

## **Muslim Consumers' Purchase Behavior Towards Shariah Compliant Hotels in Malaysia**

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### **Abstract**

*As the number of Muslim tourists drastically increased, the concept of Shariah Compliant Hotel (SCH) has become a vital concern particularly in Islamic tourism. Shariah compliance is one of the primary aspects that influence Muslim consumers' choice of accommodation while travelling. For such reason, the present study has been developed to examine the factors that affect Muslim consumers purchase behavior towards Shariah compliant hotels. Henceforth, a conceptual framework has been constructed based on past literature. The primary data were collected from Muslim travelers specifically in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia using a self-administered questionnaire. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were employed to analyze data. Based on the results the aspects of halal image, followed by halal awareness along with religiosity have been found to have profound effects on Muslim consumers purchase intention towards Shariah compliant hotels. Further, purchase intention has a significant effect on purchase behavior towards Shariah compliant hotels. The outcomes derived from this research will be of immense importance for destination marketers as*

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*well as hoteliers for crafting effective strategies in terms of meeting the needs of Muslim consumers. At the same time, the study would also facilitate future researchers to undertake more studies in Islamic tourism particularly, Shariah compliant hotels.*

### **Keywords**

*Shariah compliant hotels, purchase behavior*

### **Introduction**

An understanding of the factors that shape Muslim consumers' behavior has become a topic of much interest among researchers and academics particularly in Islamic marketing. As the consumption habits of Muslim consumers are largely shaped by their belief and adherence to the principles of Islam, significant initiative has been undertaken by marketers in various regions of the globe for tailoring their goods along with services to fulfill the unique desires and demands of the Muslim population. The primary reason that has given rise to such an occurrence is the fact that the Muslim market has been recognized as one of the leading emerging markets which is relatively untapped. As a result, Muslim consumer market is considered to be a viable segment which has the potential of being further served by marketers.

The needs and wants of the Muslim consumer market is, to a large extent, molded by their firm believes in the Islam religion and its values (Henderson, 2003). Muslims are required to follow the guidelines of *halal* and *haram* in all facets of their everyday lives even during the time of travelling. In terms of Muslim consumers, adherence to religious principles is utmost important when it comes to the aspect of accommodation while travelling. Henceforth, compliance to Islamic values and principles are integral for the hotel industry for satisfying the demands of Muslim travelers. For such reasons, *Shariah* compliant hotels have emerged as a crucial aspect in Islamic tourism. From a general perspective, *Shariah* compliant hotels are referred to hotels that are established specifically for meeting the requirements of Muslim consumers through offering services that reflect Islamic principles.

In recent time, competition within the tourism industry has accelerated at a rapid pace and with the growing number of Muslim travelers, *Shariah* compliant accommodation has turned into an issue of much importance. When travelling to foreign destinations, Muslim consumers face various obstacles in searching hotels established that adhere to the guidelines of the *Shariah*. The

unavailability of hotels that are in line with their religious values creates a dilemma for Muslim travelers (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010). The inability of destinations hosts to deliver accommodation facilities that congruent with Islamic principles greatly discourages Muslim travelers to visit the respective destinations (Battour and Battor; 2010). Therefore, to attract and retain Muslim consumers' accommodation providers and destination marketers should meet their religious needs through providing services which are *Shariah* compliant. Despite this, an extent review of prior literature demonstrated the presence of an apparent lack of studies on Muslim consumers purchase behavior towards *Shariah* compliant hotels (Idris and Razali, 2016; Yunus et al., 2014). To bridge this gap, the present study seeks to identify the factors that affect Muslim consumers purchase behavior towards *Shariah* compliant hotels. The study develops few specific objectives which are;

- To determine the effect of halal image on purchase intention towards *Shariah* compliant hotels
- To investigate the effect of halal awareness on purchase intention towards *Shariah* compliant hotels.
- To examine the effect of religiosity on purchase intention towards *Shariah* compliant hotels.
- To examine the effect of purchase intention on purchase behavior towards *Shariah* compliant hotels.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Hotels/Shariah Compliant Hotels***

