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Assessing The Relationships Between Service Quality, Muslim Tourist Satisfaction Among Middle Eastern Tourists Visiting The Maldives Using Structural Equation Modeling

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Abstract: The study aimed to investigate the relationship between service quality, Muslim tourist's satisfaction and revisit intention of Muslim Middle Eastern tourists travelling to the Maldives, using SERVQUAL model, factor analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM). Data was collected from 435 Muslim tourists from Middle East and face-to-face questionnaires were used to collect data. The survey reveals a strong correlation between Muslim tourists' satisfaction and their likelihood to return. The study reveals, however, that there is no correlation between service quality and propensity to return directl. Study being conducted during the pandemic made it difficult to collect data as some of the tourists were not willing to interact with a researcher. This study can be used as a basis for to learn about how Muslim tourists from the Middle East perceive service quality and hence, resorts and hotels can either improve or maintain same service quality. Service quality ratings by Muslim tourist are rarely done in the Maldives, hence, this study will provide a tourist's perception on service quality from a novel perspective. Having limited research on Muslim tourist travel behavior especially on the context of Maldives ensured that this study is novel.

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Keywords: Muslim Tourist Satisfaction; Reliability; Revisit Intention; Service Quality; SERVQUAL Model

1. Introduction

The year 2019 ended, Halal tourism contributed to 13% of the global tourism market with over 160 billion US dollars of revenues (Thomson Reuters, 2020). Muslim travel market is a lucrative market which has been growing each year, with both Muslim and non-Muslim countries adapting the tourism services to cater for Muslim tourists as well (El-Gohary, 2020). Post pandemic, Halal tourism is still in the embryonic stage in terms of research (Ekka, 2024). With little research conducted on learning about Muslim tourist behavior in the Maldives, it is seen as a progressive step to learn more about the Middle East segment to attract more Muslim tourists to the Maldives (Muneeza et al., 2020). The purpose of this paper is to analyze how Muslim tourists from the Middle East rate the service quality and how this affects Muslim tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to analyze and test the relationships between service quality, Muslim tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, while the study has four specific objectives. The first objective is to study the relationship between service quality and revisit intention and the second objective is to explore the relationship between service

quality and Muslim tourist satisfaction. Third objective is to analyze the relationship between Muslim tourist satisfaction and revisit intention while the fourth objective is to evaluate the relationship between service quality, Muslim tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. With the specific objectives into consideration, the study uses four hypotheses to test the relationships. To measure service quality, SERVQUAL model is used in the study with the dimensions being measured as reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, empathy and assurance.

Maldives being a country of geographical dispersion and land scarcity, the most developed and the industry contributing most to the Maldives economy of the Maldives is tourism. Maldives is ranked among poor countries in terms of gross domestic profit (GDP) per capita and well-established industries such as tourism require diversification to generate more income and to tap new markets (Maldives insider, 2019). For the past 40 years, Maldivian tourism industry has been focused mostly on tapping the European market which today contribute greatly to the tourism of the Maldives and until recently, Muslim tourists has not been in the focus of world tourism, however, due to globalization, increase of disposable income among Middle East and other Muslim countries, has started to increase the number of Muslim tourists traveling all over the world (Maldives insider, 2019). With the increase in Muslim travel, the agenda of satisfying a Muslim tourist, analyzing Muslim travel behavior and retaining a Muslim tourist just started to be something worthy of research recently (Battour, 2019). While some countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and UK have already established a Muslim-friendly tourism, a lot of countries including Maldives are yet to enhance the image and services being provided as Muslim-friendly (Rehman, 2020). If Maldives achieve the reputation of Muslim-friendly tourist destination world-wide, not only will this increase inflow of even more Muslim tourists, but also diversify the Maldivian tourist industry (Muneeza et al., 2020). When more revenues are generated from the tourism industry, GDP of the Maldives is expected to increase, improving disposable income and creating even more job opportunities (Muneeza et al., 2020). This study focuses on the Middle East segment of Muslims, because, statistics show that Middle East countries such as United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar are the destinations Maldives receives most Muslim tourists from and tourist arrivals annually report an approximate of 5% of Middle East tourists travel to the Maldives. With 5% being a lower percentage, ways to attract Middle East Muslim tourists need to be analyzed to increase the percentage. According to Subha (2020), service quality has been empirically proven as one of the most important pillars in attracting more tourists as well as retention of more tourists. With limited research done in the Maldives to learn Muslim tourist behavior, this study poses as a novel study which can be used as a guide to either maintain or increase the service quality as an attempt to bring in or attract more Muslim tourists, in addition, this study will show how Muslim tourists from the Middle East rate the service quality of the Maldives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service quality

