Faith-Based Service Needs: An Implication to Developing Halal Friendly Tourism in Thailand.

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ABSTRACT:

Halal tourism is a fast-growing trend that has attracted attention from both Muslim and non-Muslim travellers. As an inclusive tourism product, Halal tourism is viewed as niche tourism that prioritises Halal activities. To provide a better understanding of Muslim friendly tourism, this study explores in-depth what constitutes services using the Faith-Based Service Needs model. A qualitative approach was employed to interview 40 Thai Muslim travellers who have experience travelling to non-Muslim destinations. NVivo 14 was used to analyse data. Findings revealed the needs of Thai Muslim travellers are slightly different from the needs captured in the Global Muslim Travel Index. Particularly, need to have service needs comprising of Halal food, prayer facilities, and no Islamophobia; good to have service needs comprising water-friendly washrooms, Ramadhan services, and local Muslim experiences; and nice to have service needs consisting of recreational facilities and services, no non-Halal activities, and social causes. Findings provide implications for Muslim friendly service including the fundamental aspects to be focused on as well as additional values which will increase competitive advantages for non-Muslim destinations.

Keywords: Faith-based service needs, Halal tourism, Muslim friendly tourism, Non-Muslim destination

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most important sectors that drives the world economy. After the Covid - 19 pandemic, tourism was the highest global economy contributor that generated 7.6% of global GDP in 2022 (WTTC, 2023). Various types of tourism have been developed to attract tourists from all around the world. Halal tourism, being one of the modern trends in the industry, is experiencing a fast growth in the global market. The rapid and continuous growth of Halal tourism need is closely associated with the growth of the global Muslim population (Battour and Ismail, 2016). By 2030, the Muslim population is expected to reach 2.3 billion, representing 27% of the world's population (GMTI, 2023). Other than the fast-growing Muslim population, there is a growing awareness and need for Halal products and services among non-Muslims (Ruangsriroj and Suvittawat, 2022). The growing need for Halal tourism has attracted attention among practitioners in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries (Papastathopoulos, 2022). However, Halal tourism has not been recognised as a core tourism product (Hanafiah et al., 2022). Halal tourism is any tourism practices and activities permissible by the Islamic shariah targeted for the Muslims travellers (Battour and Ismail, 2016). According to Battour and Ismail (2016), religious travel is not the sole purpose of Muslim travellers therefore non-Muslim countries can practice Halal tourism if products and services are provided according to the Islamic teachings. Izberk-Bilgin and Nakata (2016) added that Halal tourism is not simply food-related, such as refraining tourists from being in contact with pork, alcohol and meat that is not ritually slaughtered, but the practice of tourism that follows the principles of Islam. Put simply, the Qur'an (Islam's holy book) and Shariah Law guide the practice and delivery of products and services in Halal tourism (Battour and Ismail, 2016). As such, practicing Halal tourism requires an understanding of the Islamic shariah.

Recognising the momentum of the Muslim travellers' needs, non-Muslim countries have attempted to develop strategies to cater and attract the market (Papastathopoulos, 2022). For example, initiating Halal-friendly restaurants, Shariah-compliant hotels and Muslim-friendly facilities. Nonetheless, Muslim travellers' inconvenient tourism experiences are still common in non-Muslim regions (Al-Ansi et al., 2021). This is mainly due to insufficient understanding of Muslim culture, Islamic hospitality notions, and the principles of Islam (Han et al., 2019). Olya and Al-Ansi (2018) asserted that service guidelines, facilities, Halal food, and Halal-friendly products and services are limited or barely available in hotels, restaurants and tourist sites in non-Muslim destinations. These inconveniences increase dissatisfaction and discomfort among Muslim travellers, negatively impacting their revisit intentions and the success of Halal tourism in non-Muslim destinations. The ability to provide faith-based service needs will greatly improve the destination image of non-Muslim destinations, which in turn, increase intentions to visit and revisit among Muslim travellers (Al-Ansi et al., 2021). However, these service needs are still lacking in non-Muslim destinations such as Thailand, Japan, Taiwan, and Australia (Jeaheng et al., 2019). Despite Thailand being ranked as the second most desired destination for Muslim tourists (Jeaheng et al., 2019), the country still struggles to meet the demands of Halal tourism (Dabphet, 2021). Interestingly, Muslim travelers continue to favour non-Muslim Asian destinations, even though these locations often lack adequate Halal-friendly facilities and services (Al-Ansi et al., 2022). To better cater to this market, it is essential to understand the specific service needs based on faith.

