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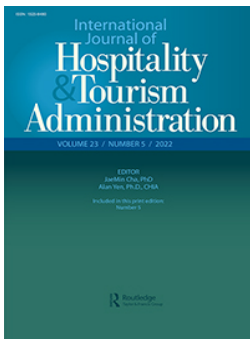
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## Memorable Halal Tourism Experience and Its Effects on Place Attachment

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### ABSTRACT

Although Halal tourism is becoming an important tourism sector and represents one of the largest niche markets in global tourism, the aspects that makes this type of tourism memorable are still unexplored for academics and practitioners. The aim of this study is to examine the relationships between hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, knowledge and memorable Halal tourism experience. The study also examines the relationship between memorable Halal tourism experience and place attachment. Data were gathered from Muslim tourists who had a halal tourism experience during the 48 months preceding the time of data collection (April 2018–March 2022). The empirical results support all eight hypotheses. The results also extend the memorable tourism experience concept in the context of Halal tourism. A positive relationship between a memorable Halal tourism experience and place attachment was also supported.

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Halal; halal tourism; memorable halal tourism experience; Muslim tourists; place attachment

## Introduction

Halal tourism is defined as tourism whose products and services are consistent with Islamic principles (Rahman et al., 2020). Halal tourism includes halal hotels, halal food and halal travel packages (El-Gohary, 2016), including convergent opportunities, such as traveling with family and visiting cultural attractions, museums and historical places (Mohsin et al., 2020). According to Belopilskaya et al. (2020), the Halal tourism industry serves 156 million outbound tourists, and its business value reached US \$220 billion in 2020. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries, such as Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia, offer high-quality halal tourism services (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019), while top non-OIC countries that are positioned as

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Muslim-friendly destinations include Singapore, Thailand and the United Kingdom (Han et al., 2019).

The halal tourism industry is increasing in demand due to the continuous growth of Muslim tourists and the awareness toward consumer Halal products and services (Suhartano et al., 2021). Muslim tourists are one of the fastest growing market segments (Marlinda et al., 2022). Another reason for the growth in Halal tourism includes Muslim countries' economic development and growing prosperity, resulting in an increase in Muslim tourist spending on travel (Jia & Chaozhi, 2020). Currently, many Muslim and non-Muslim destinations compete with one another as they attempt to capture this tourism market by offering Muslim-friendly tourism products and services (Han et al., 2019; Jia & Chaozhi, 2020). Given this emerging tourism market, understanding Muslim tourists' Halal tourism experiences is warranted (Rahman et al., 2020; Suhartano et al., 2021); however, few recent studies have examined Muslim tourists' Halal tourism experiences (Han et al., 2019; Suhartano et al., 2021), and research on this topic is still in quite an early stage (Mohsin et al., 2020).

Offering tourists memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) is central to gaining a sustainable competitive advantage against competitors in the tourism industry (Hosany et al., 2022). Kim et al. (2012) developed a scale to study the components of a MTE. The results of their study suggest that there are seven components (hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement and knowledge) that represent a MTE; however, some studies on MTE argue that Kim et al.'s (2012) identified specific experiential factors as components of MTE use student samples, who can hardly be considered tourists, and the findings cannot be generalized to more authentic travel populations (Hosany et al., 2022). Researchers call for further academic inquiries to enrich the understanding of a MTE by applying the identified components in a real-world tourism context (Sthapit et al., 2022a) – in this context, a memorable Halal tourism experience (MHTE).

The study of MTE, in this context, MHTE, is both theoretically germane and practically advantageous to the Halal tourism industry (Stone et al., 2018) because MTEs can be a vital factor for destination competitiveness. In addition, Halal tourism service providers can gain several benefits when they successfully offer MHTEs. For example, tourists with a positive MTE are more likely to revisit destinations with positive memories (Leung et al., 2022), share positive word-of-mouth about the tourism destination (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021), develop close bonds with a place (Sthapit et al., 2022b) and experience subjective well-being (Sie et al., 2021). Although MTEs are an evolving research area, there are very few studies that apply the MTE concept in the context of Halal tourism, particularly within food tourism, and they have been conducted among mainly non-Muslim tourists (Sthapit et al., 2022b).

The focus here is on a consumer-centric (Muslim tourist) view of MHTEs. The objectives of this study were twofold. In this study, first, we examined the relationships between Kim et al.'s (2012) seven MTE components and MHTE. Second, we examined the relationship between MHTE and place attachment (PA) to enhance its complexity and depth. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study linking the MTE concept with Halal tourism.

