What Makes Muslim Friendly Tourism? An Empirical Study on Destination Image, Tourist Attitude and Travel Intention

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Abstract

The demand for supply of Islamic tourism industry has been affected positively by the increasing number of Islamic followers globally and positive tourism trends. The purpose of this paper is attempted to examine the interrelations among Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT), tourist attitude toward destination, destination image, and travel intention in the tourism industry. After questionnaire survey, the structural questionnaire was used to collect data from the members at Muslims' tourists. Valid responses from the survey was 161 with a 92.5 % of respond rate. The empirical results from the structural model suggest that: (1) Muslims friendly tourism positively and significant impact tourist attitude, destination image, and travel intention; (2) tourist attitude and destination image have a significant relationship with travel intention; (3) destination image positively affects tourist attitude. (4) The opportunities and suggestions in developing and destination marketing for Halal tourism are also discussed.

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1   Introduction

Tourism is becoming a global leisure activity which is popular and very important economic income for many countries. Nowadays, the growth of the Muslim population is rapid and is expected to reach 26% of the world's population by 2030 (Pew Research Centre, 2014). The value of Muslim travelers currently represents 10% of the travel market and spending was US$ 126 billion in 2011, and is estimated to reach US$ 192 billion by 2020 (Eid & ElGohary, 2015). With the growth of the Muslim travel market, Muslim friendly tourism is an important marketing issue of tourism industry. Muslim-friendly tourism is an emergent mode of tourism development which capitalizes on the growing world Muslim travelers (Duman, 2011). It is essentially a niche market positioning which is intended to encourage reciprocal visits among Muslim countries.

Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) is discussed some definitions of this concept as an emerging field of study within the tourism discipline. Recently many research conducted in the concept of Muslim Friendly Tourism. Muslim tourism is based on the term "Halal travel". And Halal tourism defines as offering tour packages and destinations that are particularly designed to cater for considerations and address Muslim needs (Chookaew, S., chanin, O., Charatarawat, J., Sriprasert, P., & Nimpaya, S, 2015). Muslim tourists tend to honor various religious beliefs, behaviors and habits during their vacation (Cankurtaran&Cetin,2016). Muslim friendly tourism includes halal hotels, halal transport (halal airlines), halal food restaurants, halal tour packages and halal finance (Zulkifli et al., 2011).

Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) has been very popular in recent years, as well as being an important segment of international tourism. Muslim tourists are rising faster than the global tourist growth rate. MFT through among these emerging markets there is a significant amount of Muslim population (Cetin et al., 2015). Another major issue that makes MFT important is attracts a continued interest from practitioners (COMCEC, 2015).

Destination image plays an important role and it has been the subject of much discussed in literatures. Previous studies showed destination image is an essential factor to encourage tourists towards destination, and a positive destination image enhances the probability of greater tourist numbers (Coshall,2000; O'Leary,2005). Destination image will influence tourists in the process of choosing a destination, the subsequent evaluation of the trip and in the future intentions (Chon,1990; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Furthermore, knowing the factors influencing image would help identity target markets (Goodall,1990).

The Quran in many different ways issued special attention to tourism and in its attitude toward tourism considered one of the great blessings of Allah. Planning on Muslim tourist market should be in accordance with Sharia in regulating all matters relating to tourism activities (Ismail & Bator 2010).

They have a responsibility to provide hospitality to visitors who under Islamic law, enjoy the citizens' rights. Therefore, halal tourism consists of different sectors which are related with each other (Akyol & Kilinc,2014). To sum, it is an attempt

to make the tourism experience enjoyable to Muslim Travelers and allowing them to perform religious duties. Therefore, Muslim friendly products and services should also be integrated in tourism destination planning (e.g. prayer rooms at airports and public areas, customized meal plans in Ramadan) while maintaining the level of experience destination offers to other tourists. Muslim visitor arrivals were estimated and creates a large potential that cannot be overlooked for most destinations.