The Faith-Based Service Needs model was introduced in the annual Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) in 2009 and reviewed in 2019. The model includes nine service needs that are categorised into 'need to have', 'good to have', and 'nice to have' (GMTI, 2019). 'Need to have' includes needs that are indispensable, 'good to have' needs are not essential but will greatly improve Muslim travellers' experience, and 'nice to have' needs are considered less important than other needs but would increase competitive advantage of the destinations (Rehman, 2022). To better cater and attract the Muslim market, non-Muslim destinations can utilise the Faith-Based Service Needs model as a guideline to improve existing or develop new tourism products and services. There is existing research that have utilised these needs to understand Muslim tourists' behaviour in various context, including but not limited to: Muslim travellers' needs and concerns on Halal-friendly attributes when travelling to non-Muslim destinations (Al-Ansi and Han, 2019; Han et al., 2019; Said et al., 2020; Papastathopoulos et al., 2020; Dabphet, 2021; Suhartanto et al., 2021; Wibawa et al., 2021); Halal-food or Muslim travellers' food preferences and demand in non-Muslim destinations (Yousaf and Fan, 2018; Mannaa, 2020; Xiong and Zhang, 2021; Saville and Mahbubi, 2021); Muslim travellers' inconvenience experiences in non-Muslim destinations (Al-Ansi et al., 2021); the effect of Islamophobia on Muslim travellers' experiences (Al-Ansi et al., 2022); and Muslim guests' perceived importance of halal services or Halal-friendly attributes of hotels (Jeaheng et al., 2019; Papastathopoulos, 2022). Notably, no research has provided a comprehensive exploration on the Halal-friendly attributes categorised into the Faith-Based Service Needs model nor verified Muslim tourists' perceptions on these attributes.

To understand how to improve travel experiences of Muslim travellers, this study explores Halal-friendly attributes using the Faith-Based Service Needs model. To achieve the main research objective, three main research questions were addressed: "what are the 'need to have' Halal-friendly attributes that can fulfil basic travel needs of Muslim tourists?", "what are the 'good to have' Halal-friendly attributes that can add values to the travel experiences of Muslim tourists?", and "what are the 'nice to have' Halal-friendly attributes that can differentiate a destination from others?" Fulfilling the gap will: (a) provide a deeper understanding of different typology of needs among Muslim travellers; (b) assist Asian tourism businesses to improve existing or develop new products and services for the Muslim market; (c) guide non-Muslim Asian destinations on how to better serve the Muslim market; and (d) help attract non-Muslim travellers who look for Halal products and services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Halal and Halal Tourism

Halal, an Arabic word means "lawful" or "authorised" refers to anything that is permissible by the Shariah Law. Most Muslims, like the other religious groups, want to know if they are allowed to engage in certain practices. They live according to the guidelines laid down in Qur'an because they believe it contains Allah's (God in Arabic) guidance. Faith in Islam has an effect on every part of a Muslim's life, including their views on

tourism and travel and the consumption of tourism products and services. Although the notion of Halal encompasses all aspects of Muslim's life, Halal is commonly related to food and what Muslims are permitted to consume. Other than food, the Qur'an also outlines activities that are considered Haram (forbidden) in tourism and hospitality activities, such as engaging in gambling and alcohol consumption. Halal is tied to the Islamic faith and encompasses a wide range of services and goods available to the Muslim community (Samori et al., 2015) but Halal tourism is not and should not be substituted with Islamic tourism (Battour and Ismail, 2016) that focuses on religious and pilgrimage travel. Halal tourism is a more inclusive concept that combines religious and recreational travel (Jafari and Scott, 2014).

Over the years, various definitions have been provided for Halal tourism. Earlier definition views Halal tourism as a form of religious tourism that includes activities (e.g., accommodation, worship, dietary, conduct and dress code requirements) permissible by the Islamic principles to meet the needs of Muslim travellers (Arpaci et al., 2015; Mohsin et al., 2016) or as an approach which follows the Islamic principles and rules (Boğan et al., 2016). These definitions failed to capture the intention of travellers to conform to the Islamic principles (Battour and Ismail, 2016). Thus, Boğan and Sarıışık (2018) redefined Halal tourism as a type of tourism undertaken by travellers whose intention is to receive permission from Allaah. Nevertheless, a consensus in these definitions is that travellers engage with tourism activities, products and services that are in compliance with the Islamic rules. The Islamic faith has guided Muslim travellers' needs and wants and influenced their travel behaviour. When they are travelling, their faith in Islam will determine their intention to look for services that can satisfy their faith-based needs. As yet, the inconsistencies in various terms (e.g., Islamic tourism, Halal tourism) have led to the manipulation of tourism offerings (Hanafiah et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to understand what constitutes faith-based service needs.

Faith-Based Service Needs Concept

The GMTI launched the Faith-Based Service Needs 1.0 model in 2009, identifying six primary needs influencing Muslim travelers' behavior. In 2019, the model was updated to include three additional needs to reflect the evolving profile of Muslim travelers. Table 1 presents a comparison between the original and revised models. These needs are categorized into 'need to have,' 'good to have,' and 'nice to have' (GMTI, 2019) to help service providers prioritize Muslim travelers' requirements (Rehman, 2022). Additionally, it is vital for service providers to comprehend each need to effectively attract Muslim tourists (Hanafiah et al., 2022).

