FIFA World Cup? What are your thoughts, and how can Malaysia learn from them? 2. In your opinion, what are the difficulties in advertising Malaysia as a welcoming sports tourism destination for Muslims, and how do you think they can be resolved? 3. Are there any specific recommendations or ideas you have for Malaysia to enhance

Research Objective	Informant Group	Interview Questions
		its appeal as a Muslim-friendly sports tourism destination?
	Athletes	1. Are you aware of Qatar's recent efforts to highlight Islamic themes at the 2022 FIFA World Cup? What are your thoughts, and how can Malaysia learn from them? 2. From your perspective as a Muslim athlete, do you believe Malaysia has the capacity and should follow Qatar's example in integrating Islamic values when hosting international sports events? 3. What suggestions or changes do you have as a sportsperson to increase the Muslim-friendliness of international sporting events held in Malaysia?
	Government Body	1. How important do you think it is to consider the Muslim-friendly aspects when planning and hosting international sports events in Malaysia? 2. Do you see the Qatar World Cup as a benchmark for Muslim-friendly sports tourism? If so, how can Malaysia replicate or improve upon Qatar's model? 3. In your view, do you think Malaysia has the capability and should emulate Qatar by incorporating Islamic values when hosting international sports events? 4. What are the main challenges in developing Muslim-friendly sports

Research Objective	Informant Group	Interview Questions
		tourism in Malaysia, and how does the government plan to address them? 5. What are some practical steps that should be taken to ensure that Malaysia effectively caters to the needs of athletes and sports enthusiasts from various cultural and religious backgrounds during international sports events?
Objective 3: To analyse the potential benefits of developing Muslim-friendly sports tourism	Audiences	1. Considering the Qatar FIFA World Cup 2022 as an example, what potential advantages could Malaysia as a Muslim-majority country gain from hosting international sports events?
	Athletes	1. In your experience, how does the presence of Muslim-friendly amenities impact your performance and well-being as an athlete during international sports competitions?
	Government Body	1. Are Muslim-friendly sports events achievable in Malaysia, or is there still a long road ahead? 2. Are there any examples of major sporting events held in Malaysia that complied with the SOP? 3. Have you encountered any best practices or examples from other countries known for successfully accommodating athletes and sports enthusiasts from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds that you believe can be applied in Malaysia?

3.5 LIBRARY RESEARCH

This study employed a wide range of library resources, encompassing academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, reference materials, and electronic databases. Relevant materials were obtained via established academic platforms, including Google Scholar and Scopus, as well as through physical library visits, to ensure thorough coverage of the topic area. The literature review was conducted using targeted keywords such as “Muslim-friendly tourism,” “sports tourism,” and “halal tourism” to locate pertinent and current sources.

The utilisation of varied and reliable sources enhances the qualitative aspect of this research, especially through the implementation of the library research method. This approach facilitated the systematic identification, assessment, and synthesis of existing literature, hence augmenting the reliability and credibility of the study. Moreover, it enabled a thorough comprehension of the study subject and aided in establishing a robust theoretical framework that guided the creation of the research instrument.

3.5.1 Standard: MS 2610:2015 Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services (MFHS)

MS 2610:2015 Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services (MFHS) was used as one of the main sources because it was related to the writing of this thesis which covered all aspects related to Muslim friendly services in Malaysia. In this standard, it stated that this Malaysian Standard was developed with the aim to ensure that products and services provided for Muslim travelers are in accordance with the Shariah principles to assist them comfortably. This Malaysian Standard provided guidelines and requirements for managing tourism facilities, products and services for Muslim travellers in accommodation premises, tour packages and tourist guides.

Even so, this standard was not applicable for services that are related to health and beauty facilities such as spa and massage or any balneotherapy facilities, products and services. The MS 2610:2015 Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services (MFHS) standard is a globally recognized set of guidelines for the tourism industry that helps organizations provide services to Muslim travelers in accordance with Shariah principles. The standard is voluntary and can help organizations which increase revenue and clientele, gain an advantage over competitors, build credibility and reputation, and be certified faster and better.

Some examples of this standard requirements including, prohibiting non-halal pets in the accommodation area, providing floor space for Muslim guests to perform daily prayers, ensuring washrooms have a bidet, hand shower, or water hose, marking the qibla (Mecca) direction, providing personal care products and facilities suitable for Muslim use, not storing alcoholic beverages or intoxicants in the room's refrigerator, providing food that meets religious dietary requirements, such as halal food. MS 2610:2015 Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services (MFHS) is based on the Islamic principles of Aqidah, Akhlak, and Shariah, which are based on the Qur'an and Hadith.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

The primary method of data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews. One of the most popular qualitative data collecting techniques is conducting interviews, which is a wonderful strategy when attempting to acquire highly individualised data. Open-ended questions that enable researchers to obtain rich and detailed context are appropriate for informal and conversational interviews (Houston, 2022). Three categories of informants were interviewed: athletes, audiences, and a representative from a government agency. Based on the participants' availability and accessibility, data were collected through both online and face-to-face interview modalities.

Informants were contacted through a variety of methods, such as direct communication via social media, in-person approaches, and formal email communication for institutional participants. The duration of each interview session was between 35 and 90 minutes, which provided ample opportunity for discussion and elucidation. In order to guarantee that participants could articulate their opinions in a manner that was both natural and comfortable, the interviews were conducted in the Malay language. The interview data were subsequently translated into English during the transcription procedure for the purpose of analysis and reporting.

In this study, different tools and instruments have been employed for systematic and occur informational gathering throughout the data collection process. Semi-structured interview protocols were created to facilitate the interviews and help maintain alignment with the research goals. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face and by online meeting platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet, depending on the informants' availability and preference. Additionally, informants were informed that their interview session would be recorded on an audio tape. In addition, field notes were written during and soon after the interviews to document any key observations, reflections, or non-verbal responses that may assist in the interpretation of data.

In addition, ethical considerations were meticulously monitored during the data collection procedure. Prior to the interviews, all participants were granted informed assent. Prior to participating, parental or guardian consent was obtained through WhatsApp communication for secondary school pupils. The study's objective was disclosed to participants, and their participation was entirely voluntary. All data collected were exclusively used for research purposes, and confidentiality and anonymity were also guaranteed.

Then, all recordings were transcribed and pertinent notes were taken to substantiate the analysis following the interviews. In order to guarantee that the data was interpreted accurately, the researcher meticulously reviewed and reflected on each interview. Table 3.6 contains a summary of the informants, interview modes, duration,

methods of approach, and key limitations that were encountered during the data collection procedure.

Table 3.6 Summary of Informants and Data Collection Details

Informant Code	Category	Mode	Method of Approach	Date	Duration (Minutes)	Limitation
A1	Athlete	Online	Direct contact through social media	25 th Aug 2024	55	Unstable internet connection that disrupted communication
A2	Athlete	Face-to-Face	Direct approach (in person)	29 th Aug 2024	40	Requires parental/guardian consent
A3	Athlete	Face-to-Face	Direct approach (in person)	26 th Nov 2024	45	Limited flexibility in arranging interviews
B1	Audience	Face-to-Face	Direct approach (in person)	8 th July 2024	35	Limited ability to express ideas clearly due to age or vocabulary
B2	Audience	Face-to-Face	Direct approach (in person)	14 th Aug 2024	50	Dependent on informants' physical availability
B3	Audience	Face-to-Face	Direct approach (in person)	28 th Nov 2024	55	Higher cost in terms of time and effort
C1	Government (ITC)	Online	Formal request through E-mail	22 nd Jan 2025	90	Limited flexibility in interview scheduling, involving three representatives, with responses combined into a single unit of analysis

Figure 3.5 depicts the comprehensive data collection methodology employed in this investigation. The procedure commenced with the planning phase, succeeded by the identification and engagement of informants via several channels including social media, direct interaction, and formal email correspondence. The process involved acquiring informed consent, performing semi-structured interviews, and documenting the data. The gathered data were then transcribed and translated for analysis. During the process, ethical issues were meticulously upheld to guarantee the research's credibility and integrity. This methodical methodology allowed the researcher to methodically collect extensive and dependable qualitative data.



Figure 3.5 Data Collection Process

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The data analysis process of the study encompassed multiple stages, including transcription, translation, coding, and thematic analysis. All interview audio recordings

were initially transcribed verbatim in the Malay language to guarantee the precision and authenticity of informants' responses. Thereafter, the Malay transcripts were translated into English to enhance data interpretation and reporting. Subsequent to the translation process, the transcripts were methodically coded and analysed to discern emerging themes and patterns pertinent to the study's objectives.

This study used thematic analysis as a tool to analyse and interpret qualitative data. This strategy is a simple, adaptable, and growingly popular approach of analysing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Every piece of textual information in a theme represents various aspects of an occurrence and offered a story about that theme. Researchers can learn more about informants' most frequently discussed or in-depth features of a phenomenon by using thematic analysis, as well as potential connections between those aspects. There are six stages comprise the thematic analysis procedure by Braun and Clarke:

Table 3.7 Description of Thematic Analysis Phases

Phase	Description
Familiarising with the data	Transcribing audio, reading over the text and taking preliminary notes, and generally browsing the data to become acquainted with it.
Generating initial codes	Highlighting sections of the text and coming up with shorthand labels or "codes" to describe the content.
Searching for themes	Examining the coding to look for overlap and similarities between codes.
Reviewing potential themes	Return to the data collection and contrast the themes with it. If there are problems, the topics can be split up, combined, eliminated, or new ones can be formed.

Defining and naming themes	Establish the distinctiveness and specificity of each topic, and then name each one in a clear and intelligible way.
Producing the report	Using analysis, tell a convincing "narrative" about the data. The narrative ought to be compelling, clear, and complicated while also being rooted in scholarly fields.

Source: *Braun & Clarke (2012)*

3.7.1 Microsoft Word Macros

The approach to data analysis for this study was thematic analysis, as defined by Braun and Clarke. The analysis was mostly manual, but Microsoft Word Macros were used to help organize and code data extensively. In order to facilitate the organization and analysis of qualitative data, Microsoft Word Macros were implemented. The macro function was employed to automate repetitive duties, including the coding, highlighting of key responses, and categorisation of themes from the interview transcripts. Initially, Microsoft Word was used to transcribe all interview data. The researcher subsequently employed macros to systematically identify recurring keywords and phrases, which were subsequently categorised. This procedure contributed to the reduction of manual errors and the improvement of consistency in data analysis. The utilisation of macros also enhanced the efficacy of managing substantial quantities of textual data and facilitated the creation of themes for subsequent analysis. Thematic analysis has many advantages that Microsoft Word Macros provide in:

1. By Automation of Repetitive Tasks: By automating coding tasks like area formatting so that it was more visually accessible, highlighting significant themes, and coding data into different areas, macros simplify the process.
2. Everything is set: Researcher have used the pre-defined macros to ensure that the codes were used consistently across the dataset thereby decreasing the possibility of mistakes.

