



# Determinants of Muslim Tourist Satisfaction in a Muslim Majority Country: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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## ABSTRACT

Muslim tourism represents a sizable segment of the global travel industry, mainly in Muslim-majority nations. Despite its developing significance, there is constrained research on the factors that impact Muslim tourist satisfaction in such contexts. Addressing this gap, this study investigates the determinants of Muslim tourist satisfaction by reading five key variables: halal food and beverages, destination image, religious motivation, prayer facilities, and service quality. Utilizing a quantitative technique, the study employed the Smart-PLS technique to analyze data collected from Muslim travelers. The results reveal that destination image, prayer facilities, and service quality have a widespread impact on Muslim tourist satisfaction. Nevertheless, halal foods and beverages and religious motivation no longer showed statistically significant results. These findings highlight the important influence of destination image, prayer facilities, and service quality concerning Muslim tourist experiences. The paper can contribute to the current literature by providing empirical evidence of determinants of Muslim tourist satisfaction in Muslim-majority countries and highlighting the importance of stakeholders' awareness of how these factors need to be addressed. Practical aspects include the enhancement of targeted policies and projects for enhancing destination attractiveness, encouraging high-quality service provision, and an adequate number of places of worship to meet the demand of Muslim visitors. Future studies can also investigate the cultural and demographic influences on satisfaction in an analogous way to gain a deeper understanding.

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## INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is one of the world's biggest and fastest-growing economic sectors (Sofronov, 2018). The tourism industry is an enormous global industry with vast prospects for progress. It is becoming a progressively global and multifaceted phenomenon with sociological, behavioral, economic, political, cultural, environmental, and educational dimensions. For many countries, tourism is an increasingly significant source of income, employment, and wealth. The global tourism industry has found an unheard-of rise in halal tourism, pushed with the aid of the increasing consciousness of religiously compliant travel offerings and the rising Muslim population worldwide. According to a report, Muslim travelers spent over \$220 billion on tourism in 2020, a figure projected to grow annually,

reflecting the arena's great capability (Hospitalityinsights, 2018). This growth has prompted Muslim-majority countries to place themselves as appealing destinations, supplying tailored experiences that cater to the precise choices of Muslim travelers, which include halal food, prayer centers, and offerings aligned with Islamic values (Battour & Ismail, 2016).

The quick growth of inclusive Muslim travelers is motivating tourist destinations to improve their excellence to meet the requirements of Muslim tourists. A Muslim tourist has the creed and norm that always triggers every tourist activity (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Din, 1989). Tourist satisfaction criteria become higher and more specific in line with the experience of traveling (Uriely, 2005), the satisfaction of tourists in a destination in the future will be more difficult (Fuchs & Weiermair, 2003). Islamic tourism has now become a global trend and is estimated to develop in the future (Mastercard-Crescent Rating, 2019). The quick growth of world Muslim tourists has made many countries try to make Islamic tourism one of the mainstay product icons. Despite the prominence of Muslim tourism, studies on the elements influencing Muslim tourist satisfaction in Muslim-majority countries remain fragmented. Much existing research emphasizes singular dimensions, which include the availability of halal meals or first-rate services (Rasul, 2019; Samori et al., 2016), without exploring the interrelation of multiple determinants. This restrained scope leaves an essential hole in know-how the holistic drivers of satisfaction among Muslim travelers. To deal with this gap, the existing study investigates the determinants of Muslim tourist satisfaction in a Muslim-majority country like Bangladesh.

The objective of this study is to discover the most significant determinants of Muslim tourist satisfaction, particularly in a Muslim-majority context, where cultural and non-secular congruence must theoretically enhance the tourist experience. This paper is structured as follows: the following segment reviews related literature to frame the study's hypotheses, followed by a detailed clarification of the methodology for data collection and analysis. The results section affords the findings, highlighting which factors significantly influence Muslim tourist satisfaction. The discussion and conclusion sections interpret these results, imparting theoretical and sensible implications whilst figuring out areas for future studies.