Explained by Ali et al. (2021), service quality is seen to have an immense impact on customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. According to Fauzi et al. (2020), service quality in tourism is the attempt to meet the wants and needs of the tourists and the consistency in delivering the services to the expectations of the tourists. This is supported by, Myo et al. (2019), stating that customer loyalty is very crucial in the hospitality industry as customer loyalty saves a lot of marketing costs and to achieve customer loyalty, empirical studies have shown the strategy of paying attention to service quality and tourist satisfaction. Setiawan et al. (2018) pointed out that studies reveal that service quality has a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Siregar et al. (2019), explained that revisit intention in the tourism industry is the likelihood for a tourist to revisit the same destination in the future or near future.

SERVQUAL model

Defined by Alauddin et al. (2020), SERVQUAL model, a service quality measurement model which was developed in 1988 by A. Parasuraman, Valerie Zeithamal and Lenard Berry, and is being used as one of the most prominent models to study service quality in many service industries, similarly is being used by the hospitality or hotel industry to assess how tourists' assess the services being provided by the destinations and how the service quality effects tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty. Pointed out by Subha (2020), the five dimensions in the SERVQUAL model consist of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Jurcevic and Divic (2020) argued that in the present day, tourists are demanding excellent services with reasonable prices and the only way hotels and resorts can keep up with these demands of the tourists are only when the hotel delivers good quality services and continuous monitoring of the services given in the hotel has to be recorded in order to ensure consistent good quality of service. SERVQUAL model helps to assess hospitality services for their quality and the room for improvement in the service quality (Angmalisang, 2021).

Tangibility

According to Nikou and Khiabani (2020), tangibility is the physical aspects of the hotel which gives the "first impression" to the tourist and empirical studies have revealed that tangibility is very crucial in the physiological evaluation as it is seen that with clean and welcoming premises, tourists are seen to be satisfied more. This was supported by Asirifi and Senya (2020), stating that tangibility is set-up or the physical qualities of the premises as well as the service of the firm to deliver the quoted service as consistently and accurately as possible. Sekar and Sudha (2019) stated that according to various studies, it has been found out that tangibility is the most important factor. Explained by Mena et al. (2020), tangibles in the hotel industry include of the materials, equipment and physical attributes and tangibility can convey either a positive or a negative impression to the tourists as research have shown that tourists associate clean and nice setting with more confidence of the hotel that the hotel is capable of giving quality service. Kazmi (2020) argued that physical assets of the hotel including the set-up of the common areas such as lobby and restaurants as well as cleanliness of the hotel premises including staff is seen to associate with higher customer satisfaction and revisit intention.

Reliability

According to Suksutdhi (2019), reliability is the capability of the organization or the hotel in giving the promised service as consistently and as timely as possible. This was supported by Manirochana et al. (2021), that reliability examines the extent to which promised service is provided accurately to the said promise. Saravanan (2019), pointed out that reliability in SERVQUAL model measures the extent to which the organization is able to deliver the said service and how accurate the service is with relevance to the promise. Abdulla et al. (2019), stated that from various studies, it has been proved that reliability, it can contribute to customer satisfaction significantly as having reliability in the organization imply the professionalism in the organization in providing the services. Contradicting the argument, Kumar and Reddy (2019) highlighted that reliability are in fact the most important factor that is required for hotels to lead and sustain in industry especially in the hotel industry and study conducted to find the significance of relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction revealed that in service quality, reliability and customer satisfaction is highly related and that reliability has a significant relationship with customer satisfaction and revisit intention.

Responsiveness

According to Pushpanathan (2019), responsiveness is the willingness of the employees and the organization in attending to the needs and wants of the customers timely and accurately. According to Ahmad et al. (2019), in service quality, in the hotel industry, responsiveness is crucial because according to the study, from the five

dimensions in the SERVQUAL model, tangibility, responsiveness and assurance has shown to be showing significant relationship to tourist satisfaction while reliability and empathy are not as significant as tangibility, responsiveness and assurance. Ninarun and Wongleedee (2019), pointed out that through responsiveness, customers satisfaction can be improved as several studies have given empirical evidence that reliability and responsiveness are the most important dimensions in the SERVQUAL model (customers who are sensitive to prices) when it comes to increasing the customer satisfaction and revisit intention. Argued by Kiran and Kumar (2019), responsiveness is important in the hotel industry because, studies have given evidence that customer satisfaction does get influenced by the responsiveness of the employees and that consistent responsiveness by the employees of the hotel can greatly make the customer very happy or otherwise.