### **Theoretical Foundation: Memory-dominant Logic and Cognitive Appraisal Theory**

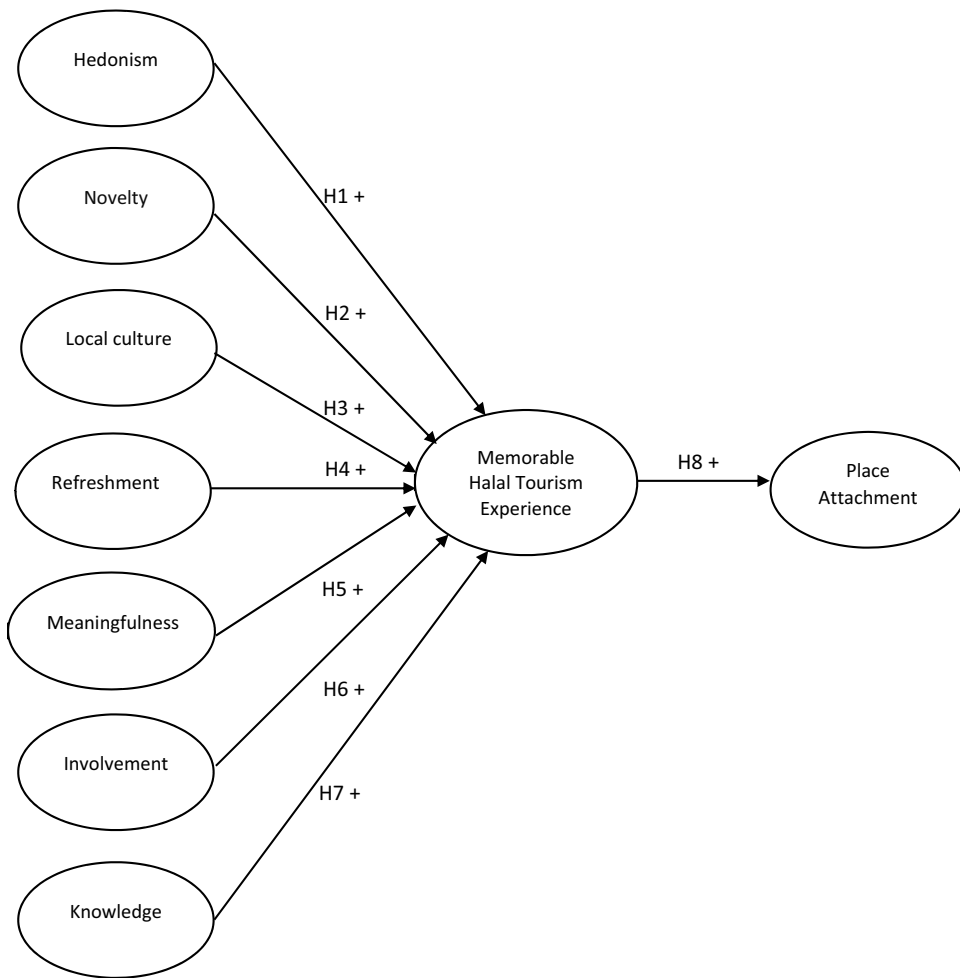
In the present study, memory-dominant logic (MDL) is the theoretical foundation to link the seven components of MTE, MHTE and place attachment (Harrington et al., 2019). Evolving from goods-dominant logic (GDL), service-dominant logic (SDL) and customer-dominant logic (CDL), MDL describes the business logic that focuses on creating value by constructing memorable experiences during the customer experience journey. Whereas GDL entails the exchange between customers and providers, SDL addresses customers' co-creation experiences with service providers, and CDL focuses on customers' experiential responses. MDL emphasizes that the value of customers' experiences comes from recall: memorable experiences lead customers to reminisce and can have enduring impacts on customers' desired behavioral outcomes (Harrington et al., 2019) – in this context, place attachment. PA is associated with the affective process and involves people's positive beliefs and emotional connections with a specific place resulting from their cognitive evaluations (Yuksel et al., 2010).

### **Memorable Tourism Experience and Its Seven Components**

According to Kim et al. (2012, p. 13), MTE is defined as 'a tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred [that is] selectively constructed from tourism experiences based on the individual's assessment of the experience'. In the context of this study, a MHTE refers to one that is remembered and recalled in vivid detail after a Halal tourism experience. Kim et al.'s (2012) original seven components representing MTEs includes: hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement and knowledge. [Figure 1](#) shows the conceptual framework of this study.

### **Hedonism**

Hedonism is linked to the consumption pleasure and gratification derived from an enjoyable experience (Zhang & Zhang, 2013), and the term stems from the Greek word *hedone*, which denotes pleasure, enjoyment or delight



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model and hypothesized relationships.

(Sandoff & Widell, 2008). Hedonistic consumption is consumption based on the desire to fulfil pleasurable needs (Tamir et al., 2008) and is related to the multisensory, imaginative and emotive elements perceived by consumers (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). This consumption is associated with terms such as fun, entertainment, fantasy, arousal, motivation and sensory enjoyment (Babin et al., 1994), and these values are stimulated by a person's desire for sensual, fantasy and recreational enjoyment (Lim, 2014). Hedonism is an important dimension in an individual's evaluation of a consumption experience (Babin et al., 1994). A significant part of the value of a product or service perceived by consumers depends on the level of hedonism they gain, and within the consumption experiences described as amusing and pleasurable, the most important benefit consumers receive is hedonic worth (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). The desire to seek hedonic experiences is considered

a fundamental factor in tourism experiences (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Hedonism positively influences Muslim tourists' MHTEs.

### **Novelty**

According to Mitas and Bastiaansen (2018), novelty is used to describe new and different experiences perceived by tourists as unfamiliar and contrasting with previous experiences (Pearson, 1970). Distinctive indicators of a novelty experience are thrill, change from routine, boredom alleviation and surprise (Lee & Crompton, 1992). Novelty experiences can originate from any aspect of the journey, such as objects, the environment and other people encountered en route or at the destination (Wong & Zhao, 2016). Novelty is a popular motivation for an individual's travel (Dunman & Mattila, 2005). The search for novelty is an innate quality in certain travelers (Lee & Crompton, 1992) and is connected to the tourist gaze that contrasts from one's usual settings (King, 2002). Novelty not only entails tourism motivation but is also a factor affecting memorability (Wei et al., 2019). It has been identified as an antecedent of MTEs (Wei et al., 2019). According to Chandralal et al.'s (2015) study, novelty is closely associated with MTEs, and novel tourism experiences tend to be more memorable for travelers than more usual and common tourism experiences. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Novelty positively influences Muslim tourists' MHTEs.

### **Local Culture**

Local culture comprises the local residents, or an important component involved in developing a destination (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). According to Selstad (2007), tourists' experiences are continuously mediated through social interactions, and these experiences are situated in the gap between locals and tourists (Auld & Case, 1997). The core of the tourist experience lies in the interaction of visitors with local people (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Understanding and exploring local cultures and meeting inhabitants are important motivations for tourists, and their experiences and behaviors are significantly affected by others as well (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Huang & Liu, 2016). Experiencing local culture is identified as a vital element of the tourist experience and helps develop memorable holiday experiences (Morgan & Xu, 2009). According to Tung and Ritchie (2011), learning local culture,

residents' way of life and the destination language significantly enhances tourists' MTEs. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Local culture positively influences Muslim tourists' MHTEs.