## **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **Muslim Tourist Satisfaction**

Visitors' anticipated satisfaction measures how well a destination meets their expectations before they arrive (Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2019). The mental state of the traveler, not their physical state, is what determines how satisfied they are with their trip. When a tourist visits their preferred location, they can be seen to be satisfied (Alegre & Garau, 2010). The enjoyment a visitor feels after visiting a specific tourist attraction is often referred to as tourist satisfaction. Visitors gauge their level of satisfaction by contrasting the destination's actual service with what they had anticipated (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Repeated visitors and a positive image are the results of satisfied tourists. A favorable reputation spread by word of mouth among travelers increases the number of travelers visiting a certain destination (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Muslim tourist satisfaction expands the concept of visitors' pleasure to include halal goods and services, yet it might be difficult to please visitors because of the intricacy of visitor behavior (Preko et al., 2020).

### **Halal Food and Beverages**

The most significant service that a Muslim traveler seeks while traveling is Halal food. According to Eid (2013) and Battour et al. (2013), the availability of Halal food is crucial for Muslim tourists. Islam provides a broad overview of what is or is not allowed in the everyday activities of its adherents, covering aspects of food, cosmetics, financial problems, and pharmaceutical products (Mukhtar & Butt, 2012). The most common importance often rests on the prohibition of alcohol consumption and gambling in any form (Qur'an, 2022). Halal has to be the food that's served at a restaurant. It is according to Islamic teachings that all animals must be slaughtered. There should be no alcoholic beverages sold on the premises (Zulkifli et al., 2011).

*H<sub>1</sub>: Halal food and beverages has a significant impact Muslim tourist satisfaction.*

### **Destination Image**

Tourist destination images are important because they influence both the decision-making behavior of potential tourists and the levels of satisfaction regarding the tourist experience (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Tourist pleasure is positively impacted by destination image. Tourists will quickly be satisfied

if they have a favorable perception of any destination in mind. A better destination image provides mental satisfaction with a given destination (Chen and Tsai, 2007). Kani et al. (2017) conducted research in Malaysia and found that destination image is one of the important antecedents for tourist satisfaction. Chen and Tsai (2007) found a close relationship between tourist destination image and tourist satisfaction. It is impossible to satisfy a particular visitor without creating a favorable destination image in their minds.

*H<sub>2</sub>: Destination image has a significant impact on Muslim tourist satisfaction.*

### **Religious Motivation**

Religious motivation is linked to the visitors who are motivated either in part or exclusively for religious reasons (Rinschede, 1992). Academics assert that what sets tourists apart from pilgrims or secular visitors is their motivation (Shuo et al., 2009). In religious tourism motivation, people travel to holy places for a variety of reasons, including to experience God's love, make vows to him, connect with him, believe in him, and find spiritual peace (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2017), as well as to 'have objects blessed', 'light candles', and 'participate in mass' (Bar and Cohen-Hattab, 2003). The tourists who travel to the holy land find that most of the travelers are motivated by their faith or religious reasons (Triantafillidou et al., 2010).

*H<sub>3</sub>: Religious motivation has a significant impact on Muslim tourist satisfaction.*

### **Prayer Facility**

The five times prayer in every-day is compulsory for Muslims to perform. The prayers hold Muslims often taking into consideration God and its miles a way to connect with Him. Muslims around the arena ought to perform this recurring in the exact time settings and need to not put off their prayer with no proper motive. In step with the holy Qur'an, Muslims around the arena should additionally face Qaba during their everyday prayers (Qur'an, 2022). Consequently, the Islamic tourism and hospitality industry ought to offer enough centers for Muslims to carry out each day's prayers on time. Therefore, the prayer room is taken into consideration to be one of the most important conveniences for Muslims (Battour et al., 2010). According to Dabphet (2021), the presence of mosques was identified as the facility that travelers were most drawn to when considering the qualities of the destination. Weidenfeld (2006) asserts that the location of a mosque may affect the hotels chosen by Muslim visitors. Haque and Momen (2017) emphasized that placing mosques close to well-known tourist attractions can increase visitors' satisfaction.