Table 1: Faith-Based Service Needs

Category	Faith-Based Service Needs 1.0 (2009)	Faith-Based Service Needs 2.0 (2019)
Need to have	• Halal food service • Salaath (Prayer) facilities	• Halal food • Prayer facilities • Water-friendly washrooms • No Islamophobia
Good to have	• Water usage friendly washrooms • Ramadhan (fasting) services and facilities	• Social causes • Ramadhan services • Local Muslim experiences
Nice to have	• No non-Halal activities • Recreational facilities and services	• Recreational spaces with privacy • No non-Halal activities

Source: GMTI (2019)

Need to have

Need to have services are indispensable to the Muslim travellers. These include Halal food, prayer facilities, water-friendly washrooms, and no Islamophobia. The Qur'an stated that Halal food is the utmost important need to Muslim travellers. The provision and consumption of Halal food are instructed in the Qur'an to guide Muslims' food choice. These guidelines laid down what constitutes Halal food. Other than strictly no pork and alcohol, how the animals are slaughtered and how the food is prepared are also the major concerns of these travellers. As Muslims consider Halal food the most appropriate choice, they need different types of services and amenities from food outlets. Since Muslims have a restricted range of food choice in non-Muslim destinations (Hanafiah and Hamdan, 2021), they are highly sensitive to the hygienic, sanitation, and safety of food (Iranmanesh et al., 2019). Mannaa (2020) found the availability of Halal food does not affect Muslim travellers' satisfaction with the destination but to a certain extent influences their choice of accommodation and revisit intentions. Therefore, non-Muslim destinations are expected to make efforts to comply with Shariah standards.

Prayer is the second of the five main pillars of Islam. Muslims should pray five times a day and preferable (for men) in the Masjid (Muslim's house of worship) but may combine prayers or postpone when travelling (GMTI, 2019). The Qur'an stated that Muslims should face Mecca (the location of the sacred Masjid) when they pray. With this said, prayer facilities should be sufficiently provided, at least a spacious prayer room with Qiblah direction which is equipped with prayer mats and garments at areas frequently visited, such as the airports and tourist attractions (GMTI, 2019). Many non-Muslim destinations such as Japan and the Philippines are offering prayer places at major airports and restaurants (Rehman, 2022). Other than that, gender-segregated prayer rooms are also important attributes for Muslim travellers (Papastathopoulos, 2022).

Water-friendly washrooms are essential since the Islamic law requires Muslims to clean their body before praying. The availability of Wudu (ablution) facilities and hand showers will greatly improve the comfort of Muslim travellers (Papastathopoulos, 2022; Rehman, 2022). Other than that, Muslim travellers also need gender-segregated washrooms to ensure privacy when they perform ablution. Muslim travellers, especially women still have difficulty in finding water-friendly washrooms even in Malaysia that ranked one of the friendliest destinations (Tavakoli and Mura, 2021). Indeed, it is still common that Muslim travellers experience inconvenience with regard to ablution especially those who visited non-Muslim or Muslim-minority destinations (Said et al., 2022). In some cases, the washrooms are not Muslim-friendly, for example, bidet is not provided in some washrooms or is provided with confusing buttons in a foreign language (Said et al., 2022).

No Islamophobia need is arisen due to the lingering of Islamophobic issues in some regions (GMTI, 2019). People who are Islamophobia developed misconceptions about Islam and the Islamic teachings (Wahab, 2019) for being ignorant and believing in misinformation (Jais, 2014). Muslim travellers, like any other travellers, want to be safe when they travel. However, the rise and enduring Islamophobia and religion-related hate crime are deterring Muslim travellers from visiting destinations that are perceived to be unsafe and unwelcoming (GMTI, 2019; Rehman, 2022). Al-Ansi et al. (2022) found Islamophobia created unpleasant experience for Muslim travellers. As it seriously challenging the development and sustainability of Halal tourism, Al-Ansi et al. (2022) urged for in-depth qualitative research that explains the role of Islamophobia in Halal tourism.

Good to have

Good to have services include social causes, Ramadhan services, and local Muslim experiences. These needs are not essential but having them will satisfy the needs of Muslim travellers. Social responsibility is rooted in the Qur'an. The Islamic teachings clearly defined Muslims' responsibility to the society and environment, thus, social causes include the need to improve local living conditions, protect the environment by going green, and participate in eco-friendly tourism (GMTI, 2019; Rehman, 2022). Driven by faith and sustainability trend, Muslim travellers are becoming more socially responsible (GMTI, 2019; Rehman, 2022).

Ramadhan (the month of fasting) is seen as a way to purify one's physical and spiritual health. It is a time to detach one from the worldly pleasure and focus on improving the inner self. Ramadhan services are preferred, although the likelihood of Muslims to travel during Ramadhan is low. Some will travel especially when the month coincides with school holidays, some wish to perform Umrah (a pilgrimage to Mecca that provides an opportunity for Muslims to seek forgiveness, renew their faith, and earn spiritual rewards.) during Ramadhan (GMTI, 2019). These travellers will look for destinations that can accommodate their special needs, such as those that provide suḥuur (pre-dawn Halal meals) and dates prior to breaking the fast (GMTI, 2019). There are some destinations that developed standards and guidelines catering to the Muslim market. For example, Malaysian Muslim-friendly hospitality standard has a tour package that requires the allocation of time scheduled for prayers, saḥūr, and ifṭār (fast breaking meal) in their itinerary during Ramadhan (Standards Malaysia, 2015; Rehman, 2022).