Assurance

Defined by Alauddin et al. (2019), assurance is the know-how of the employees and how well and confidently the employees are able to provide the services to the tourists in the hotel industry and customer satisfaction as well as revisit intention is highly influenced by assurance. Pointed out by Melinda et al. (2019), assurance in the SERVQUAL model is found to be the most significant dimension which influence tourist satisfaction and to keep up with the globalization of the hospitality industry all over the world, employees have to be able to deliver services to the tourists with great confidence. Paposa et al. (2019), stated that assurance highly influence customer satisfaction and in service quality, assurance is required to deliver good services.

Empathy

Defined by Hakimeh and Ramanathan (2020), empathy is the individualized consideration the organization gives to its customers and studies have proved that ability of the organization to give attention to individual customers consistently significantly increases the customer satisfaction as well as revisit intention and in turn increase customer loyalty. Pointed out by Shibulal and Varma (2020), studies have shown positive correlation between empathy and customer satisfaction as well as customer loyalty. According to Kleisari and Markaki (2019), studies have shown that empathy greatly influences a tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty.

Muslim tourist satisfaction

Battour (2019), defined Muslim tourist satisfaction as the positive feedback (performance exceeds expectations) by Muslim tourists after experiencing a destination/hotel/resort and further highlighted that achieving Muslim tourist's satisfaction and loyalty can be attained through good quality consistent Muslim-friendly services. Explained by Pooya et al. (2020), customer satisfaction requires the experience of a customer exceeding the expectation. Mohamad et al. (2019), pointed out that several empirical studies have shown that service quality is vital to achieve tourist satisfaction and increased revisit intention because, service quality is the only determinant in service industries that can differentiate a service from one another unlike products which can have their own different attributes. Therefore, service quality can be used as a tool to enhance, promote and deliver good services that can contribute to creating competitive advantage for the hotel or destination (Mohamad et al., 2019). Yusof et al. (2020), explained that the behavior projected out by the employees when they deliver the services to the Muslim tourists needs to be carefully shown as both the environment and the behavior of the employees are a part of service quality and this can affect significantly to the Muslim tourist satisfaction. According to [Juliana](#) et al. (2021), Muslim tourist satisfaction has significant relationship with revisit intention. Argued by Amir et al. (2020), the link between service quality and satisfaction is significant as studies have indicated a strong relationship between service quality and satisfaction.

Revisit intention

According to Suriyani et al. (2020), revisit intention is the behavioral trigger of deciding to visit the same destination again and is influenced by many factors such as service quality and tourist satisfaction. Lari et al. (2019), highlighted that service quality and Islamic attributes highly influence Muslim tourist's satisfaction and revisit intention. Similarly, Othman et al. (2019), pointed out that empirical studies have given evidence that service quality can significantly affect customer satisfaction. Bhuiyan and Darda (2019) explained that customer satisfaction has a direct relationship to customer loyalty.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF STUDY CONSTRUCTS