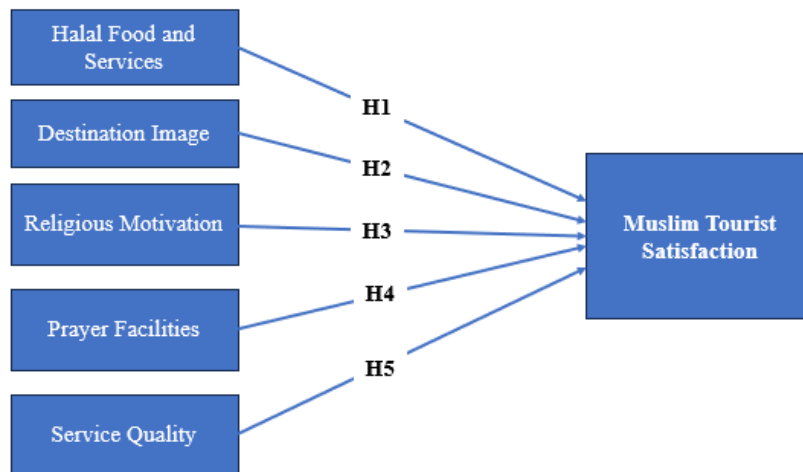
*H<sub>4</sub>: Prayer facility has a significant impact on Muslim tourist satisfaction.*

### **Service Quality**

Customer pleasure has been linked to service quality. The total evaluation of a service is its quality. Consumers who have favorable opinions of the quality of the services received are probably happier than other customers (Walker, et. al., 2006). Superior service at a destination draws visitors and increases their pleasure. Tourist happiness is the result of higher service quality, claims Juliana et al. (2024). Lee (2009) conducted a study on popular tourist locations in Taiwan and claimed that by providing great service quality, the Taiwanese tourism department satisfied visitors. According to a past study, providing greater service quality leads to happier customers who are more loyal (Olson, 2002). Improved service quality increases the likelihood of obtaining customer loyalty and satisfaction.

*H<sub>5</sub>: Service quality has a significant impact on Muslim tourist satisfaction.*

Figure I: Conceptual Model of the Study



Source: Authors

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

### Ethics Statement

The study has been approved by the Research Committee at the University of Scholars, Bangladesh, as the research is being conducted on human participants, i.e., Muslim tourists. Moreover, consent from the participants were taken before participating in the survey, wherein participants were informed that every question is entirely voluntary, and that the survey does not collect any personally identifying information as responses will remain strictly anonymous.

### Sample

We used four items from the dependent variable (Muslim tourist satisfaction) and twenty-three items from the five independent variables (Halal food and beverages, destination image, religious motivation, prayer facilities, and service quality) to conduct the study. Twenty-five respondents from various tourist destinations participated in our pilot study. A few errors were found in the questionnaire during pilot testing. After making changes to the questionnaire, we gave 250 of them out to different tourist destinations in Bangladesh. This study used a convenient sampling technique to administer the survey. Before the questionnaire was distributed, respondents were briefed about the purpose of the study. Data was gathered between February 2024 to June 2024 from various tourist destinations. A five-point rating system was also used to assess each of the items listed (1 being strongly disagreed, 2 disagreed, 3 neutral, 4 agreed, and 5 strongly agreed). Only the questionnaires that were filled out by the respondents were retained for this study after they were examined. Six questionnaires were eliminated to complete this study, leaving 244 questionnaires for analysis (see Table I). The SEM recommendations, which normally suggest a minimum of 200 respondents, were used to estimate the sample size (Kline, 2015).