### **Refreshment**

Wang's (1999) study suggests that refreshment focusses on the state of mind and the depth of experiential engagement. Individuals seek relaxation during travel experiences to fulfil their psychological needs and to escape from the monotony of daily life (Cohen, 1979). In fact, engaging in tourism means that everyday structures, such as strict school and work time regimes, might be exchanged for structures and orderings that are potentially experienced as liberating and empowering, including journeys, tours and events (Coles & Hall, 2008). The act of traveling has been defined as moving away from a familiar setting and traveling toward an unknown destination, which creates a sense of vulnerability but at the same time can be extremely liberating (Croce & Perri, 2010). Relaxation and freedom from daily life are key drivers for travelers (Wang, 1999) and lead tourists to a more stable mood by accumulating gratifying experiences and thus eliminating psychological stresses that they face in daily life (Bowen & Clarke, 2009). Kozak's (2002) study indicated that relaxation and escapism are the first two psychological reasons for taking a vacation. In addition, Morgan and Xu's (2009) study showed that a summer vacation experience of relaxing on the beach is a highly MTE. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Refreshment positively influences Muslim tourists' MHTEs.

### **Meaningfulness**

Meaningfulness relates to the fundamental necessity for individuals to attain conscious meaning for a healthy and well-adapted life that renders a feeling of fulfillment (Rejikumar et al., 2021). Meaningfulness is linked to a sense of the elevated significance of expanding the individual's thought process about existence and humanity (Hu et al., 2018). Existing studies have indicated that meaningfulness involves learning about oneself or thinking of one's personal value through travel. This element is related to the tendency for travelers to seek meaningful experiences for personal growth and self-development (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Tarssanen, 2007). For example, tourists participating in activities while at a destination may learn different perspectives on matters of life. Such activities may improve tourists' well-



being, allowing them to emphasize their self-identity and to learn about other places and cultures (Kim et al., 2012). Meaningfulness can lead to tourists' personal development and change: after returning home, everyday life may be viewed in a totally new way; the experiences and learning during the trip can be absorbed as part of their own everyday lives (Tarssanen, 2007). Tsiotsou and Goldsmith's (2012) study suggested that when meaningfulness is enhanced, customer (tourist) experience will become more memorable. Some studies have identified meaningfulness as an antecedent of MTEs (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Tsai, 2016). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: Meaningfulness positively influences Muslim tourists' MHTEs.

### ***Involvement***

Involvement is a significant and extensively applied variable in models of consumer behavior due to its potential effect on people's attitudes toward an activity and decision-making processes (Josiam et al., 1999). Involvement is 'a psychological state of motivation, arousal, or interest between an individual and recreational activities, tourist destinations or related equipment' (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997, p. 246). According to Dimanche, Havitz and Howard (1997), involvement is a fundamental element of the leisure experience. Involvement is linked to tourism activities/experiences (Gross & Brown, 2006). Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggested that individuals are more likely to have a memorable experience when they are involved in an activity. Another study by Coudounaris and Sthapit (2017) indicated that the more tourists are involved in the activities that they wanted to experience while on holiday, the better they can recall past travel experiences. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H6: Involvement positively influences Muslim tourists' MHTEs.

### ***Knowledge***

According to Poria et al. (2004), the longing to learn impacts where tourists visit and what they do while on-site at a destination, while Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) stated that a consumption of experience involves fun, enjoyment and feelings of pleasure and that learning can arise from this stream of associations. In the context of tourism, Morgan and Xu (2009) described knowledge as a cognitive characteristic of the tourist experience, which comprises learning and education. The choice of what, where, when, with whom

and why to learn relies largely on the tourists. Consequently, the perception of what has been learned can play an important role in producing trip experiences (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011). Travel experiences offer numerous unique learning opportunities for the tourist and include both unplanned and planned opportunities (McKercher & du Cros, 2002), where consumer learning comes in the form of newly acquired practical skills, knowledge, practical wisdom and self-consciousness (Chen et al., 2014), such as from social interactions with locals and taking an interpretive tour of a historic site. These experiences encompass a mixture of discovery, exploration, mental stimulation and excitement (Packer, 2006). The demand for experiences that incorporate learning and education is rapidly increasing among tourists (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). Tung and Ritchie's (2011) study demonstrated that learning about local culture, including the locals' customs and the language of the destination, significantly enhances MTEs. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H7: Knowledge positively influences Muslim tourists' MHTEs.

### **Place Attachment**

Place attachment was first developed in environmental psychology and regarded as an affective bond or link between people and specific places (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). Place attachment is the link between the individual and the place (Stylos et al., 2017) and the extent to which much social bonding occurs as a function of place (Song & Soopramanien, 2019). Place attachment is an attitudinal, emotional response and perceived proximity to a place (Hummon, 1992). It can be formed by functional, tangible factors and/or through social relationships (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). According to Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001), place attachment concept stems from attachment theory. Attachment theory suggests that the idea that babies form bonds with mothers, which influence expectations and behavior as children develop (Vada et al., 2019). Based on this theory, place attachment is seen as a bond or relationship between a person and a place (Trinanda et al., 2022).

There seems to be a consensus in the literature that place attachment is a multi-dimensional construct (Trinanda et al., 2022). Several scholars have argued that place attachment consists of two dimensions: (1) place identity and (2) place dependence (Williams & Vaske, 2003), which in this study were considered in operationalizing the concept.

Place identity is a symbolic or affective attachment to a place, and place dependence is related to the functionality of a place for recreational activities (Hwang et al., 2005). Place identity represents a place's symbolic importance as

a backdrop for individuals' emotional or social relationships (Williams & Vaske, 2003). This dimension emerges from beliefs, emotions, thoughts, attitudes and economic, historical or cultural sources associated with the place (Proshansky et al., 1983). In other words, place identity refers to the deep relationship between an individual's personal identity and a place (Qingjiu & Maliki, 2013).

Place dependence refers to functional or physical bonding to a place and reflects how important the place is in pursuing desired goals or activities (Williams & Vaske, 2003). Place dependence is defined as representing the functional utility of a place, described as tourists' functional attachment to a particular place and their awareness of the uniqueness of a setting for certain purposes (Ramkissoon et al., 2013). Place dependence is derived from a transactional view that suggests people evaluate places against alternatives. From this perspective, individuals evaluate places according to how well those places meet their functional needs (Sthapit et al., 2017). Thus, others define place dependence as how well a specific place meets tourists' needs (Gross & Brown, 2008; Tsai, 2016; Yuksel et al., 2010).