3. Efficiency: It made certain parts of the process, like tagging and pulling data segments, quicker, so researcher could devote more time to getting insights from themes.
4. Accessibility and simplicity: Microsoft Word macros do not require specialized qualitative analysis software (e.g. NVivo) and being a commonly used software, most of the users have some general understanding of its features and tools that ease the coding process.

The procedure for analysing qualitative data using Microsoft Word macros is shown in Figure 3.6. All of the interview transcripts were first combined into a single Microsoft Word document. After carefully reading the transcripts, the researcher underlined pertinent passages that were pertinent to the goals of the study. Next, key concepts and problems found in the data were represented by initial codes that were applied to noteworthy remarks using Microsoft Word's comment feature. Following coding, all comments and codes were automatically extracted into a different document using Microsoft Word macros. An ordered list of extracted codes was produced as a result, making maintenance and analysis simpler. In order to facilitate thematic analysis and understanding of the results, the retrieved codes were finally organised into groups and more general topics.

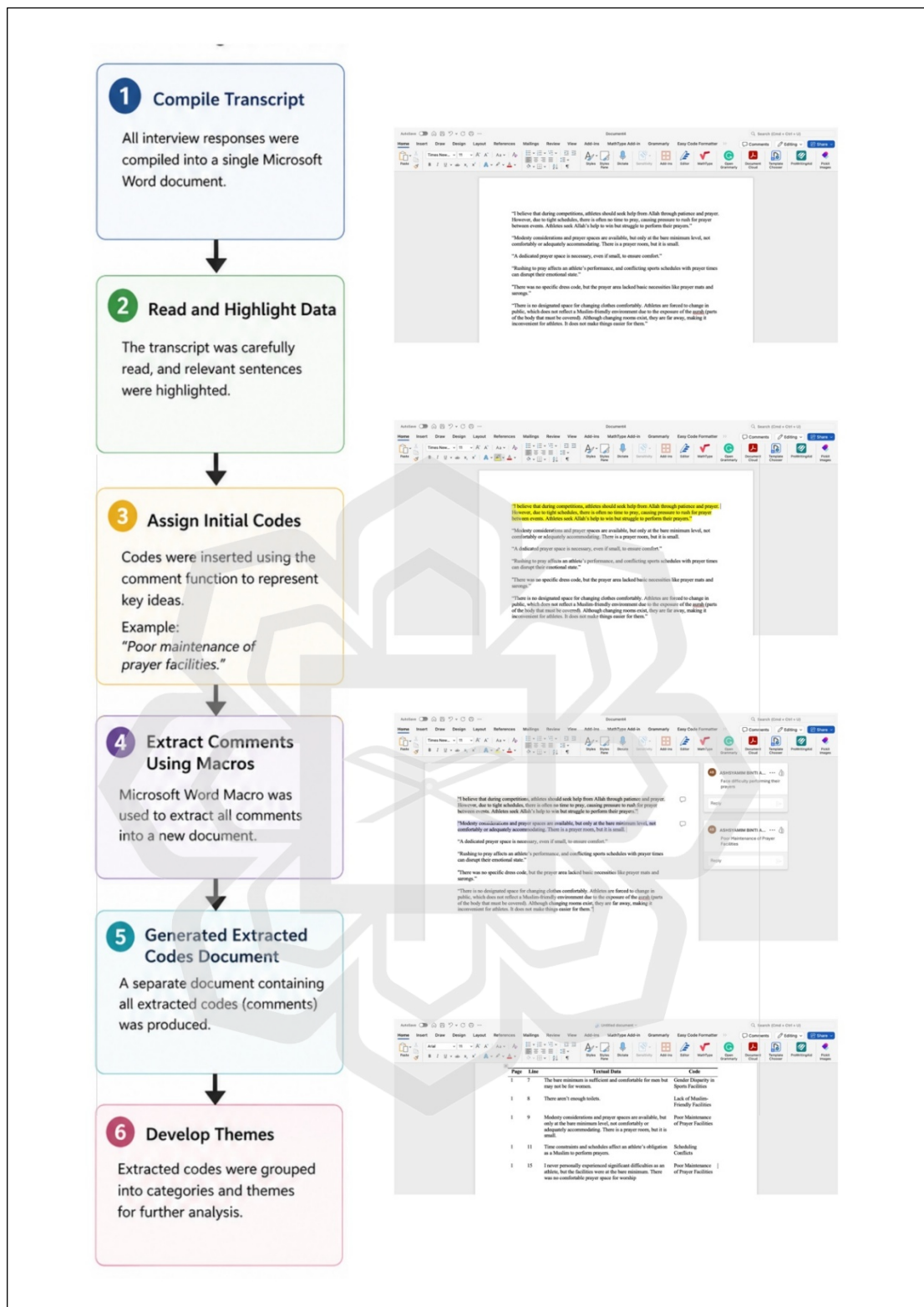


Figure 3.6 Process of Using Microsoft Word Macros for Data Analysis

Through thematic analysis, Figure 3.7 illustrates the development of initial codes and themes that were derived from the interview data. The extracted codes from the responses of the informants were categorised into seven primary themes. To facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the study's findings, the figure illustrates the systematic organization of raw interview data into broader thematic categories.

CODE	THEME
- Different comfort needs (gender) - Not enough toilets - No proper changing space - No gender separation - Inconvenient ablution - No proper ablution facilities - Uncomfortable sports attire - Unfair treatment - Basic facilities not comfortable - Basic facilities not adequate - Poor maintenance and safety issues - Poor maintenance issues - Need clean facilities - Family-friendly spaces	Theme 1: Structural and Environmental Barriers in Sports Facilities
- Small and inadequate prayer space - Small prayer space - No designated prayer space - No prayer facilities abroad - Need dedicated prayer space - Need larger prayer space - Missing prayer essentials - Need prayer mats and qibla - Need prayer clothing - Basic ablution needs improvement - No ablution facilities	Theme 2: Insufficient Religious Facilities and Infrastructure
- Schedule affects prayer - No prayer reminders - No prayer reminders abroad - Schedule supports prayer	Theme 3: Scheduling Conflicts and Time Management Issues
- Prayer supports performance - Prayer affects performance - Facilities improve experience - Focus on prayer and halal food - Focus on prayer and food - Preference for halal and prayer	Theme 4: Spiritual Well-Being and Athletic Performance
- Qatar challenges negative perceptions - Qatar as best model - Qatar promotes Islam - Qatar as benchmark - Strong promotion by Qatar - Islamic exposure	Theme 5: Qatar as a Benchmark for Muslim-Friendly Sports Model
- Malaysia can adopt Qatar model - Malaysia capable of implementation - Malaysia has potential - Malaysia needs improvement - Lack of Islamic identity - Weak promotion - Weak awareness - Government-managed events adequate - No facilities in private events - Maintain Muslim-friendly efforts - Concern about dress code acceptance	Theme 6: Malaysia's Capacity and Policy Gaps
- Need clear guidelines - Lack of guidelines - Need awareness and implementation - Need awareness and guidelines - Need Muslim-friendly focus - Improve facilities - Improve facilities and modesty - Need better facilities - Need stronger marketing - Expand Muslim-friendly services - Certification improves access - Improve Muslim-friendly services - Need strategic improvement - Apply Islamic values - Promote Islamic tourism - Promote Islamic values globally - Support banning alcohol - Maintain modest attire - Halal benefits for all	Theme 7: Need for Standardization and Policy Framework

Figure 3.7 Development of Initial Codes and Themes from Interview Data

3.7.2 Manual Thematic Analysis

Microsoft Word Macros were implemented to expedite the coding process by automating text formatting, emphasising themes, and organising data. However, thematic analysis was executed manually. In accordance with Braun and Clarke's systematic methodology, the researcher actively interacted with the data to guarantee a profound comprehension. This provided the opportunity to meticulously identify, interpret, and refine patterns and themes.

A balance between efficiency and analytical profundity was achieved through the combination of manual analysis and the use of Microsoft Word Macros. Macros improved consistency and decreased the time necessary for data organization and classification; however, the interpretative process was still researcher-driven to guarantee rigour and relevant analysis.

Figure 3.8 illustrates the data analysis process used in this investigation. The method began with the transcription of interview data, which was then translated from Malay to English to guarantee uniformity in analysis and reporting. To gain familiarity, the data were organised and reviewed often. Coding and classification were then used to discover important patterns and themes. Thematic analysis was then carried out manually, using Braun and Clarke's framework to ensure a methodical and in-depth interpretation of the data. Finally, the examined data were synthesised to generate findings that were consistent with the research aims. This organised approach ensured that the qualitative data was thoroughly and rigorously analysed.

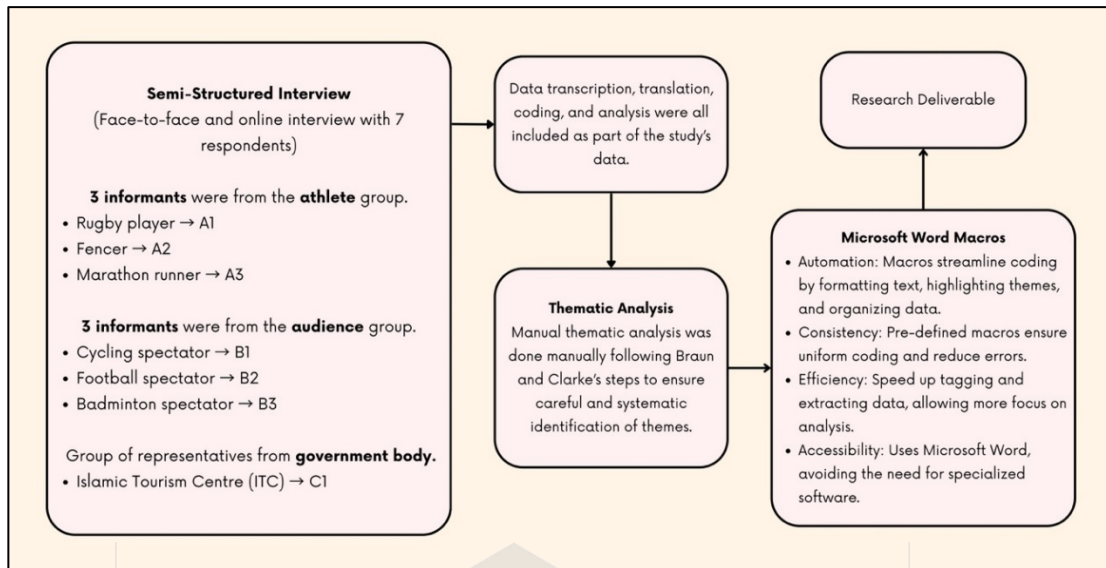


Figure 3.8 Flow of Data Analysis Process

3.8 SUMMARY

The research methodology employed in the study to investigate the potential for Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia is delineated in this chapter. In order to acquire comprehensive information from pertinent stakeholders, the investigation implements a qualitative research methodology that incorporates semi-structured interviews and library research. Verbatim transcriptions of the interview data were conducted in Malay, translated into English, and analysed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. Participant selection, data collection, classification, and theme development, as well as ethical considerations such as confidentiality and informed consent, are also detailed in the chapter. In general, Chapter 3 offers a methodical account of the research design and analysis process that were implemented to guarantee the credibility and dependability of the study's conclusions.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the data presented is a qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with seven informants (three athletes (A1- A3), three audience members (B1-B3), and a group consisted of 3 representatives of the government at the Islamic Tourism Centre (C1). The thematic analysis was used to identify, interpret, and analyse recurrent patterns in the interview data regarding the Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia in a systematic manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This chapter aims to introduce and analyze critically the main results based on the experiences and views of the informants. These results directly correspond to the research purpose, which aims at investigating key elements, strategies, and potential benefits of Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia.