Table I. Sample characteristics

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	187	76.64%
	Female	57	23.36%
Age	Below 20	22	9.02%

	21-30	93	38.11%
	31-40	68	27.87%
	41-50	42	17.21%
	Above 50	19	7.79%
Marital Status	Single	136	55.74%
	Married	108	44.26%
	Student	102	41.80%
Profession	Government	23	9.43%
	Employee		
	Private Employee	51	20.90%
	Business	37	15.16%
	Others	31	12.70%
From	Home	218	89.34%
	Abroad	26	10.66%

*Source: Customized output of SPSS*

### Measurements and Data Analysis

The study's questionnaire had seven components: the respondents' demographic characteristics, the scales measuring Halal food and services, destination image, religious motivation, prayer facilities and service quality, and Muslim tourist satisfaction.

Table II. Number of items and sources

Constructs	No. of items	Sources
Halal Food & Beverages	5	Battour et al. (2013); Zulkifli et al., (2011)
Destination Image	5	Kani et al. (2017); Chen and Tsai, (2007)
Religious Motivation	3	Triantafillidou et al., (2010); Shuo et al., (2009); Collins-Kreiner et al., (2000)
Prayer Facilities	4	Dabphet (2021); Haque and Momen (2017); Battour et al., (2013); Weidenfeld (2006)
Service Quality	6	Lee (2009); Olson, (2002)
Muslim Tourist Satisfaction	4	Preko et al., (2020); Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, (2019); Alegre & Garau, (2010)

Finally, the structural relationship between the variables influencing Muslim tourist satisfaction has been tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) (Hair et al., 2014).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Results of Measurement Model

The research conducted a comprehensive analysis of the dimension model, as provided in Table III, to assess the construct validity and reliability. The findings confirmed sturdy signs of reliability and internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding the advocated threshold of 0.80, as outlined by Hair et al. (2021). This highlights the constructs' reliability and consistency. The examine exhibited methodological rigor by adhering carefully to the tips mounted with the resources of Hair et al. (2021), Shmueli et al. (2019), and Sarstedt et al. (2021). In addition to Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR) was employed to determine the inner consistency of the measuring scales. The CR values for the constructs have been as follows: 0.981 for halal food & beverages, 0.944 for destination image, 0.985 for religious motivation, 0.978 for prayer facilities, 0.978 for service quality, and 0.967 for Muslim tourist satisfaction. These findings align with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2021) and Shmueli et al. (2019), emphasizing the reliability and robustness of the constructs.

The study additionally highlighted the significance of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) in measuring convergent validity. As defined by way of Saunders et al. (2019) and supported by the useful resource of Sarstedt et al. (2014), AVE quantifies the variance defined by way of using a construct relative to the variance attributed to measurement errors. To ensure strong convergent validity, accomplishing an AVE of a minimum of 0.50 is essential, as recommended employing Hair et al. (2021), Shmueli et al. (2019), and Rahman et al. (2023). An AVE below 0.50 could propose that size errors outweigh the variance defined via the construct, underscoring the want to fulfill this threshold for validity. With AVE values ranging over 0.818, every construct in this study met the minimal AVE threshold of 0.50. This compliance demonstrates the rigorous validation manner undertaken, ensuring the constructs' reliability and validity. By adhering to the methodological suggestions of Hair et al. (2021), Shmueli et al. (2019), Sarstedt et al. (2021), and Rahman et al. (2023), the research showcases a strong framework for comparing construct validity and reliability.

Table III: Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Halal Food & Beverages	HF1	0.940	0.980	0.981	0.925
	HF2	0.967			
	HF3	0.959			
	HF4	0.964			
	HF5	0.977			
Destination Image	DI1	0.875	0.943	0.944	0.818
	DI2	0.947			
	DI3	0.953			
	DI4	0.930			
	DI5	0.808			
Religious Motivation	RM1	0.986	0.981	0.985	0.964
	RM2	0.979			
	RM3	0.981			
Prayer Facilities	PF1	0.941	0.971	0.978	0.920
	PF2	0.956			
	PF3	0.986			
	PF4	0.954			