The tourism and hospitality industry has experienced immense transformation and emerged as one of the largest as well as fastest growing industries globally (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000). Hotels are an integral part of the tourism industry which significantly contribute to the overall tourism experience through the delivery of standardized facilities and services (Xuan, 2017). Hotels are considered to be the primary type of accommodation providers, occupying the biggest share both in terms of the amount and type in the tourist accommodation industry system (Rishipal, 2014). The use of hotel facilities such as rooms, restaurants and wellness services are no longer considered a luxury rather they have become an integral component of consumers' lifestyle (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000). Over the past two decades, the demand and supply for hospitality services has been increased drastically and resulted in intense competition (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000). In order to survive in the competitive environment, it has become imperative for hotels to adequately satisfy the needs and wants of the diversified groups of consumers which led to

the development of a newer concept of hotels widely known as *Shariah* compliant hotels (Salleh et al., 2014). *Shariah* compliant hotels are described as hotels that offer services that are in line with the teachings of Islam and Islamic values (Saad et al., 2016). Henceforth, *Shariah* compliant hotels comprise a wide range of attributes such as the prohibition of alcohol, night clubs and bars, availability of halal food, prayers room, Quran and prayer mats in each room, separate facilities for men and women, *Shariah* compliant funding and management (Samori & Rahman, 2013; Henderson, 2010; Rosenberg and Choufany, 2009). *Shariah* compliant hotels are a vital component of Islamic tourism and hospitality industry developed particularly to satisfy the special needs of Muslim consumers (Idris and Razali, 2016). These needs largely depend on the rules and regulations prescribed in Islam (Saad et al., 2016). Hotels can attract and increase the number of Muslim tourists through the fulfilment of such needs (Battour et al., 2011).

### ***Halal Image and Purchase Intention***

The term *halal* symbolizes permissibility with respect to Islamic guidelines (Deuraseh, 2009). In marketing, the aspect of *halal* is used to understand the permissibility for a product/service on the basis of the teachings of the Holy Quran (Suki and Salleh, 2016; Lada et al., 2009). Statistics have revealed that the concept of *halal* is largely considered by Muslim consumers as it has been found that 70% of Muslim population at the global level follow *halal* standard (Lada et al., 2009). From an Islamic standpoint, *halal* image represents the perceptions of Muslim consumers on brand characteristics which later influences their purchase decision (Suki and Salleh, 2016). Literature proves that there is a higher likelihood of remaining loyal with a particular company, products and services when consumers have positive perception towards it (Nguyen and Leblanc, 2001). Similarly, permissibility in Islam, based on *halal* and *haram*, is highly taken into account by Muslim consumers due to the reason that Islamic values have profound influence on the social etiquette of Muslim societies as well as their consumption patterns (Khraim, 2010). It has been found that Muslim consumers hold a deep desire for assuring their purchasing habits parallel with *halal* image and avoiding non-*halal* image (Suki and Salleh 2016). Suki and Salleh (2016) described that halal image is favorably associated with Muslims' intention of patronizing to *halal* stores. Based on such finding the following hypothesis is derived:

***Hypothesis 1: Halal image has a positive effect on purchase intention towards Shariah compliant hotels.***

### ***Halal Awareness and Purchase Intention***

Awareness generally indicates an individual's knowledge along with understanding about a particular issue (Awan et al., 2015). Azam (2016) explicated that in case of *halal*, the aspect of awareness illustrates individuals' special interest, experience or knowledge regarding the purchase of a product or service. Therefore, Muslim consumers should profoundly aware on the various aspects such as ingredients, process of production, storage as well as other sources and elements that are related to it when purchasing a product (Said and Hassan, 2014). As a result of greater awareness and knowledge regarding *halal* and *haram* among Muslim consumers, marketers are no longer able get away from "halalness" issue by just adding a *halal* logo to the package (Said et al., 2014). *Halal* awareness has emerged as a crucial issue in the decision making process of Muslim consumers, specifically in Muslim dominated nations such as Malaysia (Teng and Jusoh, 2013). Yunus et al., (2015) have further shown that *halal* awareness is crucial for Muslim consumers in the event of buying *halal* packaged foods produced by non-Muslim companies. Ghadikolaei (2016) also unveiled that *halal* awareness shares a meaningful association with Muslim consumers' purchase intention. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is derived:

***Hypothesis 2: Halal awareness has a positive effect on purchase intention towards Shariah compliant hotels.***

### ***Religiosity and Purchase Intention***

Religiosity indicates the extent to which an individual is dedicated to his or her religion (Ramly et al., 2008). According to Salman and Siddiqui (2011) and Mukhtar and Butt (2012) religious commitment has been found to be a primary driver of both Muslim as well as non-Muslims consumers' attitude, behavior, lifestyle as well as consumption habits. They further indicated that adherence to religious principles assists consumers to make sound decisions in life. Thus, consumers' religious beliefs and values occupy a significant part in consumer behavior (Sun et al., 2012). Rehman and Shabbir (2010) indicated that religion is a meaningful aspect that assists individuals in terms of making a distinction between permissible and non-permissible products. Consumers' behavior along with their attitude in terms of their choice, purchase and consumption habit of products largely rely on the degree to which they are devoted to their respective

religion (Khraim, 2010). Previous research endeavors uncovered that Muslim consumers' religiosity is integral to the formation of their intention to purchase (Jamal and Sharifuddin, 2015; Borzooei and Asgari, 2013). Shaari and Arifin (2009) similarly confirmed that Muslim consumers' purchase intention and religious values are having significant relationships. Said et al., (2015) also found that religiosity of Muslim consumers is meaningfully associated with their consumption. Based on the aforementioned discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

***Hypothesis 3: Religiosity has a positive effect on purchase intention towards Shariah compliant hotels.***

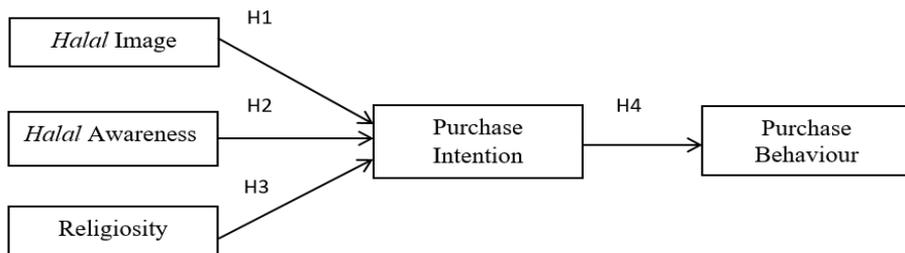
### ***Purchase Intention and Purchase Behavior***

In the field of disciplined inquiry, consumer behavior has substantially evolved over the years in understanding how consumers behave, and now it has become an integral for businesses to sustain in today's intensely competitive environment (Rahman et al., 2012). Purchase behavior is described as consumers' power of making decision when purchase products or services (Rani, 2014). It is vital for marketers to understand the various aspects that lead to the formation of purchase behavior of their target markets and develop strategies accordingly (Khaniwale, 2015). Purchase intention is considered to be a key antecedent that shapes consumers purchase behavior (Nguyen et al., 2010). Researchers have asserted that one of the most effective ways for understanding the actual purchase behavior of consumers is through examining what affects their intentions (Ghalandari and Norouzi, 2012). Intention is one of the major factors that motivate consumers towards making a purchase and ultimately effects their end behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The likelihood that a particular product or service will be purchased by a consumer largely depends of the strength of their willingness of buying that product or service (Hanzaee and Khosrozadeh, 2011). Studies have shown the presence of a favorable association between consumers' intention and their actual purchase behavior (Kim and Pysarchik, 2000). Khairi et al. (2012) found that consumers' purchase behavior shares a strong association with purchase intention. Tarkiainen and Sundqvist (2005) also evidenced that individuals' purchase intention is a significant precursor of their purchase behavior. On the basis of such findings it is hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 4:** *Purchase intention has a positive effect on purchase behavior towards Shariah compliant hotels.*

Based on the above literature, the study develops the conceptual framework emphasizing Muslim consumers purchase behavior towards *Shariah* compliant hotels as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



### Methodology

The study adopts a quantitative research method to examine the effects of halal image, halal awareness and religiosity among Muslim consumers on their purchase intention and behavior of *Shariah* compliant hotels in Malaysia. Therefore, the target population of the study includes Muslim consumers at different tourist places particularly in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The major reason for choosing Kuala Lumpur lies in the fact that it consists of majority of the tourist destinations in the nation. Random sampling method was used to select the sample since it provides an accurate representation of the whole population through ensuring randomness and preventing researcher's bias (Hair et al., 2009). Data were gathered from 426 participants through a self-administered questionnaire. 5-point Likert scale was used as the measurement of scale where 1 represented strongly disagree and 5 denoted strongly agree. Additionally, operationalization of variables is a vital process for transforming abstract concepts into measurable variables. *Halal* image was operationalized through consumers' perception regarding *Shariah* compliant hotels (Awan et al., 2015; Yunus et al., 2015) and *Halal* awareness through consumers' knowledge and familiarity with *Shariah* compliant hotels (Awan et al., 2015; Azam, 2016). Religiosity was operationalized as consumers' commitment towards their

religion along with religious beliefs and values (Rehman and Shabbir, 2010). Purchase intention denotes consumers' willingness to purchase *Shariah* compliant hotels, and purchase behavior represents consumers' ultimate decision to purchase *Shariah* compliant hotels (Rani, 2014). Table 1 depicts the sources from where the items have been adapted. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were employed for analyzing the data.