Some studies have shown that MTEs have an influential role in developing PA (Sthapit et al., 2022b; Tsai, 2016; Vada et al., 2019). For example, a recent study by Sthapit et al. (2022b) indicates that experiencing different types of tourism, in this case, Halal tourism, enables tourists to create unforgettable memories, and such memories further enhance their identification with and strong attachment to a destination. In addition, the degree to which a tourist becomes attached to a destination depends on how memorable the tourist experience is (Sthapit et al., 2017). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H8: Muslim tourists' MHTEs positively influence PA.

## **Method**

### ***Survey Instrument and Pilot Test***

In this study, we used a cross-sectional survey to measure tourists' demographic (e.g., gender, age, relationship status, nationality and education) and trip characteristics (e.g., when the trip was undertaken, type of trip and duration of the trip) and the nine constructs of the study, namely hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, knowledge, MHTE and PA. All the scale items have been adapted from existing studies and modified to fit the current research context. To reflect respondents' memories, we operationalized Kim et al.'s (2012), pp. 24-item MTE scale measuring the seven components. MHTE was measured using three items adapted from Oh et al. (2013). The eight items for measuring PA were adapted

from Gross and Brown (2008) and Yuksel et al.'s (2010) studies. Table 1 includes the 35 scale items used. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), for this reason, it has been proved useful in corresponding online studies (Sthapit et al., 2022a), and by its simple structure increases response rate and response quality along with reducing respondents' frustration level (Babakus & Mangold, 1992). The questionnaire was developed, administered in English and pilot tested by six tourism researchers to confirm the relevance, clarity, flow and phrasing of questions.

### ***Sampling and Data Collection***

Data were collected online from Muslim tourists. Two screening criteria were used before starting this survey to select target respondents. The first was that they had to be Muslim tourists aged 18 years and above. Second, they should have had a halal tourism experience during the 48 months preceding the time of data collection (April 2018–March 2022). Convenience sampling was used because it is cost-effective, efficient and simple to implement as our intention was to study Muslim tourists globally. The authors acknowledge that the key disadvantage of this sampling technique is that the sample lacks clear generalizability. The survey questionnaire was distributed using a crowdsourcing website, Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), during last two weeks of April 2022. Each participant was paid US \$1.00 upon completion of the survey. There were 320 responses obtained, and the data from 312 tourists were retained for data analysis after deleting the responses that did not meet the screening criteria.

## **Analysis and Results**

### ***Survey Respondents***

Of the 312 valid responses from individuals who met the screening criteria, most of the respondents were male (179). The respondents' ages ranged from 20 to 51 years old, with many between 30 and 39 years of age (197). Most respondents were married (214) and American (132). The respondents' occupations varied from sales executives to software engineers. In response to the question 'what kind of halal tourism experience did you have?' many mentioned consuming Halal food (190), staying at a Halal hotel (87), consuming Halal food and staying at a halal hotel (20) and visiting religious sites while at the destination (15). The destinations visited ranged from Egypt to the United Arab Emirates, and many mentioned the United Arab Emirates (100). Many respondents undertook their trips in 2019 (91), followed by 2018 (84), 2020 (50), 2021 (49) and 2022 (38). In terms of travel companions, many mentioned

**Table 1.** Constructs, measurement items and completely standardized factor loadings, variance extracted and estimates of construct reliability\*.

Constructs and measurement items	Mean (SD)	Constructs									Eigen-values	
		F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9		
<b>Hedonism</b> (Kim et al., 2012)												
H1 I was thrilled about having a new experience	3.78(1.157)	0.625										
H2 I took part in activities	3.79(936)	0.658										
H3 I really enjoyed the trip	3.95(939)	0.706										
H4 I had an exciting trip	3.95(964)	0.724										2.713
<b>Novelty</b> (Kim et al., 2012)												
N1 I had a once-in-a-lifetime experience	3.86(988)		0.530									
N2 I had a unique experience	3.93(896)		0.663									
N3 My recent halal tourism trip was different from previous trips	3.86(927)		0.597									
N4 I experienced something new	3.84(994)		0.706									
<b>Local culture</b> (Kim et al., 2012)												
LC1 I had a good impression about the local culture	3.92(986)			0.651								
LC2 I had a chance to closely experience the local culture	3.87(982)			0.677								
LC3 Locals were friendly to me	3.82(982)			0.657								
<b>Refreshment</b> (Kim et al., 2012)												
R1 I relieved stress during this trip	3.88(995)				0.648							
R2 I felt free from daily routines during this trip	3.88(946)				0.661							
R3 I had a refreshing experience	3.94(820)				0.655							
R4 I felt better after the trip	3.92(939)				0.653							
<b>Meaningfulness</b> (Kim et al., 2012)												
M1 I felt that I did something meaningful on this trip	3.86(906)				0.718							
M2 I felt that I did something important on this trip	3.88(999)				0.653							
M3 I learned something about myself from this trip	3.80(944)				0.683							
<b>Involvement</b> (Kim et al., 2012)												
I1 I visited a place that I really wanted to visit	3.96(915)					0.618						
I2 I enjoyed activities that I really wanted to do	3.95(907)					0.680						
I3 I was interested in the main activities offered at the halal tourism destination	3.93(953)					0.640						
<b>Knowledge</b> (Kim et al., 2012)												
K1 I gained a lot of information during this trip	4.02(921)						0.656					
K2 I gained a new skill (s) from this trip	3.92(889)						0.602					
K3 I experienced a new culture (s) at the halal tourism destination	3.90(926)						0.667					
<b>Memorable halal tourism experience</b> (Oh et al., 2007)												
MHTE1 I have wonderful memories of my recent halal tourism experience	3.95(958)										0.654	
MHTE2 I will not forget my recent halal tourism experience	3.90(1.003)										0.619	

(Continued)