	SQ1	0.893			
	SQ2	0.957			
Service Quality	SQ3	0.967	0.970	0.978	0.872
	SQ4	0.850			
	SQ5	0.963			
	SQ6	0.967			
Muslim Tourist Satisfaction	MTS1	0.935			
	MTS2	0.970	0.966	0.967	0.908
	MTS3	0.978			
	MTS4	0.927			

*Abbreviations: CR=Composite Reliability, AVE =Average Variance Extracted*

*Source: Customized output of Samrt-PLS*

As emphasized by Shmueli et al. (2019), discriminant validity is a vital thing of PLS-SEM route evaluation, ensuring the statistical distinction between latent variables representing separate theoretical constructs. The results offered in Table IV verify the success of discriminant validity by fulfilling the rigorous criteria of the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). According to Shmueli et al. (2019) and Hair et al. (2021), the HTMT metric is a reliable device for assessing the degree of similarity between latent variables. For discriminant validity to be set up, HTMT values must fall beneath the threshold of 1. The findings in this study now not simplest align with this requirement but additionally exhibit compliance with the methodological standards, supplying robust evidence of discriminant validity.

Table IV: Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. HF						
2. DI	0.762					
3. RM	0.673	0.548				
4. PF	0.607	0.510	0.747			
5. SQ	0.830	0.540	0.643	0.578		
6. MTS	0.626	0.631	0.817	0.618	0.830	

*Abbreviations: HF = Halal Food & Beverages, DI = Destination Image, RM = Religious Motivation, PF = Prayer Facilities, SQ = Service Quality, and MTS = Muslim Tourist Satisfaction*

*Source: Smart-PLS output*

### Goodness of Fit

The Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ), the Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR), and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) were used to assess the model's fit and efficacy. Latan et al. (2018) stated that any number above 0.20 is seen as ideal, while an  $R^2$  value between 0.25 and 0.50 is ideal. According to Hair et al. (2021), the threshold for significant effect sizes in path models is 0.25, and an  $R^2$  value close to 1 indicates good explanatory power. As shown

in Table V, the  $R^2$  value of 0.925 for this study indicates a highly significant relationship between the variables.

According to Hair et al. (2021) and Shmueli et al. (2019), a model is considered well-fitted if the SRMR is less than 0.08 and the NFI value is close to 1. The study's results show an SRMR value of 0.067, well below the 0.08 cutoff, and an NFI value of 0.781, which is near the ideal of 1. According to the criteria given by Latan et al. (2018), these measurements, which are listed in Table V, show that the model exhibits a respectable and trustworthy fit.