The discussion is categorized into a number of main themes: structural obstacles in sports infrastructure, restrictions in religious facilities, scheduling and time management issues, significance of spiritual well-being to athletic performance, insights on parallels between Malaysia and Qatar as the best examples, and policy implications based on improvements. These themes offer systematic guidelines on how to comprehend the lived experiences of stakeholders and their overall ramifications on improving Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

The demographic profiles of the seven informants provide intentional and balanced information on the major stakeholder groups that are relevant to the Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia. The sample consists of 3 athletes (A1-A3), 3 audiences (B1-B3) and 1 governmental official of the Islamic Tourism Centre (C1). This design also ensures that the research takes into account the entire spectrum of experiences including direct participation in sports, the formation of the spectators, and the institutional governance attitudes, which are key in a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Gender wise, both the male and the female informants are covered, and this will allow a more in-depth examination of gender related considerations, such as modesty considerations, access to facilities, and inclusivity in sports facilities. The 15-45 age group is indicative of a blend of younger and older participants, which further enhances the applicability of the results to the various phases of social, religious, and sporting experience.

The educational backgrounds include SPM-degree level, which implies different levels of awareness, critical thinking, and exposure to international sport tourism contexts. Athletes (A1 to A3) bring in experiential knowledge based on first-hand experience in competitive sporting activities, whereas audiences (B1 to B3) offer observational and consumer-oriented interpretations of sports settings. Conversely, the government official (C1) provides a policy and institutional dimension, especially as far as planning, implementation, and governance of Muslim-friendly programs is concerned.

All in all, this variety adds to the credibility and analytical richness of the research, providing data triangulation of the results so that the conclusions are well-balanced, dependable, and a multi-dimensional interpretation of Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia.

Table 4.1 Summary of Informants and Key Issues Raised

Informant	Group	Gender	Key Issues Raised
A1	Athlete	Male	Lack of privacy in facilities, discomfort with changing areas, insufficient support for awrah requirements, inadequate prayer reminders
A2	Athlete	Female	Absence of proper changing rooms, gender-related facility limitations, structural inequality in sports environments
A3	Athlete	Male	Overcrowded prayer spaces, difficulty accessing religious facilities during competitions, tight scheduling conflicts
B1	Audience	Female	Inadequate ablution facilities, lack of cleanliness in prayer areas, limited comfort in sports venues
B2	Audience	Male	Overcrowded surau during events, scheduling conflicts with prayer times, lack of structured breaks for worship
B3	Audience	Female	Insufficient toilets during large events, lack of gender-segregated facilities, emotional discomfort in sports environments
C1	Government (ITC)	Female	Policy gaps, lack of standardised Muslim-friendly sports guidelines, need for institutional coordination and MFAR expansion

4.3 THEME 1: STRUCTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS IN SPORTS FACILITIES

The initial significant theme that comes out of the interviews is the structural and environmental obstacles in sports facilities that indicate high levels of inadequacy in design, sufficiency, and inclusiveness of sports architecture in Malaysia. This theme is reinforced by other sub-themes, in particular, the gender inequality in facilities, absence of toilets and changing rooms, and poor provision of infrastructure in which female participants are disproportionately affected.

A shared theme of the informants is the description of facilities as bare minimum, for instance, facilities lack the basic infrastructure but are not comfortable, dignified or inclusive. Indicatively, athlete A2 indicated that there was no privacy in the offered facilities in that, at one point, the athletes had to change in places where other people could see them, as there were no changing rooms. Similarly, audience informant B3 pointed out that facilities in terms of toilets were inadequate during large events, resulting in congestion and inconvenience.

Analytically, these findings are suggestive of structural inequality in sports infrastructure planning (Neal et al., 2023). Lack of gender sensitivity means that the facility will be developed based on functional sufficiency, as opposed to universal access. This creates unequal user experiences, especially among female athletes, and thus solidifies existing gender imbalances in participating in sports and experiencing sport. Moreover, such infrastructural obstacles overlap with the Islamic notion of awrah, which implies modesty and privacy of the human body (Ayang Utriza Yakin et al., 2023). Informant A1 reported the uncomfortable experience when the facilities failed to accommodate their privacy needs and proved that poor infrastructure may contradict the religious requirements and cultural expectations. This restricts the participation of Muslim female athletes to be full without undermining their values.

Notably, the problem is not only related to the physical lack of facilities but also to the expanded effects on the well-being of athletes. The informants always associated low infrastructure with low motivation, high stress, and low psychological preparedness to compete. All in all, this theme shows that structural barriers are not just operational ineffectiveness but are systemic design failures. Unless there is a purposeful, inclusive, and gender-sensitive planning, the sports environments will remain a source of inequality and restricted participation, particularly in female and Muslim athletes.

This theme pertains to Research Objective 1, emphasising the significance of sufficient, inclusive, and gender-sensitive infrastructure as essential components of Muslim-friendly sports tourism. This also influences Research Objective 2, as overcoming these structural hurdles is crucial for formulating successful solutions to enhance sports facility design and inclusivity.

4.4 THEME 2: INSUFFICIENT RELIGIOUS FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The second notable theme that emerges due to the interviews is the lack of sufficient supply of religious facilities and infrastructure. This highlights a continuing challenge of inequality in availability, accessibility and adequacy of specially designed Muslim worship places in Malaysian sports facilities. This theme is reinforced by repetitive sub-themes, such as tiny and overcrowded prayer rooms (surau), inadequate ablution (wudu) areas, lack of necessities required to perform prayers, such as mats and sarongs, and poor maintenance and cleanliness of available facilities.

One of the most overwhelming conclusions made among the informants is that prayer facilities are usually congested during big sporting events. According to athlete A3, the surau rooms were often not big enough to seat the highest amount of people and the problem of the congestion during the prayer sessions in large areas was also mentioned by audience informant B2. The subjects were even forced to pray in the

wrong locations such as hotel rooms, parking lots or even in the open space. Such circumstances undermine the convenience and dignity that come with the accomplishment of religious duties in organized sporting places.

Moreover, informants A1 and B1 highlighted the major shortcomings of ablution facilities. At some of the places, the wudu facilities were distant from the prayer areas or in a bad condition, or in some cases, not operational. This adds more strain to logistics, especially to the athletes who are on strict competition regimes. Moreover, C1 pointed to the lack of primary prayer materials, such as mats and sarongs, which meant the lack of preparation to meet the basic religious needs and compelled participants to use their own resources.

The critical-analytical view of these findings opines that the religious needs do not have a systematic representation in the sports infrastructure planning (Miftakhu Rosyad et al., 2022). Instead, they are considered optional design features as opposed to obligatory ones. This is an indication of a structural inadequacy in sports event management, whereby efficiency and capacity of operations are taken first before the overall welfare of the participants, including the spiritual needs.

Relatively, government-organized events in Malaysia, like SUKMA and the SEA Games, according to A1 and C1, tend to offer superior facilities to religious practices as opposed to privately organized or self-funded events, where discrepancies are more pronounced. Provision internationally is patchy, with certain countries providing structured facilities to pray and others little or no specific support, which means that athletes have to take religious matters into their own hands.

In theory, this theme shows a disconnect between the infrastructure design and the spiritual requirements of Muslim athletes (Anirotul Qoriah & Aftina Nurul Husna, 2024). Participation frameworks do not incorporate worship, but they are made to fit in

an informal way, leaving the burden on the athletes to fit into the inappropriate situations.

Overall, this theme highlights that the absence of religious facilities is a systemic disparity of the inclusive sports design. It does not only affect the convenience, but also dignity, emotional comfort as well as the psychological well-being. This underscores the need to have uniform, integrated and holistic infrastructure planning in the development of Muslim-friendly sports tourism.

This theme clearly aligns with Research Objective 1 by recognising the availability of prayer facilities, ablution areas, and religious necessities as essential components of Muslim-friendly sports tourism. It also supports Research Objective 2 by emphasising the necessity for strategic enhancements and improved infrastructure planning to guarantee consistent execution.

4.5 THEME 3: SCHEDULING CONFLICTS AND TIME MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The third theme of the interviews is the issue of scheduling and time management, which points to a significant incongruity between the schedule of the sports events and the religious requirements of Muslim athletes. This theme is reinforced by recurring sub-themes, including the absence of prayer schedules, close competition schedules, and schedules at variance with the event schedule and at variance with the azan (call to prayer).

One of the major discoveries is that due to strict and tight competition timetables, athletes often miss out on prayer sessions or have to postpone them. Athletes A1 and A3 asserted that sporting events are usually planned without structured breaks, and it is difficult to meet their prayer commitment at the planned time. Similarly,

audience informant B2 noted that there are no institutional procedures, such as prayer alerts or scheduled breaks, to aid in observing religion at events. This means that athletes are left to be wholly left to their own devices and subject to situational awareness, which usually ends up producing hasty or tardy worship.

Analytically, the results indicate that sports scheduling systems are largely structured in logistical effectiveness, fairness, and flow of competition without integrating religious time requirements (Schelling et al., 2021). Although this kind of scheduling framework is generally regarded as neutral and standardized in sport management, the fact is that this framework is implicitly discriminatory against athletes who have religious commitments. This implies that neutral scheduling is culturally created in practice and can be detrimental to a particular group of users (Uhde et al., 2020).

Moreover, the problem has great implications for the well-being of athletes. The informants emphasized that the necessity to balance between the demands of competition and prayer makes the individuals experience psychological stress and emotional tension all the time. Insufficient time to structure worship activities leads to increased stress, low concentration, and discontinuous mental concentration. The impossibility to cope with both roles in a harmonious way may interfere with emotional stability and influence readiness to perform, as athlete B3 explained.

Importantly, this theme is a critique of the notion that time management in sport is technical only. Instead, it demonstrates that scheduling systems can discriminate against athletes unintentionally due to the overlap of the performance space with the religious practice. Such absence of integrated planning indicates a non-inclusivity towards management of sports events particularly in cases where religious practice is a major component of identity among people participating.