**Table 1.** (Continued).

Constructs and measurement items	Mean (SD)	Constructs									Eigen-values	
		F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9		
MHTES I will remember my recent halal tourism experience <b>Place attachment</b> (Gross & Brown, 2008; Yuksel et al., 2010) Place identity: PA1-PA4 and Place dependence: PA5-PA8	3.98(.905)										0.673	1.946
PA1 This halal tourism destination is very special to me	3.94(.930)											0.671
PA2 I identify strongly with this halal tourism destination	3.97(.900)											0.630
PA3 Holidaying in this halal tourism destination means a lot to me	4.01(.933)											0.655
PA4 I am very attached to this halal tourism destination	3.93(.895)											0.680
PA5 Holidaying in this halal tourism destination is more important to me than holidaying in other places	3.89(.895)											0.701
PA6 This halal tourism destination is the best place for what I like to do on holidays	3.93(.890)											0.685
PA7 I will not substitute this halal tourism destination with any other place for the experience I had there	3.89(.883)											0.662
PA8 I get more satisfaction out of holidaying in this halal tourism destination than from visiting a similar destination	4.04(.827)											0.672
<b>Variance extracted %</b>		67.83	62.4	66.17	65.43	68.47	64.6	64.17	64.87	66.95		
<b>Construct reliability</b>		0.832	0.837	0.795	0.832	0.817	0.78	0.759	0.782	0.916		

\*Notes: The total number of cases used in the analysis is N = 312. SD: Standard deviation. The following formulae are used for calculating the VE and CR of the constructs:

$VE = \sum \text{ of standardized regression weights} / n$

$CR = (\sum \text{ of standardized regression weights})^2 / [(\sum \text{ of standardized regression weights})^2 + (\sum \delta)]$

AVE = average variance extracted; ACR = average construct reliability

Constructs: F1 = hedonism; F2 = novelty; F3 = local culture; F4 = refreshment; F5 = meaningfulness; F6 = memorability; F7 = involvement; F8 = knowledge; F9 = place attachment.

family members (115) and friends (112). Many respondents were first-time visitors (195) to the destinations. In terms of the purpose of the trip, many reported leisure/tourism (275; [Table 2](#)).

In addition, the authors have checked the skewness and kurtosis of the data by using SPSS 28. In particular, the analysis reveals that none of the variables show both skewness and kurtosis, whereas variable PA6 exhibited kurtosis but not skewness. Therefore, there is no problem with either skewness or kurtosis of the data.

### **Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

The model fit was tested through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The model fit was acceptable, as indicated by important statistics, such as the chi-square = 1414.651; degrees of freedom (df) = 537; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.072 with the p value for close fit (PCLOSE) = 0.000; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.855; incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.857; and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.840. The RMSEA was below the threshold of 0.08 (Hair et al., 2019). There were no missing values for the 35 variables of the conceptual model. The initial non-unidimensional solution of the analysis of moment structures (AMOS) 28 revealed that the chi-square = 1399.543, df = 524, CFI = 0.856, IFI = 0.857, TLI = 0.836 and RMSEA = 0.073 with PCLOSE = 0.000. The unidimensional solution was found in the fourteenth run of the model, with the chi-square = 1414.651, df = 537, CFI = 0.855, IFI = 0.857, TLI = 0.840 and RMSEA = 0.073 with PCLOSE = 0.000. The CFA used the maximum likelihood estimation and was bootstrapped 2000 times. The modification indices revealed no high covariances, i.e. greater than 10.000 among the involved correlations of the errors of items. The last run of the model fit revealed chi-square = 561.925, df = 356, CFI = 0.940, IFI = 0.941, TLI = 0.932 and RMSEA = 0.049 with PCLOSE = 0.003.

The 156th case of the 312 cases of the study had a Mahalanobis d-squared value of 124.901 (Mahalanobis, 1936). Usually, there is a rule of thumb that one can deduct one case when the Mahalanobis d-squared is above 85; however, the elimination of any of the nine cases having Mahalanobis d-squared values of above 85.000, such as the 156<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 154<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 45<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 42, 200<sup>th</sup> and 310<sup>th</sup> cases, did not reduce the value of the chi-square, and the important statistics of the CFI, IFI and TLI for the testing of the model fit to the data worsened. Therefore, there was no need to eliminate any of the above nine cases from the total number of 312 cases. Other statistics calculated in the test of the model fit are shown in the notes of [Table 3](#) below.

**Table 2.** Demographic profile and travel characteristics of respondents (N = 312).

Characteristics	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Characteristics	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Type of halal tourism experience</b>		
Male	179	57	Consumed halal food	190	61
Female	133	43	Stayed at a halal hotel	87	28
<b>Age</b>			Consumed halal food and stayed at a halal hotel	20	6
20–29	92	29	Visiting religious sites while at the destination	15	5
30–39	167	54	<b>Destination visited (where)</b>		
40–49	40	13	United Arab Emirates	100	32
>50	13	4	Egypt	60	19
<b>Relationship status</b>			Saudi Arabia	50	16
Single	82	26	Turkey	42	13
Married	214	69	Thailand	17	5
Engaged	12	4	Malaysia	15	5
Divorced	4	1	Maldives	14	4
<b>Nationality</b>			France	7	2
American	132	42	United Kingdom	7	2
British	87	28	Indonesia	4	1
Indian	85	27	Jordan	3	1
Moroccan	2	0.64	<b>Destination visited (when)</b>		
Iranian	2	0.64	2018	84	27
Italian	1	0.32	2019	91	29
Bangladeshi	1	0.32	2020	50	16
French	1	0.32	2021	49	16
Pakistani	1	0.32	2022	38	12
			<b>Travel companion</b>		
			Family members	115	37
			Friends	112	36
			Husband/wife	48	15
			Alone	27	9
			Colleague	10	3
			<b>First-time or repeat visitor</b>		
			First-time visitor	195	63
			Repeat visitor	117	37
			<b>Type of trip</b>		
			Leisure/tourism	275	88
			Business	37	12

### Reliability and Validity

The CFA via AMOS 28 was used to calculate the construct reliabilities and the variance extracted for all nine constructs. The calculations showed that all nine constructs of the model had construct reliabilities, i.e. hedonism = 0.832, novelty = 0.837, local culture = 0.795, refreshment = 0.832, meaningfulness = 0.817, involvement = 0.780, knowledge = 0.759, MHTE = 0.782 and PA = 0.916. The average construct reliability was 0.817 (Table 1).