**Table 1: Questionnaire Items**

Variable	Source
<i>Halal</i> awareness	Azam (2016)
<i>Halal</i> image	Yunus et al. (2015); Awan et al., (2015)
Religiosity	Rehman and Shabbir (2010)
Purchase Intention	Haque et al., (2015); Lada et al. (2009)
Purchase Behavior	Joey (2004)

## Results and Discussion

Hair et al. (2009) stated the importance of conducting factor analysis to reduce substantial number of variables into more manageable amount before using them for further analysis. At the same time, factor analysis allows researchers to explore the data set as well as examine the interrelations that takes place among a set of variables (Costello and Osborne, 2005). However, before doing factor analysis it is highly important to run two tests known as Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Pallant, 2010). As depicted in the Table 2, outcomes of both these tests were within an acceptable level.

**Table 2: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) & Bartlett's test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.764
	Approx. Chi-Square	5421.742
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	
	Sig.	.000

It is very important to ensure that the scales used in the questionnaire are reliable. That refers to the degree to which the items that make up the scale are consistent with each other which means all the measuring express the same underlying construct. The reliability of the items in the questionnaire was investigated with Cronbach's Alpha, which the value ideally should be above .7 (Pallant, 2010).

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**Table 3. Reliability of the Data**

Component	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
<i>Halal</i> Image	.826	5
<i>Halal</i> Awareness	.859	5
Religiosity	.801	5
Purchase Intention	.844	5
Purchase Behavior	.762	5

Table 4 shows the rotated component matrix, a total of 25 items were generated whereby, all the items can be considered significant since they managed to load with a value more than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2009).

**Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix**

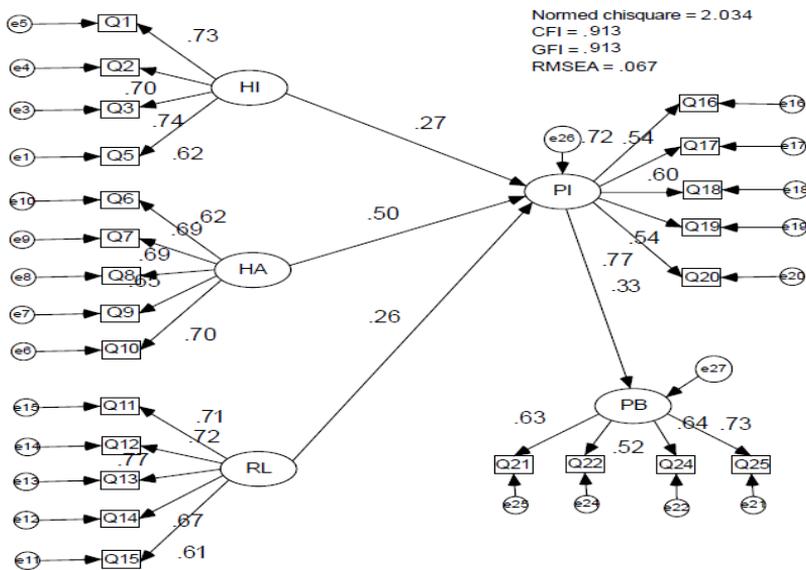
Item	(F1)	(F2)	(F3)	(F4)	(F5)
<b>Halal Image</b>					
HI1	.852				
HI2	.757				
HI3	.821				
HI3	.782				
HI4	.697				
<b>Halal Awareness</b>					
HA1		.753			
HA2		.892			
HA3		.764			
HA4		.655			
HA5		.631			
<b>Religiosity</b>					
RL1			.871		
RL2			.866		
RL3			.784		
RL4			.753		
RL5			.746		
<b>Purchase Intention</b>					
PI1				.845	
PI2				.872	
PI3				.851	
PI4				.783	
PI5				.744	
<b>Purchase Behavior</b>					

PB1	.866
PB2	.742
PB3	.778
PB4	.714
PB5	.659
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis	

**Evaluation of the Structural Model**

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was performed to verify the fitness adequacy of the model. To evaluate the model fit a number of fit indices were used such as Normed Chi-square, CFI, GFI and RMSEA as they are highly recommended in literature (Zainudin, 2012). As recommended by Hair et al. (2010) items loaded with a value lower than the threshold value of 0.50 were removed and the model was re-specified. Accordingly, as shown in Figure 2 and Table 5, the final model consists with Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) = .067, (CFI) = .913, (GFI) = .913, and Normed  $\chi^2 = 2.034$ .