Local Muslim experiences are unique experiences that allow travellers to connect with their Muslim identity, heritage, and people (GMTI, 2019; Rehman, 2022). A visit to Islamic heritage sites, an interaction with local Muslim communities, and a Muslim tour guide can enhance Muslim travellers' experiences (GMTI, 2019; Rehman, 2022). Rahman et al. (2017) used the need for relationship to explain this need. In their views, Muslim tourists need to connect and bond with close relatives and friends. They are motivated to travel to destinations of their acquaintances, destinations with friendly people and those that use common language. Social interaction reduces their anxiety when travelling abroad (Rahman et al., 2017). Therefore, young, middle-class Muslims with increasing buying power are willing to pay for experiences that either reconnect them with their Islamic heritage or allow them to learn about local community's way of life (Hanafiah et al., 2022).

Nice to have

Nice to have include recreational space with privacy and no non-Halal services. These needs are less essential but would greatly enhance travel experiences of Muslims and competitive advantages of tourism businesses. Recreational space with privacy mainly refers to the need for gender-segregated facilities in the swimming pools and gyms, beaches, parlour, and spa and beauty salons (GMTI, 2019; Rehman, 2022). It is important to note that the Qur'an and Islamic teaching have never required for gender separation when women and men are together in a public space. The faith only denotes that both men and women need to cover their Awrah (intimate parts of the body) so gender-segregated facilities are needed to ensure privacy. With that said, Muslims do not ask for women-only facilities or spaces, except for a separate space (Tavakoli and Mura, 2021). Other than that, Muslim travellers also appreciate privacy by having educated, trained, and same-gender staff to manage the facilities (GMTI, 2019).

No non-Halal services refer to not engaging in activities considered to be Haram. Muslim travellers would prefer not to enter facilities that serve alcohol, have disco and bar, or host a casino (GMTI, 2019). They also prefer services that are family-friendly, such as hotels that refrain from serving alcohol (Rehman, 2022). According to Rehman (2022), the minimum requirements for no non-Halal services include the availability of Halal food, prayer facilities, Ramadhan services, and the absence of Haram services (bars, nightclubs, casinos). However, this need is not necessary as long as the minimum requirements (need to have) are satisfied. Lack of Halal services also will not deter young Muslims from travelling to non-Muslim-friendly destinations (Hanafiah et al., 2022).

Ideally, Muslim travellers should look for the minimum requirements or 'need to have' services, which is to have Halal food, gender-segregated prayer facilities, water-friendly washrooms, and no Islamophobia, at least in priority points such as the airports and hotels (GMTI, 2019). In reality, when Muslims travel to non-Muslim destinations, they face challenges and inconveniences. These inconveniences may sometimes deter Muslims from travelling to non-Muslim destinations. Although Muslim travellers' intention to conform influences their service needs (Boğan and Sarıışık, 2018), their adherence level also depends on their awareness of and devotion on faith (Mannaa, 2020). Those who practice strictly would need most of the needs to be fulfilled while those who are less committed may focus more on the 'need to have' aspects (Mannaa, 2020). Then again,

generational differences also influence their need for Muslim-friendly facilities. Compare to older travellers, younger generations are more tolerable to the availability of Halal food in non-Muslim destinations (Hanafiah et al., 2022). Regardless, it is utmost important to fulfil 'need to have' service needs and provide additional value by delivering 'good to have' and 'nice to have' service needs if non-Muslim destinations wish to attract

Muslim markets. Halal tourism is tourism for all. It focuses on hygiene and safe travel experiences for all including non-Muslim travellers. As such, tourism business players especially those in a non-Muslim destination must equip themselves with sufficient knowledge and training on Islamic principles.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

To obtain a deeper understanding of Muslim travellers' opinions and particular attitudes toward faith-based service needs, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate (Turner et al., 2021). An in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted among Muslim travellers. Initially, this study employed purposive sampling to select participants who could provide relevant information, that is, Muslims who have travelled to non-Muslim destinations. To reach more participants, this study also employed snowball sampling to include other Muslim travellers introduced or recommended by the purposively selected travellers. For qualitative research, the number of participants is determined by data saturation, a point to stop collecting data when no new coding or themes can be generated from the rich and thick dataset (Turner et al., 2021). In this study, the saturation point is 40 participants who fit the criteria.

Data Collection Process

To obtain individual opinions and experiences, an in-depth semi-structured interview that allows flexible and free-flowing communication (Ashton and Scott, 2017) was employed. A set of 12 open-ended questions interview guidelines was created and adapted based on the criteria of faith-based service needs listed by GMTI (2019). Prior to the interview, all participants provided their consent and were informed of the possibility to withdraw at any point of the research. To ensure the transferability and dependability of data, the guidelines were tested on five participants for language, ethics, and unbiased question checks. The pilot study indicated no non-functioning questions other than language issues (to revise academic jargon into daily terms). After revision, the final set of guidelines was used to interview the remaining participants. The interview took around 35 to 60 minutes.