Overall, this theme highlights the notion that quality sports scheduling must go beyond operational organization to include culturally and spiritually sensitive planning. Without this integration, the athletes will have to negotiate independently between the requirements of competition and the religious practices with adverse consequences of participation and psychological well-being.

This theme pertains to Research Objective 1, highlighting the significance of including Islamic practices into the organising of sporting events as a fundamental aspect of Muslim-friendly sports tourism. It also supports Research Objective 2 by emphasising the necessity for more inclusive and adaptable scheduling solutions to fulfil religious obligations.

4.6 THEME 4: SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING AND ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

The fourth theme that is observed in the interviews is the relationship between spirituality and sports performance, in which religious practice is found to be very important in the psychological wellness, energy levels and total performance of the sportsmen. This theme is supported by sub-themes like the faith that faith enhances performance, prayer reduces stress, and halal food offers sustainability in competitions.

Among the most striking lessons that came out of the interviews is that the participants always testified that they felt more emotionally stable, focused and confident when the Muslim-friendly facilities were offered, in particular, the prayer space and the provision of the halal food. An example would be an athlete (A3) who indicated that the availability of prayer facilities helped them reduce mental stress and helped them focus more during the competition.

Likewise, audience member B2 observed that the presence of halal food helped to ease and maintain energy levels during sporting events. These reactions are a sign that there is a direct correlation between spiritual accommodation and the perceived performance quality.

On the other hand, lack of proper facilities was linked to stress, distraction, and emotional unease. Some of the informants said that prayer rooms were not available or too crowded, and as such, they struggled to concentrate as they needed to seek appropriate places to meet their religious needs. This is indicative of the impact that unmet spiritual needs have on indirectly interfering with psychological preparedness to compete (Smith, 2023).

Analytically, these findings show that there is a close correlation between sports performance psychology and spiritual well-being. Coping mechanisms such as religious activities, for instance, prayer help the athletes cope, refresh their mental focus and maintain a balanced mood despite the demands of the competition. This is in line with the sports psychology theories that focus on emotional control and cognitive attention as the main factors contributing to the performance results (Balk & Englert, 2020).

Remarkably, the findings reveal that Muslim friendly facilities cannot be viewed as performance enhancing systems as well as religious. Access to prayer spaces and halal nutrition, in turn, result in better physical performance and decision-making, which is achieved through psychological stability.

Altogether, this theme demonstrates that physical training is not the only factor that influences athletic performance, but also spiritual and emotional health. Muslim-friendly provisions therefore have a two-fold role in that they can not only satisfy religious requirements, but also improve athletic performance in a sports competitive environment.

This theme aligns with Research Objective 3, as it illustrates the potential advantages of Muslim-friendly behaviours in improving athletes' psychological well-being and overall performance. It further substantiates Research Objective 1 by emphasising the significance of spiritual support as a key element in sports tourism contexts.

4.7 THEME 5: QATAR AS A BENCHMARK FOR MUSLIM-FRIENDLY SPORTS MODEL

The fifth theme that comes out of the interviews is Qatar as a model of a sports-friendly environment to Muslims, as a way of appreciating how well Qatar has incorporated Islamic values in a major international sporting event. This theme is supplemented by sub-themes such as the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 success, the introduction of Islamic values in sports, the ban on alcohol, the need to provide modest settings and prayer areas, and the good global publicity.

One of the main discoveries is that the informants always considered Qatar as an example of how to host international sports events and preserve Islamic values at the same time. As an example, A1 pointed out that the introduction of prayer rooms in Qatar stadiums and the management of alcohol policy proved that Islamic values can be integrated into the international sporting infrastructure, without sacrificing the quality of the event. On the same note, B2 observed that the dress codes and organized amenities did not reduce the appeal of the event; on the contrary, cultural identity and global awareness were boosted.

Qatar, analytically, is a model of integration of national sports identity and religion. Rather than separating the cultural and religious values in the management of sports, Qatar is a progressive country that integrates the Islamic values into the organization of events, infrastructures design and visitor experience (Cochrane et al.,

2024). This renders sport not merely a competitive game, but a cultural expression and projection of soft power.

Importantly, C1 highlighted that the strategy of Qatar has helped to create a new image of Islam in the world by showing that Islamic values and modern international sports can be combined (Alfurqan Alfurqan et al., 2024). The successful organization of a world sporting event based on the Islamic principles proved the belief that religion limits world participation or competitiveness.

In comparison with other nations, Qatar is seen as a properly organized, Muslim-oriented sports environment in which policies are regularly adopted on all levels. In comparison, Malaysia can be considered a partially developed country, where Muslim-friendly aspects can be found but are inconsistently applied to sporting situations. This also shows a disconnect between policy intent and practice.

Comprehensively, this theme places Qatar as an example of how Muslim-friendly sports tourism is developed, and recommends Malaysia to selectively embrace best practices in a manner that would not conflict with its multicultural and multi-religious environment.

This theme supports Research Objective 2 by offering pragmatic strategic insights that Malaysia can implement in the advancement of Muslim-friendly sports tourism. It further supports Research Objective 3 by demonstrating prospective advantages, such as enhanced global reputation and heightened international recognition.

4.8 THEME 6: MALAYSIA'S CAPACITY AND POLICY GAPS

The sixth theme found in the interviews deals with the capacity and policy gaps of Malaysia, which represent the discrepancy between the great potential of the country in terms of Muslim-friendly sports tourism and the gaps in the practical aspect of the implementation. This theme is reinforced by sub-themes such as available halal infrastructure, poor application in sporting facilities, the lack of a standardized guideline, and the lack of international branding of the Malaysian Muslim-friendly sporting products.

One of the major observations is that Malaysia already enjoys a good base of Muslim-friendly services, especially in terms of halal food supply and overall hospitality amenities. Nevertheless, the informants repeatedly mentioned that the introduction of such facilities into the realms of sports is patchy and does not have any standardized norms. Indicatively, A2 and B3 pointed out that, unlike government-organized events like SUKMA and SEA Games, which tend to offer sufficient prayer space and halal food, privately organized or international-level events tend not to do so.

Analytically, this means that there is a definite disconnect between policy intent and operational implementation (Hupe, 2021). Despite the fact that Malaysia is marketing itself as a Muslim-friendly destination, no general, standardized framework of sports event regulation is in place. This means that Muslim-friendly facilities are provided by individual organizers, not by a national system, and this approach leads to a patchwork event-by-event strategy, as opposed to a long-term strategic plan.

More importantly, C1 highlighted that the limitation is not the availability of resources but institutional coordination and the implementation of policies. Malaysia is a great potential country with a well-established halal ecosystem and cultural positioning, but the potential has not been fully converted to the sports tourism industry because the structures of its implementation are disjointed.

On balance, this theme shows that the weaknesses faced by Malaysia are in the nature of governance, not infrastructures and finances (Khatib et al., 2022). Integration of policies, enforcement mechanisms, and inter-agency coordination is thus necessary in order to realize a comprehensive development of a consistent and competitive Muslim-friendly sports tourism framework.

This theme pertains directly to Research Objective 2, since it highlights critical deficiencies in policy execution and coordination that must be rectified to establish Malaysia as a Muslim-friendly sports tourism destination. This also aligns with Research Objective 3, as addressing these gaps can improve Malaysia's competitiveness and optimise its tourism potential.

4.9 THEME 7: NEED FOR STANDARDIZATION AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The last theme that can be identified in the interviews is the necessity of standardization and a formal policy framework to inform the implementation of Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia. This theme is also backed by sub-themes such as the necessity of official guidelines, the expansion of MFAR (Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality Assurance and Recognition) certification, and the creation of clear operational requirements of sports event organizers.

One of the findings is that the informants are in high support of formulating formalized policies to bring about consistency when offering Muslim-friendly facilities in all sporting events. Specifically, A1 and B2 pointed out the inconsistency of the current implementation since the presence of prayer spaces, access to halal food, and other associated facilities is dependent more on individual organizers than on an integrated system. This leads to discrepancies in the quality, accessibility, and compliance in general at different events.

Analytically, standardization is a necessary factor to provide consistency in the delivery of a service and lessen the need to rely on ad hoc or event-based facilities (Zhang et al., 2023). A systematic system of policy would be in place to set definite standards to be adhered to by organizers so that such essential needs as prayer areas, halal meals, and modesty issues would always be considered when organizing any sports event.

Above all, C1 noted that because there are no formal guidelines and enforcement mechanisms, Muslim-friendly initiatives are ineffective since they are fragmented and based on personal commitment, rather than an institutionalized governing body. This limits the sustainability in the long term and jeopardizes the capacity of Malaysia as a competitive sports tourism destination that is Muslim-friendly.

In general, the theme shows that policy institutionalization and reinforcement of regulatory bodies are crucial to the attainment of consistency, credibility, and sustainability in the development of Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia (Che et al., 2024).

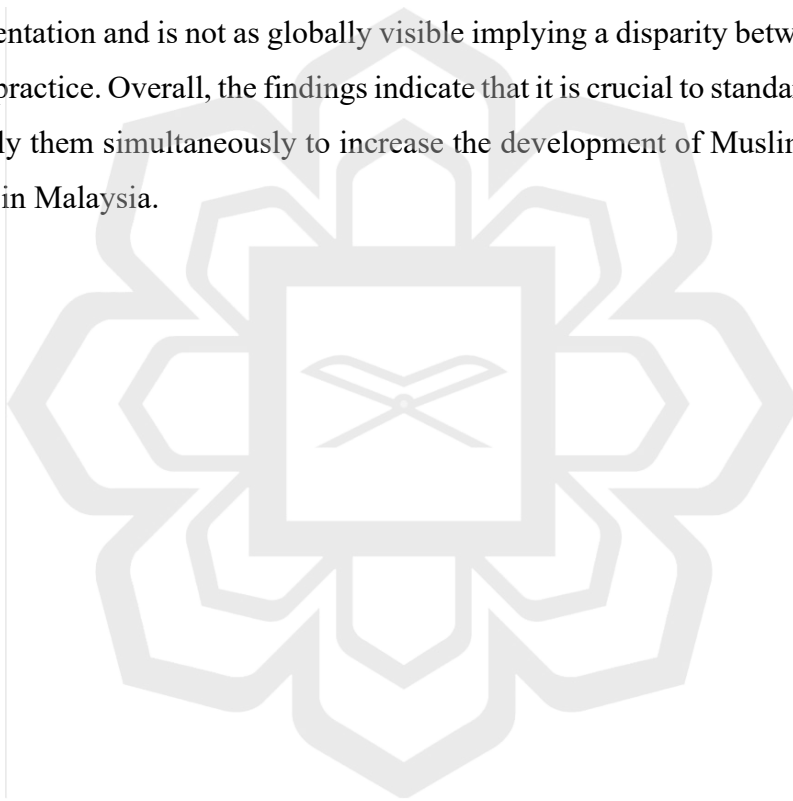
This theme significantly supports Research Objective 2 by emphasising the need for standardised rules and policy frameworks to guarantee the constant implementation of Muslim-friendly practices. This also aligns with Research Objective 3, as such standardisation can improve credibility, sustainability, and global competitiveness.