Source: The authors themselves

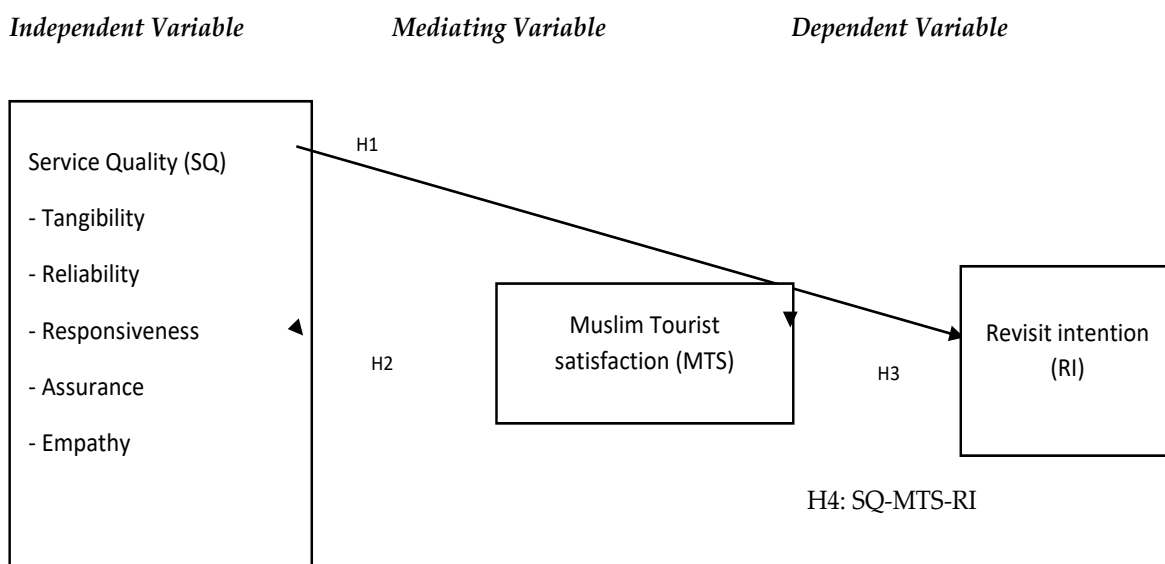


Figure 1- Conceptual framework

As seen from Figure 1, conceptual framework for the study has three variables and four hypotheses. Independent variable is service quality while the mediating variable is the Muslim tourist satisfaction. Dependent variable is revisit intention and the five dimensions in the SERVQUAL model is used as dimensions of the independent variable. Study employs SERVQUAL model and the various literature on the variables of the model while this study is a quantitative study which was conducted in the Maldives and the purpose of the study was to examine service quality examined by 435 Muslim tourists who vacationed in the Maldives. Data was collected from Maldives international airport because this was the point of departure of all the tourists who visit the Maldives. Questionnaire was a face-to-face as various previous studies has identified that tourists do not like to give response while on the vacation and are more likely to participate in a questionnaire after their vacation is over.

Ali et al. (2021) argued that service quality has a significant relationship with revisit intention and that service quality can be used as a tool to increase revisit intention. This argument was supported by Myo et al. (2019), explaining that empirical evidence shows the relationship between service quality and revisit intention with revisit intention being a proceeding action on the evaluation of service quality. Fauzi et al. (2020) emphasized on the relationship between service quality and revisit intention, elaborating those various studies show the behavioral intention of Muslim tourist after experiencing and assessing the service quality impact highly and that tourists whose assessment yield a positive response on service quality drives the behavioral intention to revisit the destination.

H1. There is a relationship between service quality and revisit intention

Battour (2019) explains that Muslim tourist satisfaction is the driver of revisit intention and eventually tourist loyalty. Battour (2019) further argued that studies suggest the significant relationship between service quality and Muslim tourist satisfaction, explaining that empirical evidence provide support that through good service quality, Muslim tourists are more satisfied which trigger a behavioral intention. Similarly, Pooya et al. (2020) and Mohamad et al. (2019), supports the arguments of Battour (2019) explaining that ensuring a good service quality increases the tourist satisfaction tremendously, creating a desire to seek similar services by the tourist. In addition, Mohamad et al. (2019) explained that good service quality also creates a benchmark for the tourist and the tourist is able to assess all the destinations the tourist visits and arrive at a decision of which destinations provide the best service quality.

H2. There is a relationship between service quality and Muslim tourist satisfaction.

Othman et al. (2019), highlighted the significant relationship between Muslim tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, explaining that studies show revisit intention as an output of Muslim tourist satisfaction as Muslim tourists who are satisfied with the destination services, tend to visit again to the destination. In addition, Othman et al. (2019), also argued that Muslim tourist satisfaction trigger word-of-mouth, in which Muslim tourists suggest the good services they receive to other tourists as well. Bhuiyan and Darda (2019) support the argument by Othman et al. (2019), explaining that Muslim tourist satisfaction drives revisit intention and that for a Muslim tourist to be highly satisfied, the quality of services being provided to the Muslim tourist is the most crucial aspect.

H3. There is a relationship between Muslim tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

Othman et al. (2019), argued and emphasized the important role service quality play on Muslim tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. Similarly, Suriyani et al. (2020), highlighted the mediating relationship of Muslim tourist satisfaction and explained that with good service quality, Muslim tourist is highly likely to be satisfied and with satisfied Muslim tourist, revisit intention or likelihood of visiting the same destination multiple times or more increase.

H4. Muslim tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and revisit intention.

2. Materials and Methods

Demographics and item adaptations

Table 1 - Summary of item adaptations and demographics for the study

Construct	Number of items	Source adapted
Demographics	4	Esenyel (2021), Sumaryadi et al. (2021)
Service quality	25	Saravanan (2019), Esenyel (2021)
Muslim tourist satisfaction	10	Suriyani et al. (2020), Sumaryadi et al. (2021)
Revisit intention	15	Kazmi et al. (2020), Hussein et al. (2020)
	54	
Items		
Service quality (Tangibility)	SQT1 Hotel premises is clean	
	SQT2 Hotel lobby and design is not welcoming and nice	
	SQT3 Rooms are clean and comfortable	
	SQT4 Accessibility to the hotel/resort was convenient	
	SQT5 The interior design of the hotel/resort projects hotel's high-quality service	