Data Analysis

To enhance trustworthiness, the data which was collected in Thai was translated into English by two experts in this field and then proofread by a native English-speaking expert. The English data was then back-translated into Thai and both original and translated content were compared to maintain data accuracy. To further enhance trustworthiness, data was analysed using NVivo 14, a software that allows narratives to be sorted into themes (Turner et al., 2021).

Study Area

The study area is Bangkok, Thailand. As the capital of Thailand, Bangkok contains 13 mosques with approximately 600,000 Muslims living mostly in the east side. Bangkok is also a popular destination for international visitors, including international Muslim travellers.

RESULTS

Profile of Participants

This study interviewed 40 Thai Muslims stakeholder who had experience and travelled to non-Muslim destinations. Table 1 listed the profile of participants.

Table 1: Muslim's participants' profile

ID No.	Sex	Age	Career	ID No.	Sex	Age	Career
ID1	F	24	Islamic religious teacher	ID22	M	51	Halal hotel owner
ID2	F	33	Halal entrepreneur	ID23	M	41	Hotel receptionist
ID3	M	41	Travel agency	ID24	M	31	Teacher
ID4	M	51	Islamic religious teacher	ID25	M	43	Hotel manager
ID5	M	44	Self-employed	ID26	M	23	Halal restaurant employee
ID6	F	24	Islamic religious teacher	ID27	M	29	Islamic religious teacher
ID7	F	21	Islamic religious teacher	ID28	M	39	Committee of Halal Center Thailand
ID8	M	48	Halal Entrepreneur	ID29	M	37	Deputy Dean of Int. Islamic College
ID9	F	57	Self-employed	ID30	M	63	Businessman
ID10	F	45	Self-employed	ID31	M	36	Self-employ
ID11	F	37	Islamic religious teacher	ID32	M	31	Employee of the Halal Affairs Department,Thailand
ID12	F	35	Islamic religious teacher	ID33	M	29	Embassy employee
ID13	M	48	Self-employed	ID34	M	30	Embassy employee
ID14	M	66	Retired government official	ID35	F	32	Government official
ID15	F	48	Merchant	ID36	M	32	Arabic Interpreter
ID16	M	45	Islamic religious teacher	ID37	M	39	Teacher
ID17	M	31	Arabic Interpreter	ID38	M	30	Chef in Halal restaurant
ID18	M	44	Islamic religious teacher	ID39	M	35	Halal Entrepreneur
ID19	M	34	Medical personnel in Arabic	ID40	M	31	Library personnel
ID20	M	65	Retired government officer				
ID21	M	41	Tour staff				

FINDINGS

Findings are presented to answer three research questions: (i) what is the 'need to have' Halal-friendly attributes that can fulfill the basic travel needs of Muslim tourists? (ii) what are the 'good to have' Halal-friendly attributes that can improve the travel experiences of Muslim tourists? and (iii) what are the 'nice to have' Halal-friendly attributes that can add value to the travel experiences of Muslim tourists?

Need to have

Findings identified three need to have faith-based service needs: (i) Halal food, (ii) prayer facilities, and (iii) no Islamophobia. The following discusses these three needs in detail.

Halal food

Halal food is the utmost important need for Muslim travellers. Other than the ingredients, Muslim travellers also emphasise the need for a dedicated Halal kitchen to minimise the risk of cross-contamination with non-Halal ingredients in the cooking process and the use of separate kitchen utensils [ID 2,3,4,8,10,11,12,14,15,16,24,27,28]. One of participant stated that

"Ingredients must be halal, with a particular emphasis on meat being slaughtered in accordance with Islamic principles." [ID 12]. Another participant mentioned that "I think a dedicated halal kitchen is essential, with separate storage and utensils to prevent mixing with non-halal items" [ID 4].

Additionally, In Halal restaurants should have a Muslim owner or kitchen staff is ideal to ensure a deeper understanding of Halal requirements so that cross-contamination with non-Halal items is avoided [ID 2,3,4,12,25]. If Muslim kitchen staff is unavailable, non-Muslim staff should be trained in Halal food preparation to adhere to specific guidelines [ID 19] and maintain the authenticity of the Halal menu [ID 28]. Halal restaurants should also obtain Halal certification to assure Muslim customers of their compliance with Halal standards and assist in identifying themselves as Halal dining places [ID 3,6,12,19,20,21,23]. Muslim staff dressing in Islamic attire can also facilitate their identity as Halal restaurants [ID3,4]. Other than that, Halal restaurants should provide a prayer room [ID 3,6,12,26] and clean washroom facilities [ID12,26] with a hand shower for the convenience of customers.