The estimation of the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the nine constructs based on the 312 cases showed satisfactory reliabilities (hedonism = 0.771, novelty = 0.720, local culture = 0.700, refreshment = 0.747, meaningfulness = 0.726, involvement = 0.676, knowledge = 0.678, MHTE = 0.691 and PA = 0.866). These estimates suggested an acceptable degree of reliability, as the mean construct



**Table 3.** Correlation matrix (N = 312)\*.

Constructs	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9
F1	0.678								
F2	0.512	0.624							
F3	0.465	0.434	0.662						
F4	0.451	0.450	0.371	0.654					
F5	0.422	0.449	0.416	0.360	0.685				
F6	0.433	0.398	0.350	0.409	0.320	0.646			
F7	0.421	0.415	0.391	0.370	0.405	0.325	0.642		
F8	0.468	0.456	0.373	0.401	0.429	0.354	0.343	0.649	
F9	0.422	0.409	0.363	0.387	0.401	0.374	0.353	0.388	0.670

Notes\*: Constructs: F1 = hedonism; F2 = novelty; F3 = local culture; F4 = refreshment; F5 = meaningfulness; F6 = involvement; F7 = knowledge; F8 = memorable halal tourism experience; F9 = place attachment. Diagonal shows the square root of AVE.

Goodness-of-fit statistics:  $\chi^2 = 1414.65$ ,  $df = 537$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.63$ ,  $p < .000$ , CFI = .86, NFI = .79, RFI = .77, IFI = .86, TLI = .84, RMSEA = .072.

reliability estimate based on Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was well above 0.7 (specifically, 0.731), which satisfies the critical value of 0.7.

The standardized regression weights of all items of the model were above 0.5 (within the range of 0.530 to 0.724), and the calculation of the variance extracted from each construct exceeded 50%. Consequently, the model showed convergent validity. Particularly, the variance extracted for the nine constructs was above 50% (hedonism = 0.678, novelty = 0.624, local culture = 0.662, refreshment = 0.654, meaningfulness = 0.685, involvement = 0.646, knowledge = 0.642, MHTE = 0.649 and PA = 0.670), and the average variance extracted (AVE) was 0.657. Each construct had an extracted variance of greater than 0.5. Because the AVE was 0.657, which is greater than 0.5, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) discriminant-validity criterion was satisfied, implying that the AVE extracted was greater than 0.5.

The correlation matrix indicated that the correlations were below the threshold value of 0.7 (Table 3). As a result, multicollinearity was not observed. Table 3 also shows the criteria for discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is achieved when the square root of AVE is higher than the correlation among constructs. This means that all the constructs explain more information through their items than through their interrelationships. In addition, all the constructs in this study performed well (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and therefore they can be used in the conceptual model (Figure 1).

### Mediation Analysis

Table 4 shows that MHTE is a significant mediator (partial mediator) in six relationships and a non-significant mediator in one relationship. MHTE is a significant mediator (partial mediator) in six relationships between novelty and PA, local culture and PA, refreshment and PA,

**Table 4.** Mediator ‘memorable halal tourism experience’ before and after entering the models\*.

Impact of variables**	Beta Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	Result***	Status of mediation
Before mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F1 Complete					Complete
F9 to F1	0.875	0.084	10.421	<i>Significant</i>	
After mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F8 to F1					
F9 to F1	0.095	0.126	0.759	<i>Non-Significant</i>	
F8 to F1	0.941	0.044	21.536	<i>Significant</i>	
F9 to F8	0.859	0.083	10.289	<i>Significant</i>	
Before mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F2 Partial					Partial
F9 to F2	1.042	0.055	19.070	<i>Significant</i>	
After mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F8 to F2					
F9 to F2	0.606	0.026	23.121	<i>Significant</i>	
F8 to F2	1.095	0.054	20.121	<i>Significant</i>	
F9 to F8	0.606	0.026	23.121	<i>Significant</i>	
Before mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F3 Partial					Partial
F9 to F3	0.989	0.101	9.825	<i>Significant</i>	
After mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F8 to F3					
F9 to F3	0.852	0.046	18.394	<i>Significant</i>	
F8 to F3	0.852	0.046	18.394	<i>Significant</i>	
F9 to F8	0.560	0.047	11.853	<i>Significant</i>	
Before mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F4 Partial					Partial
F9 to F4	0.927	0.044	21.069	<i>Significant</i>	
After mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F8 to F4					
F9 to F4	0.601	0.026	22.830	<i>Significant</i>	
F8 to F4	0.979	0.046	21.088	<i>Significant</i>	
F9 to F8	0.601	0.026	22.830	<i>Significant</i>	
Before mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F5 Partial					Partial
F9 to F5	0.961	0.083	11.520	<i>Significant</i>	
After mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F8 to F5					
F9 to F5	0.827	0.041	20.002	<i>Significant</i>	
F8 to F5	0.827	0.041	20.002	<i>Significant</i>	
F9 to F8	0.572	0.046	12.351	<i>Significant</i>	
Before mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F6 Partial					Partial
F9 to F6	1.129	0.105	10.727	<i>Significant</i>	
After mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F8 to F6					
F9 to F6	0.867	0.045	19.279	<i>Significant</i>	
F8 to F6	0.867	0.045	19.279	<i>Significant</i>	
F9 to F8	0.579	0.046	12.548	<i>Significant</i>	
Before mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F7 Partial					Partial
F9 to F7	1.095	0.115	9.546	<i>Significant</i>	
After mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F8 to F7					
F9 to F7	0.909	0.050	18.340	<i>Significant</i>	
F8 to F7	0.909	0.050	18.340	<i>Significant</i>	
F9 to F8	0.563	0.046	12.139	<i>Significant</i>	

Notes: \* Estimates are found by AMOS28. \*\* F1 = hedonism; F2 = novelty; F3 = local culture; F4 = refreshment; F5 = meaningfulness; F6 = involvement; F7 = knowledge; F8 = memorable halal tourism experience; F9 = place attachment. \*\*\* Result in italics help to decide the status of mediation regarding whether it is either a complete mediation or a partial mediation or there is no mediation. \*\*\*\* P-values are 0.000 except for three relationships: a) F9 to F1 (after mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F8 to F1) p-value: 0.448, b) F9 to F5 (after mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F8 to F5) p-value: 0.736 and c) F9 to F8 (after mediator F8 enters into the model F9 to F8 to F7) p-value: 0.402.

meaningfulness and PA, involvement and PA and knowledge and PA. Furthermore, MHTE is a non-significant mediator (complete mediator) between hedonism and PA. The above findings satisfied the four steps involved in Baron and Kenny’s (1986) approach to establishing mediation (Mackinnon et al., 2007).