4.10 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data of the interviews with the sportspeople, spectators, and one of the government officials in this chapter gave information about the Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia. The results showed a high level of infrastructure deficiencies, especially in designing facilities that consider gender

differences and the overall inclusiveness of sports facilities. Furthermore, constraints in religious facilities were always reported, such as small prayer rooms, a lack of ablution facilities, and a lack of prayer necessities. Time clashes also revealed the absence of organized mechanisms to take care of prayer requirements during sports activities.

The review also showed how spiritual health is important in enhancing concentration, emotional stability, and performance of the athletes. The Qatar World Cup emerged as a huge success and this showed that Islamic beliefs could be successfully applied in international sport. Malaysia is, however, not a consistent implementation and is not as globally visible implying a disparity between the potential and the practice. Overall, the findings indicate that it is crucial to standardize the policies and apply them simultaneously to increase the development of Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia.



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings within Chapter 4 are also critically discussed in the chapter compared to summarizing the results. It explains the thematic results according to the literature that has already been made regarding Muslim-friendly sports tourism and correlates it with the research objectives set in Chapter 1. It is discussed on the background of qualitative thematic analysis of the data gathered with the aid of seven informants, which includes athletes, audience members, and a government representatives. It also incorporates pertinent theories and literature that have been explored in Chapter 2 and takes into consideration comparative information between Malaysia and Qatar. Thematic interpretation, literature comparison, implications, and policy recommendations are the structure of the chapter.

5.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

All these findings point to the fact that a mixture of infrastructural, institutional, and experiential aspects determines Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia. To begin with, the presence of structural barriers in sports facilities is still prominent, especially with reference to a weak infrastructure, gender inequality, and the inability to create change and support facilities based on dignity. Second, the limitations in religious facilities such as small prayer rooms (surau), lack of sufficient space to ablate (wudu), and lack of necessary prayer gear like mats and sarongs are always reported, which makes the Muslim participants unable to perform their religious duties comfortably.

Thirdly, time schedule disputes demonstrate the absence of organized prayer time, which causes time stress and less flexibility in sportspeople to fit sporting activities with religious obligations. Conversely, the theme of spiritual well-being shows that when the right facilities are in place, athletes have enhanced performance and less stress, which shows a definite correlation between religious accommodation and psychological stability.

Moreover, the Qatar paradigm can be defined as a successful model, which demonstrates the successful incorporation of Islamic principles into the international sports system and acquires a positive foreign reputation. Nevertheless, Malaysia has some significant lapses, especially in the inconsistent application and lack of a uniform national approach to the provision of sports that are Muslim-friendly. As a result, formalization and standardization are highly sought after in achieving uniformity, fairness, and sustainability of sports tourism development.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO LITERATURE

5.3.1 Structural Barriers vs Literature

Structural barriers. The results on structural barriers are consistent with the current literature on sports infrastructure inclusion, which suggests that access to sport is influenced by both the opportunities to participate and the physical environmental design and inclusiveness.

Studies on gendered space in sport highlight that women do not have equal access to sport due to poor design of facilities, privacy, and facilities are not designed as inclusive facilities (Rivera et al., 2024). The current results support this point since the informants were constantly referring to sports facilities as a bare minimum, lacking changing rooms, toilets, and privacy facilities.

This means that the Malaysian sporting infrastructure is based on systematic exclusion instead of inclusiveness. The overrepresentation of female athletes also contributes to the theory that gender inequality exists in sport, with infrastructure being the reproduction of inequalities in the wider society (Sveinson et al., 2022). The design of the facilities is thus not neutral but is actively involved in creating experiences of participation and solidifying gendered disadvantage.

5.3.2 Religious Facilities and Islamic Inclusivity Literature

The results are in line with the Islamic tourism literature, specifically the halal tourism framework, which focuses on integrating religious accommodation into the service systems instead of considering it an option (Khairuldin et al., 2024). However, the facts have shown that religious provision is peripheral in the sporting settings. The lack of prayer rooms, ablution stations, and prayer requirements is an indication of a mismatch between the ideals of Islamic inclusiveness and their implementation.

According to religious accommodation theory, inclusivity should be structural and systemically addressed as a part of service design. Nevertheless, the results show that sports infrastructure prioritizes religious needs secondarily, which shows the lack of relations between the discourse of Islamic inclusivity and the practice of sports planning.

5.3.3 Scheduling and Sports Management Theory

The sports management literature is more focused on efficiency, fairness, and optimization of scheduling systems (Zhang & Yang, 2023). The findings, however, challenge the notion that the timing is culturally neutral. Athletes also lamented that

they struggled to juggle their competition schedules and prayer schedules and that they had time constraints and were lacking their religious practices.

This demonstrates that planning arrangements, which are operationally efficient, can unintentionally discriminate against religious athletes. Lack of organized prayer breaks implies that existing models of event management are mostly secular in nature. That timing needs to be rethought as culturally embedded, not as cultural neutrality.

5.3.4 Spiritual Well-Being and Sports Psychology

The findings align with the literature on sports psychology, which is associated with stress management, resilience, and performance optimization (Petersen, 2024). According to the informants, prayer and access to Muslim friendly amenities make them feel emotionally stable, focused, and confident.

This is an extension of the existing literature that shows that spiritual well-being is not merely a coping mechanism, but a performance enhancer. The interconnection of spirituality, psychology, and performance in sports is multidimensional since the availability of Halal food, prayer rooms, and easiness of religion reduce anxiety and boost psychological readiness.

5.3.5 Qatar Model and Global Sports Literature

The case of Qatar fits the mega-event and soft power literature, which justifies how states utilize sport to establish identity and impact the worldview. Results indicate that Qatar was able to incorporate Islamic values into its sporting system without decreasing

international involvement, contrary to the belief that religion restricts international sport.

This is in line with cultural diplomacy theory, whereby sport is seen as an instrument of rewriting narratives. Qatar presents an exemplary framework that unites religion, policy, and sport, which makes it a model of Muslim-friendly sport governance (Ahmad Rosy et al., 2025).

5.3.6 Malaysia Policy Gaps vs Governance Literature

The results are consistent with the policy implementation gap theory that emphasizes the gap between policy design and implementation. Despite the country having good grounds in halal tourism, its application in sports is still unsynchronized and incomplete.

This implies that it is not a problem of lack of resources but governance coordination. This is supported in the literature of tourism governance, which states that fragmented institutional responsibility undermines the effectiveness of policies (Farmaki, 2020). Malaysia needs more policy integration, not the expansion of infrastructure.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.4.1 Theoretical Implications

This research adds to the literature of Muslim-friendly sports tourism by broadening the knowledge of the intersection of religious needs and sports settings. It also contributes

to the sports inclusivity theory because it shows that inclusivity should not be limited to physical access but also involves spiritual and cultural accommodations (Gurgis et al., 2022). The findings further support the idea that the concept of religion can be considered through the prism of the overall athletic performance ecosystem where the spiritual health, mental stability, and environment design have an integrated effect on the experience and performance of the athletes.

5.4.2 Practical Implications

To sports organizers, the results indicate that it is necessary to include sufficient prayer spaces, make sure that ablution spaces are available, and offer religious necessities at events. Prayer schedules must be set to allow praying periods, with planned breaks where appropriate. Moreover, the design of the events should consider gender-sensitive infrastructure to guarantee privacy, dignity, and equality of access to all participants, mainly female athletes.

5.4.3 Policy Implications

On the policy level, the government agencies, including KBS, ITC, and more should work on the creation of standardized guidelines concerning the Muslim-friendly sports events. It is also necessary to have compliance mechanisms that would guarantee uniform application in all sporting settings, the removal of ad hoc systems, and enhanced coordination of national policies (Hums et al., 2023).

5.5 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

5.5.1 Objective 1: Key Elements of Muslim-Friendly International Sports Tourism

The initial objective was accomplished by the results of Chapter 4, particularly in the areas of accessibility, religious requirements, and Muslim-friendly practices in sports event planning. The investigation identified numerous key elements, other than basic necessity such as the availability of halal cuisine, the findings also identified prayer facilities that are both accessible and adequately equipped, modesty considerations in sports attire, gender-sensitive facilities and inclusive infrastructure that is designed to accommodate Muslims. Additionally, the results underscored the significance of incorporating Islamic principles into sports participation to prevent the neglect of religious obligations.

These findings demonstrate that the concept of Muslim-friendly sports tourism extends beyond the provision of halal food and basic religious facilities. The concept also requires the integration of Islamic values into overall planning and management of sporting events. These elements collectively illustrate that Muslim-friendly sports tourism necessitates a comprehensive approach that integrates religious, ethical, and practical considerations, in addition to fundamental facilities. Therefore, achieving this objective confirms that the successful implementation of Muslim-friendly sports tourism depends on balancing religious obligations with the needs and expectations of international sporting events.

5.5.2 Objective 2: Strategies to Effectively Market Malaysia as a Top Muslim-Friendly Sports Tourism Destination

The second objective was achieved by examining Malaysia's present practices and obstacles, as detailed in Chapter 4. The results indicated that Malaysia has significant

potential. However, there are deficiencies in the areas of implementation, coordination among stakeholders, and awareness of Muslim-friendly practices. These findings are consistent with the issues highlighted by the informants, who emphasised the need for stronger institutional support and a more coordinated approach to implementing Muslim-friendly practices in international sporting events,

The study identified key strategies, such as enhancing collaboration between government agencies and industry players, improving promotional efforts to highlight Muslim-friendly services during international sports events, and increasing awareness and training among service providers, by comparing Qatar as a benchmark. Furthermore, the participation of pertinent authorities, including MOTAC, ITC, JAKIM, and KBS, is essential for the establishment of policies and guidelines that are more clearly defined. The development of clear standards and continuous collaboration among these stakeholders would contribute to a more consistent implementation of Muslim-friendly sports tourism initiatives throughout the country. These strategies are crucial for Malaysia to more effectively position itself in the global sports tourism market that is Muslim-friendly.

5.5.3 Objective 3: Potential Benefits of Establishing Malaysia as a Muslim-Friendly Sports Tourism Destination

The third objective was achieved by recognising the potential benefits of the development of sports tourism that is Muslim-friendly. The results suggest that Malaysia's current assets, such as its well-established halal ecosystem and tourism infrastructure, serve as a robust foundation for future growth. The findings also demonstrate that these existing strengths provide Malaysia with a competitive advantage in further developing Muslim-friendly international sports tourism.

The implementation of Muslim-friendly practices has the potential to improve Malaysia's global image as an inclusive destination, attract a broader segment of

international visitors, and enhance the overall tourist experience. Beyond attracting Muslim tourists, these initiatives may also create awareness and appreciation of Islamic values among international visitors through positives experiences.