Prayer facilities

Prayer facilities are essential prayer tools to be equipped in prayer rooms, separate spaces for males and females [ID 1,4,7,12,13,19,21,24,28], cleanliness of prayer room [ID 4,6,9,10,11,15,16,19,20,24,28], ease of use [ID 11], safety [ID 11,16], privacy [ID 22], and availability of facilities to perform ablution ritual referred to as Wudhu [ID 2,4,5,6,14,20,27]. Generally, Muslim travellers mentioned that prayer rooms should be equipped with prayer mat (Sajjadah) [ID 3,12,21,26,27], Qiblah directions clearly marked to assist worshippers orient themselves towards Mecca [ID 3,10,14,27], prayer timings [ID 27,28], comfortable seating for individuals who may have difficulty sitting on the floor due to physical limitations or weaknesses [ID 3,10], fan or air-conditioner [ID 3,21,28], storage [ID 17], prayer garments [ID 21,26,27], and elderly facilities [ID 19,27]. One participant mentioned:

"The prayer room must be clean, including the carpets, prayer mats, and prayer cloths that should be regularly washed and cleaned so there will be no unpleasant odour that disturbs the praying process. The prayer room must be clearly separated between men and women and provide assistive facilities for the elderly such as handrails and anti-slip tiles." [ID 19]

Another important consideration is the facilities to perform the ablution ritual or Wudhu. Wudhu is a cleansing ritual performed by Muslims before their prayers. Facilities for the ablution ritual known as Wudhu should be separated for both males and females   [ID 2,5,9,12,17,21,22], is distinct from restroom facilities [ID 4,5,12,16], and be equipped with foot washing amenities [ID 25].

No Islamophobia

No Islamophobia is a crucial consideration for Muslim travellers because it can impact travel intention of those who prioritise safety. The impact of Islamophobia on travellers who prioritise safety is obvious [ID 3,4,10,22,24] and may make them feel unwelcome [ID 9,26] in certain destinations:

"Islamophobia will affect my choice of travel destinations. I'm worry if I have to travel to countries known for their prejudice against Islam, such as some Western countries but it would not affect my decision if there is no history of prejudice, such as the far east." [ID 28]

However, for those who hold a positive image of the destination and are well-informed about the country [ID19, 28], Islamophobia seems to have little to no influence on their travel decisions. According to Participant 19, "Muslims in Thailand has no negative image of terrorism in the eyes of foreigners and there are many popular tourism provinces such as Phuket, Krabi, Phang Nga, Satun and Songkhla among international tourists."

To combat Islamophobia in tourism, it's crucial to promote understanding through accessible media and provide accurate knowledge about Muslim [ID 2,3,5,6,8,9,11,14,16,26,27]. Promotion of Thailand's image as a diverse nation where Muslims can coexist peacefully with non-Muslims is essential for attracting foreign visitors and fostering a welcoming environment for all [ID 19,22]. They want people to understand the principles of Islam or at least learn about the Muslims to reduce misconceptions and not merely believing in misinformation.

Good to have

Three good to have faith-based service needs were identified: (i) Ramadhan services, (ii) local Muslim experiences, and (iii) water-friendly washrooms.

Ramadhan services

Ramadhan services include ifṭār and saḥūr services, a space for relaxation and observance, religious activities with local community, a private dining space for non-fasting Muslims, and designs of tour program suitable for Muslim travellers. Ifṭār is a service that provide meals for Muslims to break their fast at sunset [ID 2,3,6,12,16,17,19,20,21,22,24,25,26,28] typically includes dates [ID 3,4] and water [ID 2] while saḥūr is the pre-dawn meal before the morning prayer [ID 2,11,25,26] that include a wake-up service to ensure that individuals wake up in time for saḥūr [ID 3].

Muslim travellers also appreciate a space that offers comfortable atmosphere for relaxation [ID 3,9,21,24] which facilitates the observance of religious obligations [ID 13,21]. During Ramadhan, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset, and it's a time of spiritual reflection and increased devotion. In addition to relaxation amenities, such places may also feature a dedicated area for performing prayers [ID 12,17,20,21,26] and Qur'an recitation. This space can include comfortable seating, prayer areas, and Qur'an recitation area that are quiet and suitable for Qur'an recitation.

The destination should organise an event to invite Muslim travellers to join in religious activities [ID 8,15], including breaking their fast [ID 8,11], Taraweeh prayer and charitable donations with the local community during Ramadhan. By combining religious observance, community engagement, and charitable efforts, this event encourages a sense of unity and shared experiences among Muslim travellers and the local community during the holy month of Ramadhan. In addition, Muslims also need a private eating area for Muslims who cannot fast during Ramadhan, where individuals can eat without being in full view of others [ID 19]. A tour program suitable for Muslim travellers during Ramadhan should be designed to enhance their experience [ID 28].

Local Muslim experiences

Local Muslim experiences offer travellers a chance to connect and interact with local Muslim communities, visit mosques, and explore the destination with a Muslim tour guide. This helps them understand Islamic culture and history better and build cultural connections.

Interacting with local Muslim communities will allow travellers to take part in communal activities, religious ceremonies, or local events that reveal the customs, traditions, and way of life of the local Muslim community. Such interactions promote cultural understanding and provide a unique view of the destination [ID 3,9,12,19].

Visiting local mosques is the opportunity for tourists to either perform prayers, to join a guided tour, or to learn more about Islamic culture and architecture. These visits often connect travellers with the local Muslim community [ID 3,9,15,17].

Traveling with a Muslim guide deepens the experience by offering deeper insights into Islamic history, culture, and religious practices. These guides can also connect travellers with the local Muslim community and strengthen their bond with their faith and heritage [ID 3,11,14,21].