### Hypotheses Testing

Based on the CFA via AMOS 28, the hypotheses were tested (Figure 2). The CFA was performed between the constructs F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7 and F8 to the construct F9. The independent constructs F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6 and F7 are related to the dependent construct F8, and the independent construct F8 is associated with the dependent construct F9.

Figure 2 reveals that all eight hypotheses were supported, and the relationships in the conceptual model were positive and significant at the 99% confidence level.

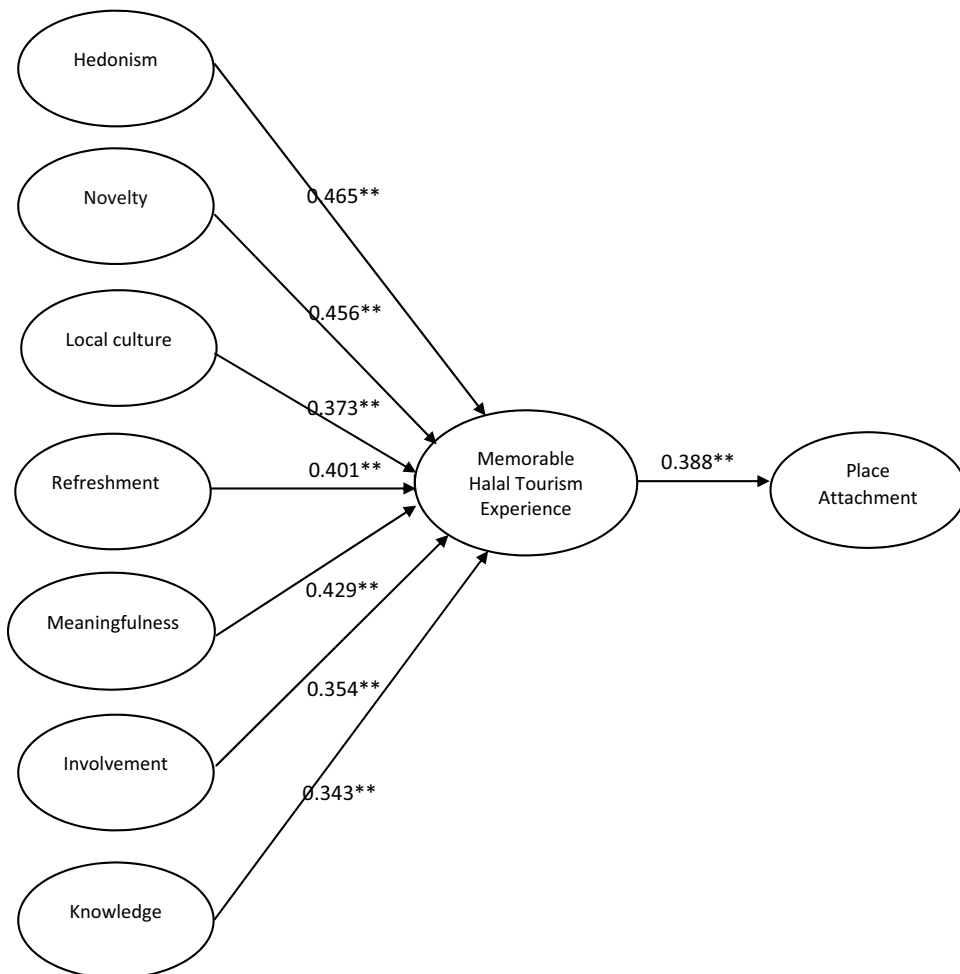


Figure 2. Results of the structural model assessment. **Note:** \*\* $p < .001$ .

## Discussion and Conclusion

The study offers theoretical and empirical evidence about the interrelationships between the seven components of MTE and MHTE. In addition, the relationship between MHTE and PA was examined. The empirical results support all eight hypotheses.

First, the relationship between hedonism and MHTEs is significant (H1). This implies that when Muslim tourists have a hedonic experience during their Halal tourism trip, they are likely to recollect and retrieve such experiences. This finding corresponds with studies indicating that when tourists experience thrill, enjoyment and excitement (hedonism) while at the destination, they are likely to have a memorable experience (Sthapit et al., 2017).

Second, a positive correlation exists between novelty and MHTEs. This finding supports H2 and suggests that Muslim tourists who are inclined toward participating in new activities, for example, consuming new Halal cuisines and visiting new religious sites, may tend to have more MHTEs. This further implies that the higher the level of novelty experienced during MHTEs, the higher its memorability for Muslim tourists. In addition, this finding corresponds with studies that suggest that novelty is a core input for memories (Wei et al., 2019) and that unusual events are better recollected than ordinary events (Chandralal et al., 2015).

Third, it was found that local culture positively influenced MHTEs. Thus, experiencing a higher level of local culture while at a tourism destination positively affects tourists MHTEs (H3). More specifically, majority of the respondents reported consumed Halal food as part of their Halal tourism experiences. This finding supports studies indicating that consuming food, in this context, Halal food, as part of the local culture contributes to tourists MTE (Adongo et al., 2015). Local food consumption connects tourists with a destination's landscape and unique way of life (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012) and contributes, above all, to visitor experiences. These food experiences are founded on local, original, and authentic foods, which represent the local food culture (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). This finding is also in accordance with some studies demonstrating that interacting with residents allows tourists to experience the local life and culture of the tourist destination more closely, making them more likely to appreciate the culture, which ultimately provides them with a memorable experience when returning home from the trip (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Chen & Rahman, 2018).

Fourth, the results revealed a positive correlation between refreshment and MHTEs. This finding implies that Muslim tourists who can experience solitude, a sense of freedom, relaxation and liberation during their trips to fulfil their psychological needs and to escape from daily routines are more likely to have MHTEs. This finding supports studies highlighting the importance of relaxation in travel experiences (Leblanc, 2003) as well as some studies

indicating a positive relationship between refreshment and MTEs (Morgan & Xu, 2009).