Service quality (Reliability)	SQR1 There is quick check-in and check-out process
	SQR2 There are not adequate staff to provide the services
	SQR3 Restaurant services are as promised
	SQR4 Did provide timely housekeeping services
	SQR5 Arrangement of transport services are as they promised
Service quality (Responsiveness)	SQRE1 Staff attends to sudden requests quickly
	SQRE2 Staff do not guide tourist well
	SQRE3 Staff attend to complaints and do later check to ensure satisfaction
	SQRE4 Staff do give extra care in case of injuries
	SQRE5 Staff shows is eager to always attend to the tourist
Service quality (Assurance)	SQA1 Staff behavior shows they are well-trained
	SQA2 Staff do not show good communication skills
	SQA3 Staff shows knowledge about halal tourism
	SQA4 Staff do exude confidence
	SQA5 Staff listens to the tourist well
Service quality (Empathy)	SQE1 I am happy about the individual attention given to the tourist
	SQE2 Each customer's query is handled separately
	SQE3 Staff do not learn about individual preferences of the tourist such as food allergies and attend well
	SQE4 I am happy about empathy shown towards me
	SQE5 Extra care is given when special requests are being made
Muslim tourist satisfaction	MTS1 I am highly satisfied with the service quality of the resort/hotel
	MTS2 I am satisfied with the service quality of the Islamic attributes available in the resort/hotel
	MTS3 Destination image of the Maldives to me is very positive
	MTS4 The resort/hotel and the surrounding premises were as clean according to my liking
	MTS5 Staff was readily available for inquiries
	MTS6 I am not content with the post-pandemic measures and implementation of these measures in the resort/hotel
	MTS7 I am very satisfied with my vacation in the Maldives
	MTS8 I am happy about the quality of halal food, prayer facilities and water-friendly washrooms in the resort
	MTS9 I am content about the kindness of the staff
	MTS10 I am happy on how the services are designed specially to cater for non-Muslim tourists
Revisit intention	RI1 I will revisit the Maldives because I am highly satisfied
	RI2 I will describe Maldives positively to my family
	RI3 I will describe Maldives positively to my friends
	RI4 I will not describe Maldives positively to my colleagues
	RI5 I would like to visit Maldives again
	RI6 I will encourage my family to visit Maldives
	RI7 In comparison to other destinations, Maldives is better
	RI8 I will revisit the Maldives due to great service quality
	RI9 I feel a strong sense of relaxation and comfort towards Maldives
	RI10 I will not revisit Maldives due to lack of Islamic attributes available in the resort/hotel
	RI11 I feel at ease with my personal safety in Maldives

	RI12 Maldives did motivate me enough to come back	
	RI13 I will revisit Maldives again because I perceive a very positive destination image of Maldives	
	RI14 I feel Muslim tourists should revisit Maldives more and more	
	RI15 Local culture is Muslim friendly and worthy of revisits	
Demographics		
Demographic item	Segment	Percentage
D1: Gender	Female	48.50%
	Male	51.50%
D2: How many times you visited the Maldives	1 st time	17.90%
	2 nd time	66.90%
	3 rd time and more	15.20%
D3: How did you become aware of the Maldives?	Social media	74.50%
	Suggested by another person	6.70%
	Newspaper/magazine	6.20%
	Internet	4.40%
	TV/radio	4.10%
	Others (trade fairs and etc)	4.10%
D4: Nationality	UAE	71%
	Qatar	25%
	Lebanon	3%
	Iran	1%

Source: The authors themselves

As summarized in table 1, face-to-face questionnaire was distributed to 435 Muslim tourists who departed from the Maldives after vacationing in the Maldives. The instrument had 54 items which was measured on a Likert scale where; 1 is strongly agree, 2 is agree, 3 is neutral, 4 is disagree and 5 as strongly disagree. When examining demographics from table I, female respondents were 48.50% and male respondents 51.50%. Majority of the tourists who visited the Maldives is for the second time, which is 66.90% and 17.90% of Muslim tourists visited the Maldives for the very first time, while 15.20% are Muslim tourists who visited for the third time. Social media is seen as the platform where majority of Muslim tourists knew about the Maldives at 74.50%, while trade fairs is the option in which least percentage of Muslim tourists who learned about the Maldives at only 4.10%. After social media, being suggested by another person is the second most way Muslim tourists learning about the Maldives and the percentage is 6.70%, followed by newspapers/magazines at 6.20% and the third most platform Muslim tourists learn about the Maldives. Internet websites and TV as well as radio is seen as the fourth and fifth most platform Muslim tourists learn about the Maldives. Majority of respondents were from UAE which was 71% while from Qatar is 25% and 3% from Lebanon and 1% from Iran, making UAE the first and Qatar the second destination with most Muslim tourist arrivals to the Maldives. There are tourist arrivals from other Middle countries such as Jordan, to the Maldives, however, the respondents willing to participate in this study is only from UAE, Qatar, Lebanon and Iran.