In addition, the research indicates that these initiatives have the potential to enhance Malaysia's status as a premier Muslim-friendly tourism hub, increase tourist arrivals, and stimulate economic development, a phenomenon that was observed in Qatar during the FIFA World Cup. Therefore, the successful of this concept would not only strengthen Malaysia's tourism competitiveness but also contribute to its long term economic and tourism sustainability,

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The research paper comes up with a series of specific recommendations to enhance Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia in terms of infrastructure, scheduling, governance, capacity building, branding, and learning the policy.

5.6.1 Infrastructure Improvements

The sports arenas should consider larger and more convenient prayer rooms, like a permanent surau in stadiums. Ablution (wudu) facilities must be modernised with regard to cleanliness, accessibility and proximity to prayer rooms. In addition, they ought to have gender-distinct changing rooms to provide privacy and dignity, and inclusivity, particularly to female athletes.

5.6.2 Scheduling Reform

Organizers of events ought to create disciplined prayer breaks in competition timetables. Prayer awareness should be considered in the timing of events to minimize the conflict between sporting and religious requirements (Ghous & None Mohamed Ashath, 2024). Electronic prayer notifications or automatic venue messages may also assist sportspeople and fans in effective time management with respect to their religious needs.

5.6.3 Policy and Governance

An all-inclusive system of sports that is friendly to Muslims needs to be established in order to adopt a uniform system of implementation of all activities. Compulsory standards for the organizers are necessary to provide uniformity, and MFAR certification should be extended to cover sports venues and event facilities.

5.6.4 Training and Awareness

The organizers of the event should be trained on religious and cultural sensitivity. Education in sports management needs to include cross-cultural and Islamic inclusiveness factors to enhance how events are planned and executed (Lee Kwan Meng et al., 2024).

5.6.5 Branding and International Strategy

The country of Malaysia should position itself strategically as a Muslim-friendly sports tourism destination through improved international marketing and international cooperation with Islamic tourism organizations to promote its international presence.

5.6.6 Lessons from Qatar

Malaysia ought to pick and choose the Qatar model and balance Islamic values with its multicultural reality rather than copy the model wholesale.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study also has a number of limitations to which its findings should be interpreted. Firstly, the sample size is rather small, comprised of seven informants, and this factor limits the applicability of the findings to a larger population. Second, the scope is restricted to Malaysia, which restricts the comparison with other countries and may not be representative of the global practices in Muslim-friendly sports tourism. Furthermore, this study does not focus on specific international athletic events or investigate the viewpoints of international tourists and athletes in depth. The study also does not evaluate the readiness of sports infrastructure, digital promotion tactics, or the long-term socio-cultural and environmental effects of implementing Muslim-friendly sports tourism. Thirdly, the qualitative research design, which is effective in the development of deeper insights, cannot be used to generalize findings statistically. Lastly, subjective bias might be involved, since the data will be based on personal experience and perception of the informants, which can affect the interpretation and reporting of the problems. Additionally, rather than assessing actual implementation results or policy efficacy across various sporting contexts, the study primarily

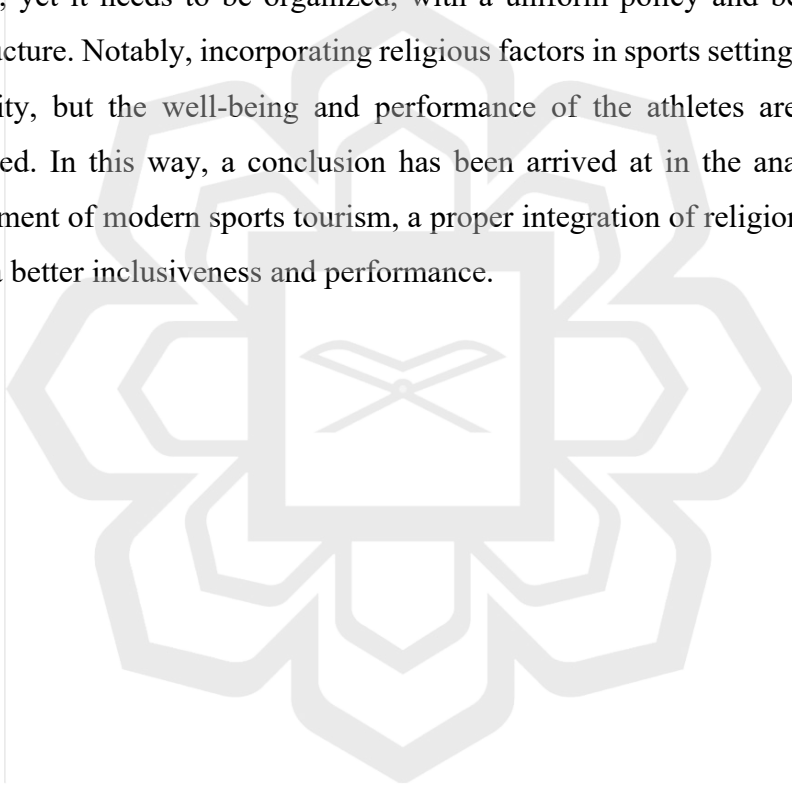
investigates the potential and perceptions of Muslim-friendly sports tourism. Nevertheless, in spite of such shortcomings, the work offers deep, rich data that adds value to the familiarity of lived experiences in the framework of Muslim-friendly sports tourism in Malaysia.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies need to take into account the use of bigger sample sizes and quantitative methods to increase the generalizability of results on Muslim-friendly sports tourism. It is also advisable to compare Malaysia, Qatar, and the UAE to have a better idea of various models of sports environment and Islamic integration. In order to investigate the practical use of Muslim-friendly characteristics in various athletic contexts, future researchers may also carry out event-specific case studies using international sporting events like marathons, triathlons, football tournaments, or motorsports. Moreover, research concentrating on performance indices of athletes might be used to empirically support the effects that Muslim-friendly facilities have on physical and psychological performance. Future research should also examine stakeholder preparedness, behavioural intentions, tourist satisfaction, and the efficiency of digital marketing and Muslim-friendly branding techniques in drawing foreign sports visitors. The sociocultural and environmental effects of Muslim-friendly sports tourism development on nearby communities and destinations are among the sustainability problems that researchers might look into further. More studies should also compare the efficacy of current policies like MFAR in sports situations, and investigate the economic effect of Muslim-friendly sports tourism on the development of nations and sports competitiveness in general.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This research paper aimed at investigating the key elements, strategies, and potential benefits of the Muslim-friendly international sports tourism in Malaysia. On the whole, the results point to the fact that Malaysia has great opportunities to become a major destination in the region, which is supported by the presence of halal infrastructure and cultural orientation. Nevertheless, there are major gaps in its structure, institutions, and implementation, which restrict its complete effectiveness, especially in sports-specific situations. The data indicates that the sports tourism that is Muslim-friendly is very possible, yet it needs to be organized, with a uniform policy and better planning of infrastructure. Notably, incorporating religious factors in sports settings not only boosts inclusivity, but the well-being and performance of the athletes are also positively influenced. In this way, a conclusion has been arrived at in the analysis that in the development of modern sports tourism, a proper integration of religion and sports may lead to a better inclusiveness and performance.



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GLOSSARY

FIFA World Cup 2022. An international football competition that takes place in Qatar and is renowned for its facilities and policies that are conducive to Islam.

Halal Certification. An formal certification issued by Islamic authorities confirming that food, merchandise, or services satisfy halal requirements.

Halal Ecosystem. A comprehensive framework encompassing halal-certified food, Islamic banking, Muslim-friendly lodgings, and Shariah-compliant enterprises.

Halal. An Arabic word that means "permissible" in Islam, it is frequently used to describe goods, services, or food that abide by Islamic law.

Islamic Ethics in Sports. Islamic teachings govern the ideals of fair play, modesty, and discipline in sports.

Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC). A Malaysian government agency tasked with promoting and expanding Islamic tourism.

Islamic Tourism. Activities related to tourism that are in line with Islamic principles and beliefs, such as pilgrimages to places of worship and travel locations that provide services that are accommodating to Muslims.

Mega Sporting Events. Large-scale international sports contests, such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics, draw huge crowds and competitors from all over the world.

Modest Dress Code. Clothing standards based on Islamic principles that encourage people to cover certain areas of their bodies, especially in public and during sports.

Muslim-Friendly Sports Facilities. Sports arenas with prayer rooms, halal food options, and separate facilities for men and women can accommodate Muslim athletes and guests.

Muslim-Friendly Tourism (MFT). A kind of tourism that accommodates Muslim tourists' needs by offering amenities like halal cuisine, places for prayer, and settings with a modest dress code.

Qibla Direction. Muslims pray towards the Kaaba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

Shariah-Compliant. Refers to activities, goods, or services such as business dealings, hospitality, and financial transactions that comply with Islamic law.

Sports Tourism. A sector of the travel business where individuals go to observe or take part in athletic events.



APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT WITH INITIAL CODES

Page	Line	Textual Data	Initial Code
1	7	The bare minimum is sufficient and comfortable for men but may not be for women.	Different comfort needs (gender)
1	8	There aren't enough toilets.	Not enough toilets
1	9	Modesty considerations and prayer spaces are available, but only at the bare minimum level, not comfortably or adequately accommodating. There is a prayer room, but it is small.	Small and inadequate prayer space
1	11	Time constraints and schedules affect an athlete's obligation as a Muslim to perform prayers.	Schedule affects prayer
1	15	I never personally experienced significant difficulties as an athlete, but the facilities were at the bare minimum. There was no comfortable prayer space for worship	Basic facilities not comfortable
1	16	I have never experienced a truly Muslim-friendly and comfortable environment as an athlete. However, as a tourist, I have encountered such accommodations. It is not just a gimmick, it brings genuine satisfaction to Muslims. It truly meets Muslim-friendly requirements. It goes beyond the bare minimum, not necessarily needing to be luxurious but making things easy and comfortable for both able-bodied individuals, people with disabilities, and women. Religion is for both the young and old. That particular hotel made things convenient.	Better Muslim-friendly experience as tourist
1	26	There is no designated space for changing clothes comfortably. Athletes are forced to change in public, which does not reflect a Muslim-friendly environment due to the exposure of the aurah (parts of the body that must be covered). Although changing rooms exist, they are far away, making it inconvenient for athletes. It does not make things easier for them.	No proper changing space
1	30	The call to prayer (azan) is only heard when it is broadcasted; no officials have ever informed or reminded athletes about prayer times.	No prayer reminders
1	34	Qatar's efforts should be acknowledged. Western skepticism views Islam as a belief system that suppresses the principles of freedom, being overly conservative or extremist. However, Qatar's successful hosting of major events challenges this perception. In Qatar, men and women do not mingle freely, alcohol is banned, and so on. Usually, large events like the World Cup and the Olympics face riots due to fanaticism and alcohol consumption, which can act as a stimulant for chaos. In Qatar, these issues did not arise. This is a key success factor that should be acknowledged, but Western media refuses to recognize it.	Qatar challenges negative perceptions
1	40	Malaysia can learn from this and implement similar principles in sports. This is not necessarily about prioritizing only Muslim athletes but creating a system that benefits all athletes, including non-Muslims. Implementing Muslim-friendly facilities would make things easier for many parties. Gender	Malaysia can adopt Qatar model