Fifth, the proposed positive association between meaningfulness and MHTEs was confirmed by our results, thus supporting H5. This finding concurs with some studies demonstrating that meaningfulness is an antecedent of MTEs (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013) and that when the meaningfulness of an experience is enhanced, the experience will become more memorable (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2012).

Sixth, the finding confirms H6, which is consistent with other studies, indicating that involvement is an antecedent of MTEs (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). Thus, Muslim tourists who are able to immerse themselves and be more involved in a vacation in terms of activities, that they have wanted to experience while on-site at a tourism destination, for example, consuming Halal foods and visiting religious sites, can better reminisce about the experience. This finding supports studies suggesting that the higher the level of involvement, the higher the memorability of the trip experience (Wei et al., 2019).

Seventh, the path from knowledge to MHTEs was positive (H7). This finding suggests that Muslim tourists who gain new skills, knowledge, practical wisdom and self-consciousness during their trips are more likely to have MHTEs. This finding supports existing studies that indicate a positive link between knowledge and MTEs (Tung & Ritchie, 2011) and that knowledge is an important dimension of travel experiences (Hung & Petrick, 2011).

Finally, the standardized path coefficient value between MHTEs and PA (0.388;  $P = .000$ ) indicated that MHTEs exert a significant direct effect on PA, which confirms H8. This finding implies that the positive experiences Muslim tourists gain from Halal tourism produce unforgettable memories that make them likely to develop close bonds to specific tourism destinations. This finding corresponds with studies indicating that when tourists have a memorable experience, they are likely to be highly attached to a tourism destination (Tsai, 2016; Vada et al., 2019).

## Theoretical Implications

The theoretical contribution of this study includes the validation of the MTE scale in the context of Halal tourism. This study used Kim et al.'s (2012) and proved that it is useful in explaining MTHE. The findings are in contrary to studies indicating that the MTE scale is not applicable in other settings (Sthapit et al., 2022a, 2022b). In comparison to studies that have used other dimensions to explain MTE, for example, experience co-creation, sensory appeal, substantive staging and togetherness (Sthapit et al., 2022a), experience intensification (Sthapit et al., 2019), existential authenticity (Taheri et al., 2020) and country image (Chen & Rahman, 2018), this finding suggests that

the higher the amount of hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement and knowledge, the stronger the Halal tourism experience's memorability, which supports H1–H7. A positive relationship between a memorable Halal tourism experience and place attachment was also supported. In other words, the findings suggest that tourists with vivid memories of their Halal tourism experiences are more likely to have an attachment to that destination, supporting H8. This study builds on existing studies on MTEs and Halal tourism by contributing to a deeper understanding of the antecedents of MHTEs as well as of the mediating effect of MHTEs on PA. Moreover, the finding supports studies indicating that tourists' memorable experience – in this case, Halal tourism experience – is a multifaceted concept (Hosany et al., 2022) and is not one-dimensional.

### **Managerial Implications**

This study has interesting managerial implications for Halal tourism service providers and destination managers. First, Halal tourism service providers should offer travel packages with permissible activities that are perceived as fun, thrilling and interesting for Muslim tourists. Second, Halal tourism service providers should offer Muslim tourists a variety of new and unique activities that are consistent with Islamic principles to fulfil their tendency to seek novel experiences while at a halal tourism destination, for example, visits to local Halal restaurants offering a variety of cuisines and organized tours to different religious sites.

Third, Halal tourism service providers should develop and promote halal tourism activities in which Muslim tourists can closely experience the local culture, such as visits to local sites that reflect the history, culture, food and art, which would intensify their experiences of the local culture, including visits to local marketplaces and ethnic restaurants. Service providers can offer a plethora of halal gastronomic opportunities with the focus on local food. Fourth, regarding enhancing refreshment and involvement aspects, destination managers can design programmes in which Muslim tourists can actively participate, such as participating in local art and craft events, which might allow for active involvement as well as an escape from the routines of daily life.

Fifth, destination managers must also offer activities that allow Muslim tourists to assert their self-identity and broaden their thinking about life and society (meaningfulness). For example, a visit to religious sites may offer Muslim tourists the opportunity to experience the meaning of religion and the ways in which it functions emotionally, psychologically and socially for the residents. Sixth, destination managers could offer diverse souvenirs to Muslim tourists, which act as meaningful reminders after returning home from a trip. Lastly, visits to local festivals, galleries and zoos, including participating in local culinary classes, may provide Muslim tourists with hands-on

opportunities with novel experiences in the travel destination, which also serve as an educational element. All the offered activities to enhance Muslim tourists' memorability of the halal tourism experience should be in line with Islamic teachings and values.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although the results of the present study provide theoretical and managerial implications to the field of MTE and halal tourism, this research has some limitations. First, this study was conducted among Muslim tourists only. Future studies could include both Muslims and non-Muslims to gain a holistic understating of MHTEs and to expand on the findings of this study. Second, the generalizability of the results is limited due to the moderate sample size and the use of a convenience sample. Third, this study employed an online survey. Future studies could use a wide range of research methods, such as focus groups and in-depth interviews from respondents who record their experiences soon after their trips, to overcome this limitation. Storytelling is key to understanding travel experiences because stories carry memories of impressive events and occasions over time (McCabe & Foster, 2006). Fourth, the survey was only available in English. Fifth, the time lapse between the actual visit and completing the survey was up to months, which might have impacted survey responses. Data should be collected shortly after the vacations to avoid the creation of false memories. Sixth, another limitation is combining Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries and non-OIC countries as research settings for halal tourism destinations. Given that there is high variation in the development of halal tourism in OIC countries and non-OIC countries, future studies should compare tourists' MTHE in OIC and non-OIC to augment the findings of the current study. Seventh, the study participants were mostly young, and those between the ages of 30–39 comprised the largest group, which is another limitation. Eight, this study was limited to seven MTE components, so future studies could include other factors that might have an impact on MHTEs, such as experience intensification (Sthapit et al., 2019), existential authenticity (Taheri et al., 2020) and country image (Chen & Rahman, 2018). Lastly, corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic has affected the global tourism industry including the halal tourism destinations (Wardi & Trinanda, 2022) as well as led to changes in tourist behavior and travel patterns (Mirzaei et al., 2021), thus, future studies should examine the examine the impact of COVID-19 on MTHE in the post COVID-19 era to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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