**Figure 2: Structural Model of Purchase Behavior towards Shariah Compliant Hotel**



**Table 5: Fitness Assessment of the Structural Model**

Name of category	Required value	Obtained Value	Comments
Absolute fit	RMSEA** $\leq$ 0.08	0.067	The required value is attained
	GFI** $\geq$ 0.90	0.913	
Incremental fit	CFI** $\geq$ 0.90	0.913	The required value is attained
Parsimonious fit	$\chi^2/df$ ** $\leq$ 3	2.034	The required value is attained

Source. Byrne (2010); Hair et al. (2010); Kline (2011); Zainudin (2012).

Note. \*\*These indices are recommended since these are highly reported in the literature RMSEA = root mean square error approximation; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; CFI = comparative fit index;  $\chi^2/df$  = Chi Square/Degree of Freedom

### ***Hypotheses Testing***

The structural model output was used to test the hypotheses. Table 6 summarizes the hypotheses testing result for the current study.

**Table 6: Result of Hypotheses Testing**

Hypotheses	Standardized Regression Weights		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Outcome
H1	PI	<-- HI	.258	.054	5.721	***	Accepted
H2	PI	<-- HA	.205	.045	3.168	***	Accepted
H3	PI	<-- RL	.047	.076	3.862	.003	Accepted
H4	PB	<-- PI	.086	.033	2.667	.004	Accepted

According to the findings, aspects of *halal* image, *halal* awareness as well as religiosity play integral role in Muslim consumers' purchase intention towards *Shariah* compliant hotels. The outcomes derived from the present study were supported by the literature. *Halal* image is considered to be one of the primary antecedents of Muslim consumers purchase intention (Lada et al., 2009). A favorable relation between *halal* image and purchase intention was previously disclosed by Suki and Salleh (2016) whereby they have found that *halal* image significantly affected the purchase intention of Muslim consumers. In the past a number of studies were undertaken for investigating the effect of *halal* awareness on the buying behavior of Muslim consumers (Azam, 2016; Said et al., 2014; Teng and Jusoh, 2013). The outcomes of these studies have revealed a meaningful association between these two factors. Similarly, Ghadikolaei, (2016) and Yunus et al., (2015) found a relationship between *halal* awareness and purchase intention. Religiosity is an integral factor that affects consumers' choice of products/services (Mukhtar and Butt, 2012; Salman and

Siddiqui, 2011; Rehman and Shabbir, 2010). Jamal and Sharifuddin (2015), Said et al. (2014) and Borzooei and Asgari (2013) also proved the effect of religiosity of Muslims on their purchase intention. Khairi et al. (2012) and Tarkiainen and Sundqvist, (2005) have established that consumers' purchase behavior largely relies on their purchase intention.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The present study attempted to investigate the aspects are vital for gaining an understanding regarding Muslim consumers purchase behavior towards *Shariah* compliant hotels. In line with the findings derived from the study it is recommended that destination marketers should take the initiative of enhancing the *halal* image of *Shariah* compliant hotels through building positive perception in the minds of the consumers. Additionally, marketers should enhance consumers' awareness regarding the *halal* aspect of *Shariah* compliant hotels through various marketing activities. Consequently, the findings have also shown that Muslim consumers religiosity affects their purchase intention towards *Shairah* compliant hotels. To encourage Muslim consumers to visit *Shariah* compliant hotels, marketing strategies and activities should be developed in accordance to Islamic principles by avoiding anything that may offend the religious beliefs of Muslim consumers. Finally, marketers of *Shariah* compliant hotels should try their best to create a positive intention among Muslim consumers. This is because the existence of positive intention will lead to positive purchase behavior toward *Shariah* compliant hotels.

Even though the present research contributes to the literature of purchase behavior towards *Shariah* compliant hotels, it has some limitations. The first limitation is in terms of the study's location. Data for the research at hand was gathered only from the tourist destinations in Kuala Lumpur, it may in turn influence the generalizability of the outcomes. Henceforth, it's great for future studies if they gather data from a larger number of tourist places to obtain a more comprehensive representation of the population. Moreover, it is also advised that the conceptual model of this study can be further developed in the future including new mediating as well as moderating variables. Finally, the model of the study can be tested in the setting of different countries as well as industries.

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