Water-friendly washrooms

Water is essential for Muslims to maintain purity and cleanliness, which are important parts of their faith. Muslims emphasize physical cleanliness, especially in washrooms. They use water in toilets for hygiene, and it can be difficult for them to travel to places without water facilities.

Generally, Muslim travellers require access to clean water supply in restrooms [ID 2,4,6,8,9,10,11,12,15,19,24,25], equipped with hand showers [ID 3,8,26] or water containers [ID 7,13,14,28]

to enable proper cleansing after using the toilet. Participant 27 mentioned the design of water container that protect the water from contamination with impure substances is important to maintain cleanliness. Others also emphasised the importance of clean water that allow individuals to wash themselves after using the toilet rather than relying solely on tissues or dry methods [ID 3,18,22,26]. In cases where these setups are not available, providing bottles besides the toilet is an alternative solution [ID 2].

Nice to have

For nice to have faith-based service needs, three needs were identified: (i) recreational spaces with privacy, (ii) no non-Halal activities, and (iii) social causes.

Recreational spaces with privacy

Recreational spaces with privacy for Muslim travellers involve creating facilities that respect their cultural and religious values. This is achieved through: creating gender-segregated spaces, employing same-gender staff, and training educates staff on privacy and instructs them on providing respectful service to customers with diverse cultural and religious expectations.

Gender-segregated spaces involve dividing recreational areas like swimming pools and gyms [ID 12,26] into separate sections or schedules [ID 4,23] for men and women [ID 3,4,6,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,24,27,28]. Staffing with same-gender employees involve hiring and assigning staff based on the gender of the customers they serve. For example, having female staff members to manage and assist female customers and male staff members to serve male customers [ID 2,3,12,14,15,19,22,25,26]. Training for customer service personnel should have staff undergo training to enhance their sensitivity to the cultural and religious needs of Muslim travellers. This training includes educating staff about the importance of privacy and modesty in service delivery. It helps employees understand how to provide respectful and considerate service to customers who may have different cultural and religious expectations [ID 8,12,20].

No non-Halal activities

Muslims consider certain activities to be Haram or non-Halal, meaning they are prohibited or forbidden according to Islamic law. When traveling, they avoid engaging in prohibited activities. This includes the consumption of alcohol and non-halal food, going to night club, bar, casino, using sexual services, participating in religious-related activities that are against Islamic beliefs or activities that expose Awrah (the intimate parts of the body for both men and women).

Participants are well aware of what constitutes non-Halal activities. The consumption of alcohol is generally considered a sin. It is prohibited by the Islamic law [ID 2,6,8,10,11,20,24,28]. The consumption of non-halal food is also prohibited. Halal food is considered permissible and lawful for Muslims to eat, while non-halal food, which includes items like pork and improperly slaughtered meat, is considered Haram and is to be avoided [ID 8,9,25].

For night club and bar, Muslims choose to avoid these establishments due to their concerns related to alcohol and mixed-gender interactions [ID 4,6,8,11,14,16,20,26,28]. Sexual services and any form of sexual activity outside of a lawful and legitimate marriage are prohibited in Islam [ID 4,5,9,17,19,24]. Gambling is forbidden in Islam because the Islamic teachings prohibit all forms of gambling [ID 4,14,20,24,27,28]. Muslims also avoid participating in religious-related activities that are against Islamic beliefs [ID 5,13,15,19,21,27] or activities that expose Awrah, their intimate body part which must be covered with clothing since exposing the Awrah is unlawful in Islam and is regarded as a sin [ID 12,19,25].

Social causes

Muslim travellers can improve local living conditions for fellow Muslims by attending local mosques, participating in charitable activities, supporting local businesses, and supporting community-based taxis and ridesharing. For example, Participants 13 and 15 mentioned that they are happy to support local mosques through contributions to maintenance and participation in restoration projects. Other than that, they wish to

contribute to local charities and organizations that serve the Muslim community. This could involve participating in providing meals, clothing donations, or other charitable activities. They also mentioned the need to promote the local economy by supporting local businesses through shopping at local markets, dining at family-owned restaurants, and staying in accommodations run by local hosts, as well as the need to support local drivers by choosing taxis and ridesharing services provided by the community.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore in-depth what constitutes need to have, good to have, and nice to have faith-based service needs of Muslim travellers. Table 2 compares findings of this study with the Faith-Based Service Needs 1.0 and 2.0.