The current number of Muslim visitors in Taiwan is relatively small. As is shown by the statistics of Tourism Bureau, there were four hundred and forty thousand Muslims visiting Taiwan in 2014, occupying less than one percent of Muslims' oversea tourism population of the year. The gap in the knowledge particularly on the needs, services and behaviors of Muslim tourists is still to be found in Taiwan. This is precisely why there remains a large space in the market of Muslim tourists in Taiwan that worth developed. Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to offer an integrated approach to examine the interrelationships among Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT), destination image, tourist attitude toward destination and travel intention among Muslim tourists.

2   Literature Review

2.1 Islamic Tourism concept

Halal is an Arabic word meaning lawful and permitted, the Halal concept comes from the Islamic teaching Quran & Sunnah which it uses to describe objects and actions. Halal as defined as permitted, with respect to which no restriction exists, and the doing of which the law-giver, Allah, is allowed (Al-Qaradawi, 2013). From Islamic perspective, all product development (residential places, foods, and beverage), places (Islamic destinations), dimensions (economic, cultural, religious, etc.) and managing service processes (marketing and ethical issues) designed for and directed at Muslims (Henderson, 2010; Hassan, 2007). Every Muslim must ensure that what they eat comes from a halal source. This does not mean only to check the ingredients perse, but also to ensure that the whole process is in accordance with Shariah principles (Zakaria 2008).

  Based on Islamic principles, many researchers have tried to defined Islamic tourism means all tourism activities, facilities, actions and objectives are permissible according to Islamic Law (Shariah) (Battour et. al., 2014; Hassan, 2007; Henderson, 2010; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). Islamic tourism covers tourism activities as an economic, culture and religious concept, including all relaxation and entertainment in hospitality enterprises (Dogan 2010; Ala Hamarneh 2011). Muslims who strive to the teachings of Islam directly and indirectly have an impact on their decisions regarding vacation and travel plans (Zamani-Farahani &Henderson 2010 in Bazazo et al. 2017). Muslim consumers whose tastes and preferences are governed by halal rules on food specification, a halal food market exists.

2.2 The influences of Muslim Friendly tourism

With the growth of the Muslim traveler as a niche market, the importance of Muslim Friendly tourism has been widely discussed by various researches in the field and conceptual proposed. Adapted from Mastercard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), it has evaluated destinations to create an Index to be a benchmark destination in the Muslim Travel Market, ranking them based on how well they cater to Muslim travelers. In 2017 covers a total of 130 destinations, providing comprehensive research and insights on the Muslim travel market.

The current research considers 4 attitudes towards Islamic attributes of destination. These dimensions are access, communication, environment and services; and which have been further divided into 11 sub-criteria. There are measured in the questionnaire through accommodation options, Muslim visitor arrivals, airport facilities, access to prayer spaces, dining options & Halal assurance, family-friendly destination, Muslim traveler and general safety, awareness and outreach air connectivity, Muslim travel needs, ease of communication, and visa free travel items.

Based on the study analysis, MFT consists of the following three main components: 1. Key faith-based needs (Faith-based needs of the Muslim travelers) 2. Demand side key themes (Reasons and motivation for travel by Muslims) 3. Supply side key themes (Travel and hospitality services and facilities) (CrescentRating, 2015). It features a list of over 150 terms and expressions related to the Halal travel market, with an explanation of each term in the context of lifestyle and travel. Following that, the study presents the suggested terms and definitions to be used for the MFT market.

Destination image is defined as an individual's mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings and overall perception of a particular destination (Crompton, 1979; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). It is regarded as the mental portrayal of a destination (Alhemoud &Armstrong, 1996). A destination's image can be developed based on the estimation or understanding of a region's characteristics. Tasci, Gartner, and Cavusgil (2007) observe that the image of a destination can also be influenced by promotional information from that destination. One approach of examining what Theory of planned Behavior drives Muslims' attitude to choose a particular destination (Rahman, N. A., Salleh, R., Rahman, S. A., and Hashim, D. M., 2011). The finding shows that attitude has significant relationship with behavior of non-compliance. Mill and Morrison (1998) proposed several factors to determine the factors influencing tourist in choosing a particular destination such as motivations, perceptions, learning and attitudes; and these factors are influenced by personality, culture and society. Thus the study proposed the hypothesis:

H1: Muslim Friendly Tourism has a positive and significant impact on destination image.
H2: Muslim Friendly Tourism has a positive and significant impact on tourists' attitude toward destination.