3. Results

EFA analysis and Reliability analysis

Table 2 - Exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis

Construct	KMO and	Cumulative percentage	Reliability analysis	Items dropped	Factor loadings	AVE	CR	Remaining items
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	Bartlett's test								
Service quality	0.872	56.533%	0.804	SQR5 SQRE2 SQRE4	SQT1 SQT2 SQT3 SQT4 SQT5 SQR1 SQR2 SQR3 SQR4 SQRE 1 SQRE 3 SQRE 5 SQE1 SQE2 SQE3 SQE4 SQE5 SQA1 SQA2 SQA3 SQA4 SQA5	0.664 0.638 0.689 0.670 0.667 0.603 0.670 0.570 0.772 0.704 0.789 0.793 0.762 0.652 0.711 0.680 0.729 0.724 0.734 0.714 0.771 0.756	0.50	0.96	SQT1 SQT2 SQT3 SQT4 SQT5 SQR1 SQR2 SQR3 SQR4 SQRE1 SQRE3 SQRE5 SQE1 SQE2 SQE3 SQE4 SQE5 SQA1 SQA2 SQA3 SQA4 SQA5
Muslim tourist satisfaction	0.935	54.69%	0.904		MTS1 MTS2 MTS3 MTS4 MTS5 MTS6 MTS7 MTS8 MTS9 MTS10	0.704 0.784 0.793 0.647 0.809 0.665 0.750 0.767 0.768 0.687	0.55	0.92	MTS1 MTS2 MTS3 MTS4 MTS5 MTS6 MTS7 MTS8 MTS9 MTS10
Revisit intention	0.948	50.97%	0.901	RI4 RI8 RI10 RI14	RII1 RII2 RII3 RII5 RII6 RII7 RII9 RII11 RII12 RII13 RII15	0.683 0.682 0.781 0.704 0.669 0.804 0.751 0.673 0.721 0.681 0.690	0.51	0.92	RII1 RII2 RII3 RII5 RII6 RII7 RII9 RII11 RII12 RII13 RII15

Source: The authors themselves

Explained by Hair et al. (2012), significant KMO value is a value more than 0.8 while 0.7 is acceptable and Peterson (2000) stated that acceptable cumulative percentage value in

hypotheses developed which tests the significance of the relationships between the variables. In addition, the hypothesized model is also tested for the covariances between the constructs, which explains the relationships or link that exists between the constructs used in this study. Further explained by Awang (2015), significant values for the three fit indices are; normed chi-square, a value less than 5, acceptable CFI value is greater than 0.90 and acceptable RMSEA value according to Browne and Cudeck (1993) is less than 0.08. As seen from figure 3, this study yielded, all three fits, parsimonious fit (Normed Chi-Square) value at 1.472, a value less than 5, incremental fit (CFI) at 0.949, a value more than 0.90 and absolute fit (RMSEA) at 0.033, less than 0.08 and hence within the significant values explained by Awang (2015) and Browne and Cudeck (1993), indicating that the measurement model used in this study is an acceptable model.