Page Line	Textual Data	Initial Code
	segregation in sports events is crucial. During sports events, fundamental rights and dignity must be protected, including the safety of supporters, families, and athletes. The Muslim-friendly concept should be emphasized.	
Page Line	Textual Data	Initial Code
2 5	The most important aspects are facilities and prayer spaces, which must have prayer mats and qibla direction indicators.	Need prayer mats and qibla
2 6	Ablution areas exist but are at the bare minimum level and should be improved.	Basic ablution needs improvement
2 7	There should also be sarongs for men and prayer garments (telekung) for women.	Need prayer clothing
2 8	Some places provide prayer essentials, but they are not well-maintained, raising concerns about cleanliness and usability. Broken ablution facilities are a common issue. Stone seating in the ablution area might also pose risks for injured athletes and the elderly.	Poor maintenance and safety issues
2 12	For an athlete, spiritual preparation is crucial. When their religious obligations are made easy, their mood improves. Muslim-friendly facilities significantly impact an athlete's performance. When these facilities exist, they no longer have to worry about modesty or finding a place to pray. A smooth and well-organized routine directly contributes to better performance. Everything is interconnected.	Prayer supports performance
2 18	places of worship and halal food are the main concerns.	Focus on prayer and halal food
2 21	Domestic facilities are at the bare minimum.	Basic local facilities
2 21	Abroad, there is no schedule or reminders for prayers—it all depends on self-discipline.	No prayer reminders abroad
2 25	Qatar's model is the best example for Malaysia	Qatar as best model
2 25	Malaysia has the capacity to implement such a system, considering it has hosted major sporting events like the 1998 Commonwealth Games.	Malaysia capable of implementation
2 27	Alcohol consumption should be banned at sports events. Malaysia is not a Muslim-only country, but the presence of alcohol causes more harm than good. Some may argue that alcohol makes events more vibrant and enjoyable, but in reality, it leads to fights and destruction. It can damage the country's image and even cause diplomatic issues.	Support banning alcohol
2 32	Ablution areas should be improved, accommodations should be Muslim-friendly, and modesty should be maintained.	Improve facilities and modesty

Page	Line	Textual Data	Initial Code
2	33	Halal food is not a major issue.	Halal food not an issue
2	33	When it comes to sports attire, religious obligations must not be neglected, and modesty must be upheld regardless of where the competition takes place. Modest sportswear for Muslim women exists and maintaining aurah should not be seen as a barrier for athletes.	Maintain modest attire
2	38	There is skepticism about the Muslim-friendly industry from the general public, and research like this is important for public awareness. However, implementation is more important than theory alone. Execution must go hand in hand with planning. The Muslim-friendly initiative is a good one—it prioritizes both worldly success and the afterlife.	Need awareness and implementation

Page	Line	Textual Data	Initial Code
3	5	Attire: Somewhat tight and uncomfortable, but it is a necessity.	Uncomfortable sports attire
3	8	Most venues do not have designated prayer spaces. The Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) does not have a prayer room, so athletes have to go to a nearby hotel to pray. When competing abroad, there are certain places where they have to pray in parking lots, possibly because most fencing athletes are non-Muslims.	No designated prayer space
3	11	there is no issue with halal food availability.	Halal food not an issue
3	14	For events like the SEA Games, SUKMA, and Selangor Sports, there are no problems because they are organized by the government, which ensures proper arrangements.	Government-managed events adequate
3	15	However, for self-funded competitions, prayer facilities are usually not provided, making it difficult for Muslim athletes. Most Muslim athletes end up praying in empty spaces that are not specifically designated for prayer.	No facilities in private events
3	24	There were instances of obvious bias, with a lack of fair play, which is ethically and morally wrong.	Unfair treatment
3	28	During an event opening, the recitation of the Quran surprised and motivated the respondent.	Positive Islamic element
3	29	Malaysia tends to follow trends instead of embracing its identity. Despite being an Islamic country, Malaysia lacks uniqueness in its approach. This could be an opportunity for da'wah (Islamic outreach) to non-Muslims.	Lack of Islamic identity
3	34	Malaysia can follow Qatar's example by implementing modest attire, banning alcohol, and starting with halal food.	Malaysia can adopt Qatar model
3	38	I believe that during competitions, athletes should seek help from Allah through patience and prayer. However, due to tight schedules, there is often no time to pray, causing	Schedule affects prayer

Page	Line	Textual Data	Initial Code
		pressure to rush for prayer between events. Athletes seek Allah's help to win but struggle to perform their prayers.	
3	41	A dedicated prayer space is necessary, even if small, to ensure comfort.	Need dedicated prayer space
3	42	Rushing to pray affects an athlete's performance, and conflicting sports schedules with prayer times can disrupt their emotional state.	Prayer affects performance
3	45	Main concerns are food and prayer spaces.	Focus on prayer and food
3	45	Most non-Muslim countries do not provide prayer facilities.	No prayer facilities abroad

Page	Line	Textual Data	Initial Code
4	3	Scheduling Adjustments: Pause sporting events during the call to prayer (azan) and allocate short breaks for athletes to pray	Schedule supports prayer
4	5	Gender Segregation: Provide separate resting areas for male and female athletes during sports events.	Gender separation needed
4	7	Family-Friendly Zones: Implement family-friendly areas in sports arenas for the comfort of athletes' families.	Family-friendly spaces
4	9	Clean Facilities: Ensure proper and clean facilities for athletes and their families.	Need clean facilities
4	12	There were plenty of halal food options	Halal food sufficient
4	13	but the prayer space was too small, making it difficult for participants to pray, especially since many runners finished at the same time. This led to delays in performing prayers, and some participants even missed their prayer times.	Small prayer space
4	17	There was no specific dress code, but the prayer area lacked basic necessities like prayer mats and sarongs.	Missing prayer essentials
4	20	The event organizer was the Melaka State Government that some Muslim-friendly aspects were provided	Government-managed events adequate
4	21	there are other marathon event did not fully meet the needs of Muslim athletes, as mentioned earlier.	Basic facilities not adequate
4	25	when I traveled to Melaka for the marathon, the prayer space in my hotel room was too small, making it difficult to perform prayers comfortably.	Small prayer space
4	29	Prayer facilities: No proper prayer spaces along the running track	No designated prayer space

Page	Line	Textual Data	Initial Code
4	30	Toilets: Available, but not gender-segregated.	No gender separation
4	31	Prayer timing: The organizer planned the marathon early so participants could pray Fajr (Subuh), but prayer spaces were insufficient.	Schedule affects prayer
4	35	I noticed Qatar's efforts in promoting Islam as a host nation. The country received positive feedback from the West, which helped change their perception of Islam.	Qatar challenges negative perceptions
4	36	Malaysia can adopt similar strategies, using Qatar as a model for hospitality and inclusivity.	Malaysia can adopt Qatar model
4	40	Malaysia should incorporate Islamic values when hosting sports events, such as dress code. Promoting modest attire, not necessarily requiring hijabs, but encouraging decent clothing. Then, halal food widespread availability to showcase Islam's cleanliness and quality standards. Next, accommodation which encourages hotels to provide prayer direction (Qibla), separate family rest areas, and gender-segregated spaces.	Apply Islamic values
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Page	Line	Textual Data	Initial Code
5	2	I agree that if the organizer provided a comfortable prayer space, I would have enjoyed the marathon more. Without proper prayer areas, I felt rushed to complete my run and couldn't fully enjoy the experience. Additionally, having more halal food options would have helped improve my performance and energy levels.	Facilities improve experience
5	8	Increase Halal Food Options – Many non-Muslims also prefer halal food because it is perceived as cleaner and healthier. Set a Modest Dress Code – Rather than requiring hijabs, the guideline should simply encourage participants to avoid revealing clothing. Improve Accommodation for Muslim Participants –	Improve facilities and modesty
5	14	Provide family rest areas with separate spaces for men and women. Encourage hotels to offer prayer-friendly amenities such as Qibla direction markers. The government should implement these changes gradually, starting with local sports events before expanding to international events. This phased approach will help ensure smooth adoption and acceptance.	Gradual implementation

Page	Line	Textual Data	Initial Code
6	5	There were plenty of halal food options	Halal food sufficient
6	5	but the prayer room was secluded and small.	Small prayer space
6	5	There were no ablution facilities, which did not meet the needs of Muslim visitors.	No ablution facilities
6	8	There was no clear separation between men and women	No gender separation
6	8	and there were no reminders for prayer times.	No prayer reminders
6	12	Qatar's approach is commendable—people who know nothing about Islam can still learn about it.	Qatar promotes Islam
6	13	For example, during the World Cup, Qatar displayed hadiths in public places for everyone to read.	Islamic exposure
6	16	In Malaysia, a similar approach could be implemented by including the call to prayer (azan) during events so that the public is aware. Since Malaysia is an Islamic country, this would be logical, and foreigners would likely understand.	Apply Islamic values
6	20	Non-Muslims can also learn that halal food is a better option, especially since Malaysia has more halal food choices than non-halal options.	Halal benefits for all
6	24	For large-scale events, Malaysia should provide bigger prayer spaces, as there will definitely be visitors who need to pray. If the prayer rooms are too small, they will become overcrowded and uncomfortable for Muslim visitors.	Need larger prayer space
6	29	Malaysia lacks effective promotion strategies. Despite organizing various events, many people are unaware of them	Weak promotion
6	30	In contrast, Qatar's large-scale promotion of the World Cup ensured that the event was widely recognized across social media.	Strong promotion by Qatar
6	34	When traveling, I look for halal food options and hotels with comfortable prayer spaces.	Preference for halal and prayer
6	38	There should be clear guidelines for visitors, both international and local, regarding modest attire. These guidelines should apply to athletes, audiences, and everyone involved so that people can learn from them.	Need clear guidelines
6	41	Encourage tours to Islamic sites for tourists who come to Malaysia for sporting events.	Promote Islamic tourism