H3: Muslim Friendly Tourism has a positive and significant impact on travel Intention

2.3 Destination image toward travel intention

Destination image is defined as an individual's overall perception or the total set of impressions of a place (Phelps, 1986). It has been generally accepted in the literature that destination image has influence on tourist behaviors (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez,2001; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2005).Tasci, Gartner, and Cavusgil (2007) observe that the image of a destination can also be influenced by promotional information from that destination.

In addition, many tourism and marketing researches suggest that destination image is influential not only on the destination selection process and tourists' subjective perception but also on the subsequent evaluation of the trip, and on their future travel intentions (Mansfeld, 1992; Murray & Vogel, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Crompton & Ankomah; Prendergast &Man, 2002; Castro, Armario & Ruiz, 2007; Ryu, Han & Kim, 2007; Morais, Kerstetter, & Hou, 2007; Hsu, Huang & Swanson,2010). Further, from many researches validate that destination image is one of the most important factors to make the travel intention to revisit the same destination. As a result, the following hypothesis is presented:

H4. Destination image has a positive and significant influence on travel intention.

2.4 Tourist's attitude toward Muslim Friendly destination

Attitude toward a behavior can be defined as "the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question" (Ajzen, 1991). In general, tourist attitudes comprise cognitive, affective and behavioral components (Vincent&Thompson,2002). Tourist attitude describes the psychological tendencies expressed by the positive or negative evaluations of tourists when engaged in certain behaviors (Ajzen,1991; Schiffman&Kanuk,1994; Kraus, 1995). In our case, the target behavior is the Muslim traveler's intention, and the Muslim tourist's attitude is the that toward Taiwan as a Muslim Friendly destination. Muslims are well ordered to follow Islamic teachings which directly and indirectly impact on their decisions concerning leisure and travel plans (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010) Hence, the study proposed the hypotheses on the basis of these findings:

H5: Tourist attitude toward Muslim Friendly destination has a positive and significant influence on travel intention.

2.5 Destination image toward to Muslim tourist attitude

Previous studies (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Chon, 1990) have showed that destination image will influence tourists in the process of choosing a destination, the subsequent evaluation of the trip and in their future intentions. Furthermore, past research across fields has emphasized the importance of understanding the forces, which influence image development (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004). Goodall (1990) noted

that knowing the factors influencing image would help identify target markets.
H6: Destination image has a positive and significant impact on tourist attitude toward destination.

3   Methodology

3.1 Research Model and Hypotheses

This research framework was based on Jalilvand et. al. research (2012). The questionnaire was in four parts: a first part with concept about Muslim Friendly Tourism following Mastercard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), the study measured using MFT by employing eleven items. A second part with questions about the Taiwan destination image, a third part with questions about the Muslim's attitude were measured by using modified scales developed by Gamble, Juliusson, and Garling (2009) Items included were very bad/very good, very worthless/very valuable, and very unpleasant/very pleasant. Finally, a fourth part with questions to measure travel intention, the study modified and used a scale with three items developed by Kassem et al. (2010). The final questionnaire included a total of 12 items, and the format was a seven-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).
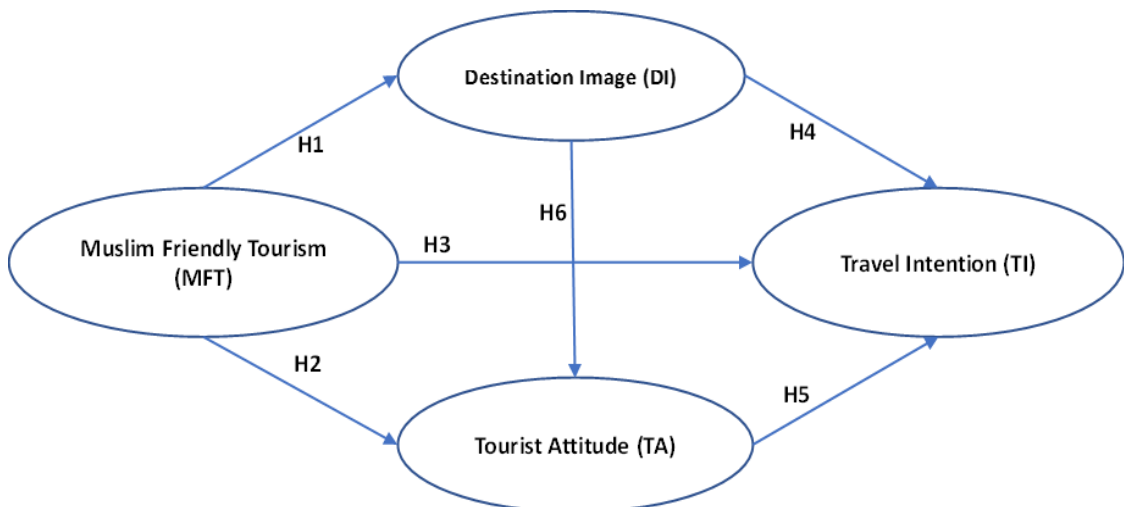