Table V: Model fitness

Name of Criteria	Value
$R^2$	0.925
SRMR	0.067
NFI	0.781

*Source: Smart-PLS output*

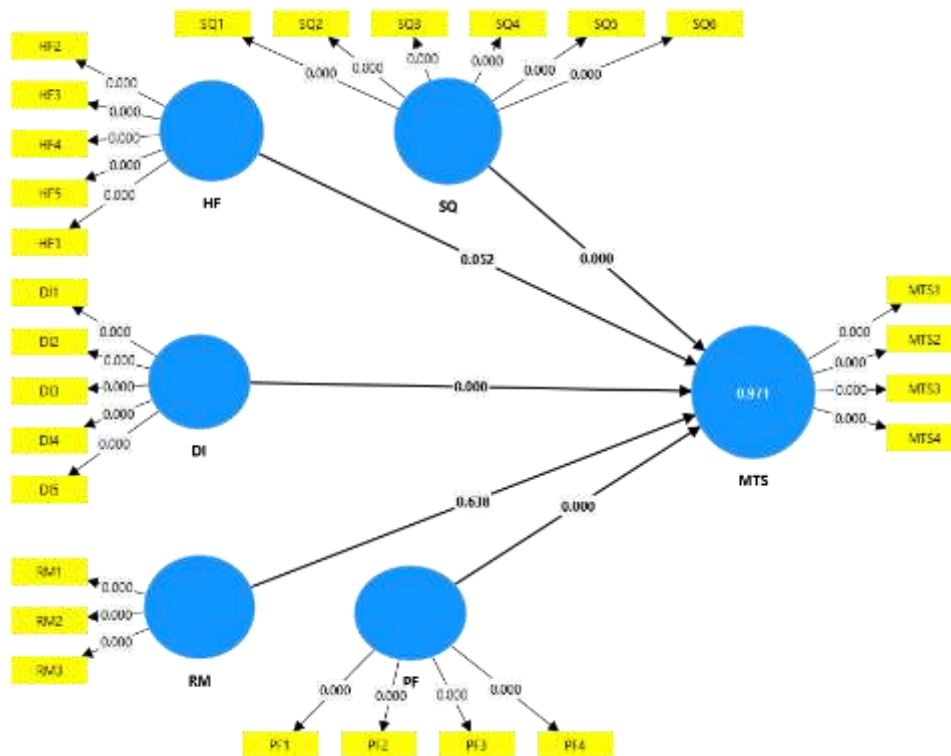
Table VI: Structural Model

No.	Path	<i>T</i> <i>statistics</i>	<i>p</i> -values	Remarks
H1:	Halal Food & Beverages -> Muslim Tourist Satisfaction	1.943	0.052	Not Supported
H2:	Destination Image -> Muslim Tourist Satisfaction	18.001	0.000	Supported
H3:	Religious Motivation -> Muslim Tourist Satisfaction	0.471	0.638	Not Supported
H4:	Prayer Facilities -> Muslim Tourist Satisfaction	4.784	0.000	Supported
H5:	Service Quality -> Muslim Tourist Satisfaction	4.029	0.000	Supported

*Source: Smart-PLS output*

Figure II: Results of the path analysis





Source: Smart-PLS output

### Discussion on Findings

The outcomes of the hypothesis testing offer enormous insights into the elements influencing Muslim tourist satisfaction. Hypothesis H1, which posited that halal food and beverages impact Muslim traveler delight, turned into not supported, with a T-statistic of 1.943 and a p-value of 0.052. While Halal meals are culturally significant to Muslim travelers, this result shows that they might not act as an instantaneous, standalone determinant of ordinary satisfaction. This aligns with the practical implications, emphasizing the importance of integrating halal meals right into a broader package in preference of relying entirely on it. Studies by Eid & El-Gohary (2015) and Battour et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of providing halal food options, but they also imply that other elements, including destination image and service quality, have a greater influence on Muslim tourist satisfaction.

Conversely, hypothesis H2, which tested the impact of destination image on satisfaction, was strongly supported with a T-statistic of 18.001 and a p-value of 0.000, emphasizing the crucial importance of retaining an effective and attractive destination image for Muslim travelers. This finding supports the previous similar study (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Wang et al., 2009). To draw in and please Muslim tourists, a destination must have a positive reputation. According to Echtner & Ritchie (1993), it affects how they perceive accessibility, safety, and cultural compatibility. According to research by Mohsin et al. (2016), Muslim tourists are far more satisfied when a destination reflects Islamic principles and offers services that are Muslim-friendly.

Similarly, with a T-statistic of 0.471 and a p-value of 0.638, hypothesis H3, which addressed the function of religious motivation, did not demonstrate a significant link with satisfaction. According to this research, religious motivation may have an impact on travel location selection, but it may not have a direct impact on satisfaction levels. In the past, some investigations have also discovered a strong correlation between the motivation and contentment of tourists. According to Beerli and Martin (2004), motivation is the urge that propels a person to take a particular action to fulfill a desired goal. Yoon and Uysal (2005) claim that travel motivation and destination loyalty are mediated by visitor satisfaction. Satisfying spiritual demands may take precedence over experiencing new things for religious visitors. Henderson (2010) claims that Muslim travelers frequently see places like Mecca or Medina mostly through a religious prism, where happiness is based more on meeting religious requirements than on other factors like service quality.