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7	1	There were basic facilities like prayer rooms (surau) and halal food options,	Basic facilities available
7	2	The surau was too small for large crowds, and the cleanliness of the toilets could be improved.	Small prayer space
7	5	One major issue is the lack of well-maintained prayer facilities. During big events, it can be hard to find a comfortable space to pray	Poor maintenance issues
7	6	Also, while halal food is available, the variety could be improved.	Limited halal variety
7	10	In Malaysia, some travel agencies offer similar packages, but I think there's room for improvement in promoting these services for sports tourism.	Weak promotion
7	14	Yes, Qatar did an excellent job incorporating Islamic culture into the event, such as having prayer rooms in stadiums, Islamic calligraphy in designs, and even introducing non-Muslim visitors to Islamic values.	Qatar promotes Islam
7	16	Malaysia can learn from this by integrating local Islamic heritage into sports events, ensuring top-quality facilities, and promoting Islamic tourism alongside sports.	Malaysia can adopt Qatar model
7	20	Malaysia could attract more Muslim tourists by offering a seamless experience with halal food, prayer facilities, and Islamic cultural elements. It could also boost the local economy and strengthen Malaysia's reputation as a top Muslim-friendly destination for sports tourism.	Malaysia has potential
7	25	More spacious prayer rooms at stadiums, clearer halal food labeling, designated family-friendly areas, and better promotion of Muslim-friendly accommodations. Also, improving transport options to accommodate prayer times would be beneficial.	Need better facilities
7	29	One challenge is that Malaysia's Muslim-friendly services aren't widely promoted internationally. We need better marketing, partnerships with Muslim travel agencies, and stronger branding similar to what Qatar did. Additionally, ensuring top-notch infrastructure and hospitality will make a difference.	Weak promotion
7	34	I would look for halal food availability, prayer facilities at stadiums, Muslim-friendly accommodations, and an overall welcoming environment for Muslim travelers.	Preference for halal and prayer
7	37	Malaysia should actively market itself as a hub for Muslim-friendly sports tourism by hosting more international events and ensuring all major stadiums have high-quality Muslim-friendly amenities. Collaborations with global Islamic tourism boards and influencers could also help spread awareness.	Need stronger marketing
7	45	Yes, there was a prayer room (surau), but I think it was too small. Many people ended up praying outside because of the limited space.	Small prayer space
7	46	It was also difficult to perform ablution (wudu) as the washrooms were far from the prayer area.	Inconvenient ablution

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8	47	For the large Muslim crowd, the surau was not spacious enough, especially during major events. Additionally, there was no dedicated wudu area inside the surau.	Small prayer space
8	5	Food was not an issue – There were separate halal and non-halal sections at the food booths.	Halal food sufficient
8	7	Prayer Space Issue – The surau was small and crowded, making it hard to move around, especially with both men and women sharing the space.	Small prayer space
8	9	Ablution Issue – Some Muslims used the sink in public restrooms for wudu, which made some non-Muslims uncomfortable.	No proper ablution facilities
8	11	Limited Toilets – There were not enough washrooms compared to the large number of attendees.	Not enough toilets
8	15	I have experienced Muslim-friendly facilities before, even in non-Muslim countries. In some cases, non-Muslim-owned accommodations still provided large prayer spaces. I have also visited Muslim-friendly spas with gender-segregated facilities, which shows that these services can be implemented regardless of the country's religious demographics.	Muslim-friendly exists globally
8	21	I am aware of Qatar's efforts during the FIFA World Cup, where they promoted: Modest and Islamic attire Islamic themes in the opening ceremony A ban on alcohol	Qatar promotes Islam
8	26	To be honest, Malaysia still has a long way to go in terms of implementing similar changes. Since Malaysia is a multiracial country, it needs to find a balanced approach. However, certain logical improvements can and should be implemented to enhance Muslim-friendly facilities at sports events.	Malaysia needs improvement
8	31	Malaysia has a great opportunity to position itself as a top destination for Muslim-friendly sports tourism. Just like Qatar, we can highlight our halal food scene, prayer facilities, and hospitality while also promoting our rich culture. Hosting major international events would boost tourism, create jobs, and strengthen Malaysia's reputation as a global sporting hub.	Malaysia has potential
8	37	At venues like Axiata Arena, better prayer facilities are needed—sometimes the surau is too small for big crowds. Providing family-friendly seating areas and ensuring modest dress codes for all could further enhance the experience for Muslim visitors.	Need better facilities
8	41	One issue is that Malaysia's Muslim-friendly offerings aren't always highlighted in international sports marketing.	Weak promotion
8	42	we need better branding—working with influencers, sports teams, and travel agencies to showcase Malaysia as an ideal destination. We should also improve infrastructure and services so visitors experience top-quality hospitality that matches what Qatar demonstrated.	Need stronger marketing

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9	1	I'd look for accessible prayer rooms at stadiums, halal-certified food options, and accommodations that cater to Muslim travelers. The overall cultural atmosphere matters too—I prefer places where I feel comfortable practicing my faith without any difficulty.	Preference for halal and prayer
9	5	Malaysia should actively promote itself as a hub for Muslim-friendly sports events. This means ensuring world-class prayer facilities in stadiums, improving halal food variety, and integrating Islamic culture into events (e.g., calligraphy displays, Quranic recitations at opening ceremonies). Hosting more Islamic-themed sports tournaments could also set Malaysia apart.	Need stronger marketing

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10	5	It is highly important because Malaysia is known for promoting Muslim-friendly tourism and hospitality. Integrating Muslim-friendly elements into sports events is equally essential.	Importance of Muslim-friendly integration
10	8	The Qatar World Cup was a refreshing approach to sports. Furthermore, every major event includes tourism aspects, which is why many people noticed the Islamic elements in the Qatar World Cup. It can serve as a benchmark, as Qatar implemented guidelines such as a tourist code requiring men and women to dress modestly and show respect for local culture by avoiding revealing clothing. Malaysia can adopt and implement similar standards.	Qatar as benchmark
10	14	When it comes to halal food, Malaysia has a significant advantage, as it is widely available.	Halal food sufficient
10	15	In conclusion, many aspects showcased during Qatar's World Cup already exist in Malaysia. However, there are areas that need more emphasis, such as modest attire and cultural sensitivity.	Need improvement in implementation
10	19	For example, in Formula One, prayer rooms (surau) were available but too small	Small prayer space
10	19	Event organizers must provide more prayer spaces, or at least set up mobile prayer areas, especially for events like marathons. Additionally, stadiums in Malaysia require better maintenance.	Need better facilities
10	24	Since Malaysia is already promoting Muslim-friendly services and hospitality, it is crucial to maintain these elements.	Maintain Muslim-friendly efforts
10	25	Qatar is a fresh and relevant example of how Islamic values can be promoted through sports tourism.	Qatar promotes Islam

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10	28	Another key aspect is showcasing Islamic values globally. A good example is Izzuddin, an athlete who maintained Islamic principles by not shaking hands with a female award presenter. These values should be communicated internationally.	Promote Islamic values globally
10	32	Malaysia can establish guidelines, such as prohibiting swearing and inappropriate behavior, similar to Qatar's policies. Government agencies like KBS, ITC and HDC must play a role in upholding Islamic values in sports events.	Need clear guidelines
10	36	Malaysia already offers halal food, prayer facilities, and security measures (RELA and police presence) at sports venues. However, facilities need to be enhanced in terms of comfort, cleanliness, size, and aesthetics.	Improve facilities
10	40	prayer time notifications should be introduced during sports events to reinforce Muslim-friendly elements.	Need prayer reminders
10	44	ITC has implemented MFAR recognition for service providers, including hotels. Similarly, sports events should consider prayer times and introduce short breaks during prayer hours to highlight Malaysia's commitment to Muslim-friendly sports tourism.	Schedule supports prayer
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11	1	If Malaysia imposes a modest dress code, western visitors wearing revealing clothes may find it restrictive.	Concern about dress code acceptance
11	3	However, pausing activities during Friday prayers (Solat Jumaat) would be an easy and logical step, as all Malaysians would understand its significance.	Schedule supports prayer
11	7	Malaysia should also focus on: Halal food availability for all, including non-Muslims Muslim-friendly hotels Cultural sensitivity Encouraging proper behavior among spectators	Need Muslim-friendly focus
11	14	Awareness Programs – Work with KBS and other government agencies to establish guidelines and propose them to the relevant ministry.	Need awareness and guidelines
11	19	1998 Commonwealth Games – The opening and closing ceremonies showcased Malaysian culture and Islamic elements. SEA Games 2017 – Introduced a family-friendly zone. Asian Cup Hockey 2022 – Aligned with COVID-19 SOPs and ensured halal food availability. Terengganu Marathon – Provided halal food and prayer spaces. 2022 Commonwealth Qualifiers – Offered prayer spaces and halal food.	Previous Muslim-friendly efforts
11	27	Event venues and organizers must understand and cater to basic Muslim-friendly needs. Without clear guidelines, event organizers may not prepare adequately.	Lack of guidelines

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11	30	Are there official guidelines that organizers must follow? If not, this is a major gap. Without formal requirements, pushing for such implementations will be difficult.	Lack of guidelines
11	33	Balancing Muslim-friendly services with inclusivity – It is crucial to provide these services without making others feel excluded. The narrative must be well-structured to avoid alienating other religious communities. For example, instead of making it seem like everything revolves around Islam, the approach should focus on mutual respect and inclusivity.	Need inclusive approach
11	39	Promoting Malaysia as a Muslim-friendly sports hub – Attract more Muslim athletes to draw more Muslim travelers.	Need stronger marketing
11	42	Lack of Awareness – Government agencies must take the lead in creating guidelines and raising awareness.	Weak awareness
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12	46	Malaysia should increase the number of service providers under the MFAR program, including: Hotels Sporting event venues Facilities such as stadiums Travel agents catering to athletes	Expand Muslim-friendly services
12	6	If service providers are MFAR-certified, it would be much easier for Muslim travelers and athletes to access suitable services. ITC could audit and certify these businesses to ensure they meet Muslim-friendly standards.	Certification improves access
12	10	Moreover, ITC must collaborate with other agencies to establish event guidelines that organizers must follow. If an event is being planned, there should be clear requirements that need to be met.	Need clear guidelines
12	15	Malaysia should: Offer Muslim-friendly tours for tourists (Muslim-Friendly Tourist Guide) Provide clear instructions and multilingual signage Introduce mobile apps to help travelers locate halal food options	Improve Muslim-friendly services
12	21	Tokyo 2020 Olympics – Provided halal food accessibility, mobile apps for locating halal restaurants, and portable prayer rooms. Additionally, Japanese spectators set a good example by cleaning stadiums after matches. Malaysia could implement a similar initiative, where announcers remind spectators to clean up after events.	Learn from other countries
12	26	London 2012 Olympics – The athletes' village offered halal meals, vegetarian options, prayer spaces, and accommodations catering to Muslim needs. This shows that even non-Muslim countries acknowledge and accommodate diverse needs.	Muslim-friendly exists globally
12	31	For Malaysia to establish itself as a leading Muslim-friendly sports tourism destination, it must: Improve awareness and marketing strategies Develop official guidelines for sports event organizers Enhance Muslim-friendly facilities in sports venues Ensure inclusivity while maintaining Islamic values Strengthen	Need strategic improvement

Page	Line	Textual Data	Initial Code
		MFAR recognition for service providers Promote Malaysia globally as a Muslim-friendly sports hub	
12	40	By implementing these strategies, Malaysia can attract more Muslim athletes, spectators, and tourists, ultimately strengthening its reputation in sports tourism while upholding Islamic values.	Malaysia has potential