Figure 1:   The Research Model

The hypotheses will be the following:
H1: Muslim Friendly Tourism has a positive and significant impact on destination image.
H2: Muslim Friendly Tourism has a positive and significant impact on tourists' attitude   toward destination.
H3: Muslim Friendly Tourism has a positive and significant impact on travel

intention.

H4: Destination image has a positive and significant influence on travel intention.

H5: Tourists attitude toward Taiwan has a positive and significant influence on travel intention.

H6: Destination image has a positive and significant impact on tourist attitude toward destination.

3.2 Tourist's Sampling

Sample selection was a result of the convenience method; the Muslim tourists were selected at different popular locations including Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, National Palace Museum, Taipei 101, Taipei and Taichung Mosque, Sun Moon Lake, Shilin night market and High Speed Train Station. These locations were chosen based on their popularity as tourist attractions in Taiwan. As to size, although initially 208 questionnaires were collected, some had to be rejected because they were not understanding English cannot filled in. finally resulting in a sample of 161 valid respondents. some had to be rejected because they could not be filled in properly due to the tourists' incapability of understanding English, and finally yielding 161 valid responses. Data were gathered during the months of July to December 2017.

Table1 shows demographic profile of the Muslim tourists. As indicated in Table1, 60.9% of the sample was female respondents while 39.1% of the sample represented male respondents. In regards to education level, 64.60% of the respondents were in university level, 24.80% of the respondents were in graduate school. About 62% questionnaires of personal income per month is less than 2000 USD. Further, the research project was conducted across various nationalities with the most dominant Residential is Asia of 83.9%. More than 62% of Muslim tourists are the first time come Taiwan and 69% of questionnaires are independent travel pattern.

Muslims are well ordered to follow Islamic teachings which directly and indirectly impact on their decisions concerning leisure and travel plans (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010) Hence, the study proposed the hypotheses on the basis of these findings:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Descriptions	Content	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	98	60.9%
	Male	63	39.1%
Marriage Status	Single	95	59.0%
	Married	66	41.0%
Age	under 20	7	4.30%
	20-29 years old	60	37.30%
	30-39 years old	48	29.80%
	40-49 years old	38	23.60%
	50-59 years	5	3.10%
	over 60	3	1.90%
Education	Primary school	1	0.60%
	Junior high school	2	1.30%
	Senior high school	14	8.70%
	University	104	64.60%
	Graduate school	40	24.80%
Monthly income 〈USD〉 a33 NT$A1 US$.	under 1000 USD	50	31.1%
	1001-2000 USD	50	31.1%
	2001-3000 USD	41	25.4%
	3001-4000 USD	8	5.0%
	4001-5000 USD	6	3.7%
	Over 5001 USD	6	3.7%
Times of visiting	1st time	100	62.10%
	2nd time	31	19.30%
	3rd time	8	4.90%
	4th time and above	4	13.70%
Tourist's region	Asia	135	83.9%
	Europe	14	8.70%
	America	10	6.20%
	Oceania	2	1.20%
	Africa	0	0.00%
Travel pattern	Independent	111	69.0%
	Group package tour	40	24.8%
	Business trip	8	5.0%
	Official business trip	2	1.2%