Structural model

Source: structural model with fit indices values

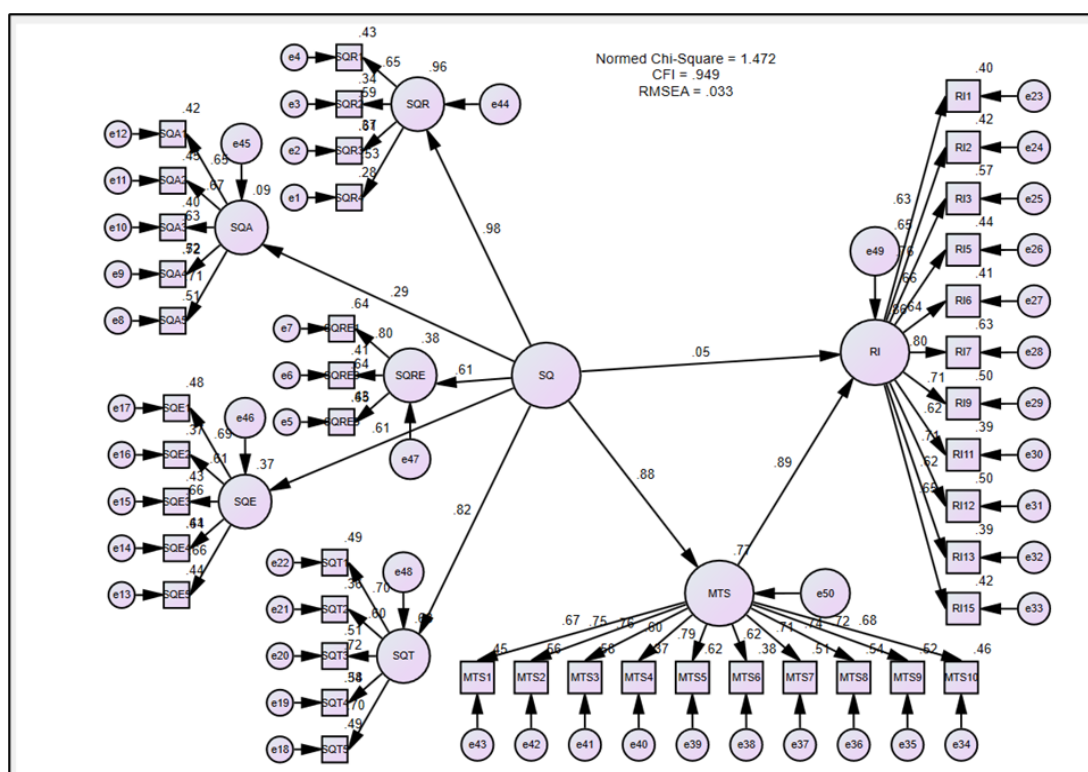


Figure 3- Structural model

Stated by Awang (2015), in statistical analysis, both measurement model and structural model is used to measure the acceptability of a model as well as the covariances that exists between the constructs. The structural model is a model constructed after EFA and reliability analysis that represents the model in a structured simplified representation and shows the factor values, R² values as well as the covariances between the items and variables Awang (2015). The three main fit indices used in structural model is Normed chi-square, CFI and RMSEA while, Normed chi-square test is used in studies to test for detection of relationships between variables and the significant value for Normed chi-square test is any value below 5 Awang (2015). The comparative fit index (CFI), is used in research to examine discrepancy between the hypothesized model and the significant value for CFI is over 0.9 Awang (2015). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) assess a hypothesized model to how far it is from the perfect model and significant RMSEA value is any value less than 0.08 Awang (2015). As seen in Figure 3, structural model of this study, Normed chi-square is at 1.472, a value less than the significant value 5, while CFI is observed at 0.949, a value over 0.90 and RMSEA is seen at 0.033, a value less than 0.08,

making all the three indices within the significant values, indicating that all the three fits are met and that the structural model show an acceptable model. When reviewing the measurement model in figure 1 structural model in figure 2 shows that both models are observed with all fit indices within the significant values indicating acceptability of the study.

Hypothesis testing

Table 3 - hypothesis testing

	Estimate	S.E	C.R	P value	Interpretation
H1 SQ@RI	0.066	0.120	0.545	0.586	Not significant
H2 SQ@MTS	1.218	0.094	12.959	***	Significant
H3 MTS@RI	0.874	0.109	8.019	***	Significant

Source: The authors themselves

Details of the hypothesis testing

H1. There is a relationship between Service quality and revisit intention.

H2. There is a relationship between Service quality and Muslim tourist satisfaction.

H3. There is a relationship between Muslim tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

H4. Muslim tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between Service quality and revisit intentions.

After measurement model and structural model, estimates were examined for the hypothesis significance which is seen in table III. According to Geert and Berg (2017), significant p-values should be less than 0.05 or denoted as *** after the structural model and estimates should be above 0.2. There are four hypotheses in this study and as seen from table III, H2 and H3 has both *** as well as estimates greater than 0.2, making both hypotheses significant or the relationship in these hypotheses significant. However, H1 has a p-value greater than 0.05, which is 0.586. Therefore, H1 having p-values greater than 0.05, the relationship between SQ@RI is proven to be not significant.

H4 details mediating relationship of Muslim tourist satisfaction between service quality and revisit intention. According to Awang (2015), hypotheses testing portrays a significant p-value, which is less than 0.05 or denoted by ***, it is supported and therefore shows partial mediation. Because H2 and H3 details the relationships of H4 and both these hypotheses being significant as seen in table 9, H4 shows a significant relationship and therefore, indicating partial mediation of the variable MTS between SQ and RI. Hence, this study result that there is direct relationship between service quality and Muslim tourist satisfaction and also direct relationship between Muslim tourist satisfaction to revisit intention, although the study shows no relationship between service quality and revisit intention.