However, with a T-statistic of 4.784 and a p-value of 0.000, hypothesis H4 demonstrated the importance of prayer facilities and showed that Muslim tourists must be satisfied with easily accessible and well-maintained religious facilities. Because they meet a basic religious requirement, easily accessible prayer facilities greatly increase the enjoyment of Muslim travelers. According to research by Battour et al. (2010), places with well-kept prayer spaces draw more Muslim visitors and receive favorable assessments, highlighting the significance of infrastructure that supports Islamic customs.

Finally, with a T-statistic of 4.029 and a p-value of 0.000, hypothesis H5 verified that service quality has a significant impact on satisfaction. For this group, high-quality services—such as dependability, promptness, and general excellence—are essential factors in determining satisfaction. The findings of this study confirmed a significant correlation between service quality and satisfaction in the tourism business and corroborated comparable studies conducted in other countries (De Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Murray & Howat, 2002; Baker & Crompton, 2000). This result also supports research by Al-Ansi & Han (2019) and Han et al. (2019), which highlights that pleasant experiences are a result of excellent service quality, particularly for culturally sensitive populations like Muslim tourists.

The findings show that destination image, prayer facilities, and service quality are significant determinants in determining Muslim traveler satisfaction, whereas halal food and beverages and religious motivation are less significant. Maintaining a favorable impression of the destination, ensuring that prayer facilities are available, and offering outstanding service quality should be top priorities for tourism stakeholders to boost Muslim tourist contentment and loyalty.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The findings from the research have several substantial implications for legislators, travel companies, and destination marketers who wish to improve Muslim tourists' comprehensive satisfaction. The significance of destination image emphasizes the demand to focus on developing and propagating an appealing image of tourist destinations through specific advertising initiatives that promote attributes that are secure, hospitable to Muslims, and culturally justified. Additionally, it is essential to ensure that there are hygienic and easily accessible prayer facilities available, as they significantly impact the travel experience of Muslim tourists. Highlighting cleanliness, awareness of cultural differences, and adherence to Islamic principles in staff training programs is an additional requirement for prioritizing excellent service quality. Though delivering halal food is essential, it should be taken into account as an integral part of a wider service package rather than as a stand-alone driver. This

strategy guarantees a comprehensive travel experience that satisfies both religious and nonreligious necessities. Additionally, the absence of a direct influence from religious motives suggests that tourism operators should balance religious and recreational components to appeal to a wider range of tastes. Two ways the government and business sector may collaborate to further establish Bangladesh as a top Muslim travel destination both domestically and internationally are by establishing halal certification and Muslim-friendly service standards.

### CONCLUSION AND DIRECTION OF FURTHER STUDY

By offering pertinent data for comprehending the factors impacting Muslim tourists' satisfaction in Bangladesh, this study contributes to the expanding body of research on tourism management and consumer behavior. Results indicate that Muslim tourist satisfaction is strongly moderated by destination image, the presence of prayer facilities, and service quality, and underscores the importance of an integrated approach for meeting the needs of this emerging market segment. Although religious motivation and the presence of halal food were not shown to have a specific effect on satisfaction, their importance in shaping the overall travel experience cannot be ignored. Based on the results, to meet Muslim travelers, travel agencies must focus on improving the image of the destination, maintaining a high level of service, and ensuring that the prayer facilities are accessible in an easy way. These strategies will not only increase Muslim tourist satisfaction but also their loyalty, which will contribute to the sustainable development of Bangladesh's tourism industry.

Despite offering a modest insight, certain areas require further examination. First, the study would be better expanded by indicating cross-cultural differences, and how Muslim tourist pleasure varies in different countries and places. Second, longitudinal study attention should be directed at how changes in consumer liking and travel tendencies bring about a transformation in satisfaction factors over time. Third, the other elements, such as environmental sustainability, destination safety, and technology integration should be added to the model for future research. Lastly, qualitative research techniques like focus groups and in-depth interviews are required to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological and emotional components of Muslim tourists' experiences. Such issues can further our understanding of Muslim tourism and help to develop more targeted and effective tourism strategies.

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