4 Findings

Table 2 demonstrates the mean, standard deviation, and order scores for items to each variable. In Muslim Friendly Tourism construct, Muslim Traveler and General Safety is the highest score which indicates that Muslim tourists feel safe to travel in Taiwan, and find Airport Facilities convenient and completed. However, Access to Prayer Spaces is considered insufficient by Muslim tourists, and also the most troublesome problem lies in the inconvenience of Dining Options & Halal Assurance.,

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of items of Muslim Friendly Tourism

Variables	Mean	Std.	Order
Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) Accommodation Options	3.22	1.584	9
Muslim Visitor Arrivals	3.59	1.407	8
Airport Facilities	5.60	1.315	2
Access to Prayer Spaces	3.09	1.626	11
Dining Options & Halal Assurance	3.15	1.488	10
Family-friendly Destination	5.33	1.259	4
Muslim Traveler and General Safety	5.94	1.026	1
Awareness and Outreach Air Connectivity	5.20	1.532	5
Muslim Travel Needs	5.38	1.265	3
Ease of Communication	4.24	1.421	7
Visa Free Travel	5.16	1.248	6
Tourist Attitude (AT) Very pleasant	5.12	1.307	4
Very convenient	5.16	1.440	3
Very good	5.23	1.352	2
Very Valuable	5.35	1.267	1
The same expected	5.03	1.142	5
Destination Image (DI) The climate is comfortable with good sanitary condition	5.47	1.299	5
Natural and ecological resources are abundant	5.51	1.200	4
Unique geographic location and island landscape	5.61	1.173	3
Famous relics and rich cultural history	5.39	1.220	7
Amusing festival activities	5.08	1.167	12

Delicious food with special flavor	5.09	1.425	11
Diversified experience activities	5.13	1.231	9
Various entertainments at night	5.26	1.248	8
Service staff are highly qualified	5.40	1.086	6
Public security is good	5.81	1.130	2
The surrounding is not too crowded or noisy	5.12	1.386	10
People are friendly and nice	5.87	1.056	1
Travel Intention (TI) Recommendation	5.58	1.399	1
Increase budget	5.32	1.283	2
Re-visit Taiwan	5.58	1.238	1
Travel Intention	5.25	1.285	3

Tables 3 shows the factor loadings, Cronbach alpha, composite reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for the variables. All of the indicators of the factor exceeded 0.5 except the Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) constructs. The evidence of convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Creswell. 2009). In addition, while the measurement reached convergent validity at the item level because all of the factor loadings went above 0.5, all of the composite reliability values exceeded 0.60, demonstrating a high level of internal consistency for the latent variables. The findings revealed that each of AVE exceeded 0.5, the convergent validity was proved.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics, factor loadings, critical rations, Cronbach Alpha, AVE values

Constructs and Indicators	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Muslim Friendly Tourism(MFT)		0.854		
MFT1	0.802***			
MFT2	0.766***			
MFT3	0.406***			
MFT4	0.894***		0.821	33.9%
MFT5	0.901***			
MFT6	0.498***			
MFT7	0.251**			
MFT8	0.319***			

MFT9	0.402***		
MFT10	0.243**		
MFT11	0.295***		
Tourist Attitude(AT)		0.944	
AT1	0.874***		
AT2	0.942***		
AT3	0.929***	0.946	78.0%
AT4	0.901***		
AT5	0.756***		
Destination Image(DI)		0.920	
DI1	0.775***		
DI2	0.834***		
DI3	0.847***		
DI4	0.791***		
DI5	0.671***		
DI6	0.554***	0.922	50.0%
DI7	0.730***		
DI8	0.671***		
DI9	0.608***		
DI10	0.627***		
DI11	0.701***		
DI12	0.607***		
Travel Intention(TI)		0.888	
TI1	0.778***		
TI2	0.909***	0.896	68.4%
TI3	0.874***		
TI4	0.735***		

Note: **p≤0.01, ***p≤0.001

Table 4 presents the intercorrelations analysis among Muslim Friendly Tourism, tourist Attitude, Destination Image, Travel Intention. There were all below They were all below 0.75 that significant value p≤0.01. From the result, all measurement results indicate that this study had adequate levels and good discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2006). They were all range from 0.5 to 0.75 and significant by p≤0.01. All squared correlations were less than the AVE value for each factor except Muslim Friendly Tourism, demonstrating good discriminant validity.