Table 4- Validity and reliability

<u>Validity</u>	AVE value above 0.50	AVE values are: 0.50, 0.55 & 0.51	Has convergent validity
Convergent validity	All fit indices are met	Normed chi-Square 1.472	Has construct validity
Construct validity	Normed chi-Square: below 5	CFI: Above 0.90	
	CFI: Above 0.90	RMSEA: Below 0.08	
Discriminant validity	Exogenous correlation lower than 0.85 in measurement model	Correlation between SQ@MTS 0.88 SQ@RI 0.5	Slightly lack discriminant validity
<u>Reliability</u>			
Internal reliability	Cronbach Alpha over 0.7	0.765 0.904	Has internal reliability

Composite reliability		0.901	
	Factor loadings over 0.60	All over 0.60, except for one item	Has composite reliability
Average variance explained	AVE value above 0.50	All over 0.50	Has optimum AVE

Source: The authors themselves

Validity in research shows well the findings and the results received from research represents the actual findings within the study population and therefore validity measures how precisely the research instrument measures the data required (Awang, 2015). Therefore, the accuracy of the instrument and measurement used in the analysis affect highly the validity of the study (Awang, 2015). On the other spectrum, reliability in research is the consistency of the measurement or analysis used in the study or research (Awang, 2015). As seen in table IV, for this study, three types of validity; convergent validity, construct validity and discriminant validity are measured. For a study to have convergent validity, Awang (2015), explain that AVE values should be over 0.5, a study to have construct validity, three fit indices should be met and a study to have discriminant validity, exogenous correlation should be lower than the 0.85. This study is seen to have both the convergent and construct validity but lacks discriminant validity as one exogenous correlation observed in the measurement model is seen to have slightly higher than 0.85. Three types of reliability are measured in this study; internal reliability, composite reliability and average variance explained. As seen in table IV, internal reliability for the study is met with Cronbach Alpha values being over 0.7 for all the variables and composite reliability is also met with factor loadings after EFA being over 0.60. Having all the AVE values in all three variables over 0.5, indicate that average variance explained meets with the significant values. Therefore, this study has both validity and reliability.

IMPLICATIONS

With very limited academic research on Muslim travel behavior and the antecedents of Muslim tourist satisfaction, this study will enhance the current body of literature on Muslim travel behavior and Halal tourism. The second significance is that, tourism investors in the Maldives can use this study and reflect upon how Muslim tourists rated service quality and whether to continue the service quality or improve service quality can be decided as a strategy. Maldives though is well established in catering for the European market or any other western market, catering for Muslim tourists is relatively new to Maldivian tourism industry. Therefore, while Maldivian tourism industry is just embracing the different ways to satisfy a Muslim tourist, this study will highlight the prominence of service quality in satisfying a Muslim tourist. Due to the well-establishment of the European market in the Maldivian tourism industry, limited research has been conducted for the purpose of studying Muslim tourist behavior especially in the context of the Maldives. Hence, this research adds both to the theoretical literature as well as the empirical literature pertaining to Muslim tourist behavior.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Collecting data in a pandemic had limitations such as reluctance of the potential respondents of interacting with a researcher and voluntarily participating in the questionnaire. This study did not attempt to examine Muslim tourist's perspectives from other continents and hence future research could examine from other continents other than Middle East. Islam being the second largest and the fastest spreading religion in the world, there are Muslims in every country in the world. Maldives being a country famous for welcoming tourists from all over the world, collecting data from Muslim tourists who comes from all different countries in the world would give more

support to the results from this research. Therefore, future research could be extended towards in collecting data not only from the Middle East, but also from other countries which will increase the generalizability of the results from this study. In addition, because data was collected during the pandemic, hence, many respondents were seen to be reluctant to engage in the research and due to this obstacle, tourists from few countries volunteered to participate in the research.

4. Conclusion

This study is a quantitative study in which data collected from 435 Muslim tourists from Middle East region and was given face-to-face questionnaires to examine the four hypotheses drawn from the conceptual framework. The result from this study showed that there is significant relationship between service quality, Muslim tourist satisfaction and revisit intention although the study did show no significant relationship between service quality and revisit intention. Therefore, study showed that service quality and Muslim tourist satisfaction has significant relationship and Muslim tourist satisfaction has significant relationship with revisit intention. On reflecting to the literature, this study supports findings by Ali et al. (2021), showing that service quality and satisfaction has a significant relationship. Similarly, this study further supports findings by Fauzi et al. (2020), explaining that tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and revisit intention. However, from the literature, Suriyani et al. (2020), reveal that service quality and revisit intention have significant relationship.

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