Table 4: Results of Correlations

Constructs	MFT	AT	DI	TI
Muslim Friendly Tourism	1			
Tourist Attitude	0.568*	1		
Destination Image	0.588*	0.550*	1	
Travel Intention	0.514*	0.579*	0.746*	1

Note: *p≤0.01

Table 5 shows the result of regression analysis. From Muslim Friendly Tourism concept, it has the highest impact on travel intention. Then, destination image has highest influence on travel intention in the framework. The study results found that Muslim Friendly Tourism has the weakest impact on destination image suggesting the necessity for Taiwan to improve and lay emphasis on Muslim Friendly Tourism.

Table 5: Results of regression analysis

Hypothesis	Regression equation	P value	Remarks
H1:	DI=0.535*MFT+15.243	***	Supported
H2:	TA=0.936*MFT+25.627	***	Supported
H3:	TI=1.110*MFT+25.763	***	Supported
H4:	TI=1.773*DI+26.231	***	Supported
H5:	TI=0.758*DI+9.431	***	Supported
H6:	TA=0.997*DI+38.918	***	Supported

Note: **p≤0.01, ***p≤0.001

5   Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to propose a conceptual framework for Muslim Friendly Tourism concept and comment on Taiwan Islamic tourism industry. This paper examined the impact of Muslim Friendly Tourism on destination image, Muslim tourist' attitude toward destination, and travel intention to determine the effect of destination information on the Muslim tourists' decision-making process. Results indicated that Muslim Friendly Tourism has a positive and significant impact on destination image (H1 is supported), tourists 'attitude (H2 is supported), and travel intention (H3 is supported). The results of structural equation analyses also showed that travel intention is a direct function of destination image (H4 is

supported) and Muslim's attitude (H5 is supported). Moreover, the finding from the structural modeling showed that destination image positively affects Muslim attitude toward destination (H6 is supported).

The results provide several implications of practical importance for destination's government, tourism industry and managers, particularly those in Taiwan. First, merely 6 mosques, and few public places and national scenic areas in Taiwan provide access prayer spaces, causing the inconvenience of Muslim's prayers which are to be performed five times a day. Muslim tourists that proximity to a mosque may influence preferences when making hotel reservations, attitude towards choosing the prayer room for a holiday as a tourism destination and found that Muslim respondents were concerned about the availability of mosques.

(Weidenfeld,2006 ; Mohsin,2005). More prayer spaces and toilets facilities are advised to be provided in public places and hotels.

Second, according to the record of Chinese Muslim Association, only 104 restaurants and hotels in Taiwan have obtained Halal Certification, and most of them are located in metropolitan area. It's rather inconvenient for Muslim tourists who travel to other parts of Taiwan. There are many studies that show the importance of the availability of Halal food to Muslims in choosing their tourist destinations (Mohsin & Ryan, 1997; Syed, 2001; Mohsin,2005; Weidenfeld, 2006; Weidenfeld and Ron,2008). Hence, the government is promoting vigorously several projects of Muslim friendly environment, instructing practitioners of food and beverage trade to get the certificate of Muslim-friendly restaurant.

Third, the record of Ministry of Labor shows that, by September, 2016, of the six hundred thousand migrant workers in Taiwan, nearly two hundred and forty thousand are from Indonesia, of whom more than ninety percent are Muslim, occupying the majority of Muslim population in Taiwan. A friendlier environment could make a better impression on Muslims. Destination's higher MFT image and its ability to serve religious needs of Muslim travelers contribute to the higher potential of a continuous stream of Muslim traveler, the fastest growing travelers market. This is the challenge in turn contribute to the growth and success of Taiwan's tourism industry.

The results of the study make contributions and support the findings of previous studies, yet, limitations are unavoidable. One of the challenges lies in collecting questionnaires. It's rather difficult to recognize Muslim tourists among the masses of travelers, except for Muslim women who wear hijab. Besides, some Muslims come to Taiwan for employment, not for trip, which requires further and respective confirmation. In addition, Muslim tourists would not be able to fill in the questionnaires if they don't understand English.

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