Table 2: Faith-Based Service Needs for Thai Muslim travellers

Category		FBSN 1.0	FBSN 2.0	FBSN for Thai Muslim travellers
Need to have	• Halal food	√	√	√
	• Prayer facilities	√	√	√
	• No Islamophobia		√	√
	• Water-friendly washrooms		√	
Good to have	• Water-friendly washrooms	√		√
	• Social causes		√	
	• Ramadhan services	√	√	√
	• Local Muslim experiences		√	√
Nice to have	• Recreational facilities and services	√	√	√
	• No non-Halal activities	√	√	√
	• Social causes			√

First, findings revealed need to have services include only three essentials namely Halal food service, prayer facilities, and no Islamophobia. While findings are similar to the Faith-Based Service Needs 2.0 (GMTI, 2019), the need for water-friendly washrooms is found to serve as a good to have need for Thai Muslims. Findings support the notions of Hanafiah and Hamdam (2021), Iranmanesh et al. (2019), and Mannaa (2020) that Muslim travellers have limited food choice when travelling to non-Muslim destinations and are sensitive to the safety and hygiene of food and restaurants. For Halal restaurants, it is preferable that Halal certification is obtained to provide assurance. If Halal restaurants are unavailable, Muslim travellers are willing to tolerate if the cook is Muslim or non-Muslim cook and staff are trained in Halal food preparation. Other than food and restaurant, prayer facilities especially prayer rooms or prayer areas separated for male and female are necessities to Muslims, which support the notions of Rehman (2022) and Papastathopoulos (2022). Muslim

travellers also emphasised the need for cleanliness of prayer rooms, facilities for ablution separated for male and female, prayer mat, and Qiblah directions as well as the availability of prayer rooms or areas in the restaurant. For the need for no Islamophobia, findings support Al-Ansi et al. (2022) and Rehman (2022) that visiting destinations that are perceived to be unsafe, unfriendly and unwelcoming will create an unpleasant experience for Muslim travellers. Findings also revealed that while some Muslims will avoid travelling to certain destinations, some are hopeful that Islamophobia will not affect those who hold a positive image or are familiar to the destination.

Secondly, findings found good to have services include three needs namely water-friendly washrooms, Ramadhan services, and local Muslim experiences. Finding revealed that water-friendly washrooms belong to good to have which is similar to the Faith-Based Service Need 1.0 and social causes are nice to have, which are slightly different from Faith-Based Service Need 2.0. Water plays a role in cleansing and purifying the body before prayer. Therefore, it is reasonable that water-friendly washrooms are essential as a need to have service. However, findings revealed travellers can tolerate with an alternative if water-friendly washrooms are unavailable. The finding is not surprising given that Muslim travellers still experience inconvenience and difficulty finding water-friendly washrooms even in Muslim-friendly destinations (Tavakoli and Mura, 2021; Said et al., 2022). Perhaps the only reasonable explanation is that the neglection of ablution area design has forced Muslim travellers to adapt themselves and perform ablution in the toilet (Rahim, 2005). For Ramadhan services, findings support GMTI (2019) and Rehman (2022) that ifṭār and saḥūr services and a tour program that allocates prayer time would greatly enhance traveller's experience. Additionally, Muslim travellers also wish for a space for relaxation and observance of religious obligations, a dedicated area for prayers and Qu'ran recitation, and a private dining room or area for non-fasting Muslims during Ramadhan. For local Muslim experiences, findings support Rehman (2022), Rahman et al. (2017), and Hanafiah et al. (2022) that travellers look for connections and interactions with local Muslim communities. They wish to obtain local experience through interactions with local Muslims, visit local mosques, and travel with a Muslim guide who can provide deeper insights into the history, culture, and religious practices of Islam.

Thirdly, nice to have services include three needs namely no non-Halal activities, recreational facilities and services, and social causes. The finding is slightly different from both Faith-Based Service Needs 1.0 and 2.0 models, which include social causes that was originally categorised as a good to have need. For recreational facilities and services, findings support GMTI (2019), Rehman (2022), and Tavakoli and Mura (2021) that gender-segregation facilities with privacy and same-gender staff are important for Muslim travellers. Other than that, findings found gender-segregated spaces can be achieved through dividing recreational areas into separate schedules. For no non-Halal activities, findings support Rehman (2022) and Hanafiah et al. (2022) that Muslim travellers will avoid entering bars, nightclubs and casinos. Thus, lack of Halal services will not deter Muslims from travelling to non-Muslim destinations as long as forbidden activities or those that expose Awrah are avoided. Findings found little mention of social causes but sufficient to support the notions of GMTI (2019) and Rehman (2022) that improving local living conditions is a responsible of Muslims. Findings also revealed Muslim travellers are willing to support local mosques, local charities and organisations, and local economy, businesses, and transportation services.

Faith-based service needs model is useful as a guideline for non-Muslim destinations that aim to promote Halal tourism or improve its existing products and services. In an attempt to provide a deeper insight into what constitutes need to have, good to have, and nice to have faith-based service needs of Muslim travellers, this study found the need to re-categories certain needs (water-friendly washrooms and social causes) and to pay attention on additional requirements of each need. Halal tourism is more than serving Halal food or refrain Muslim tourists from gambling, alcohol drinking or sexual activities (Rehman, 2022). While confirming the notion, this study also addresses a few simplest yet neglected areas that can fulfil the fundamental principles of Islam, such as the need to provide gender-segregated areas for prayers, ablution, recreational activities. These areas of improvement are summarised in Figure 1. In conclusion, delivering need to have services will fulfil basic satisfaction of Muslim travellers, providing good to have services will add values to their travel experiences, and offering nice to have services will make a destination stands out from the crowd.
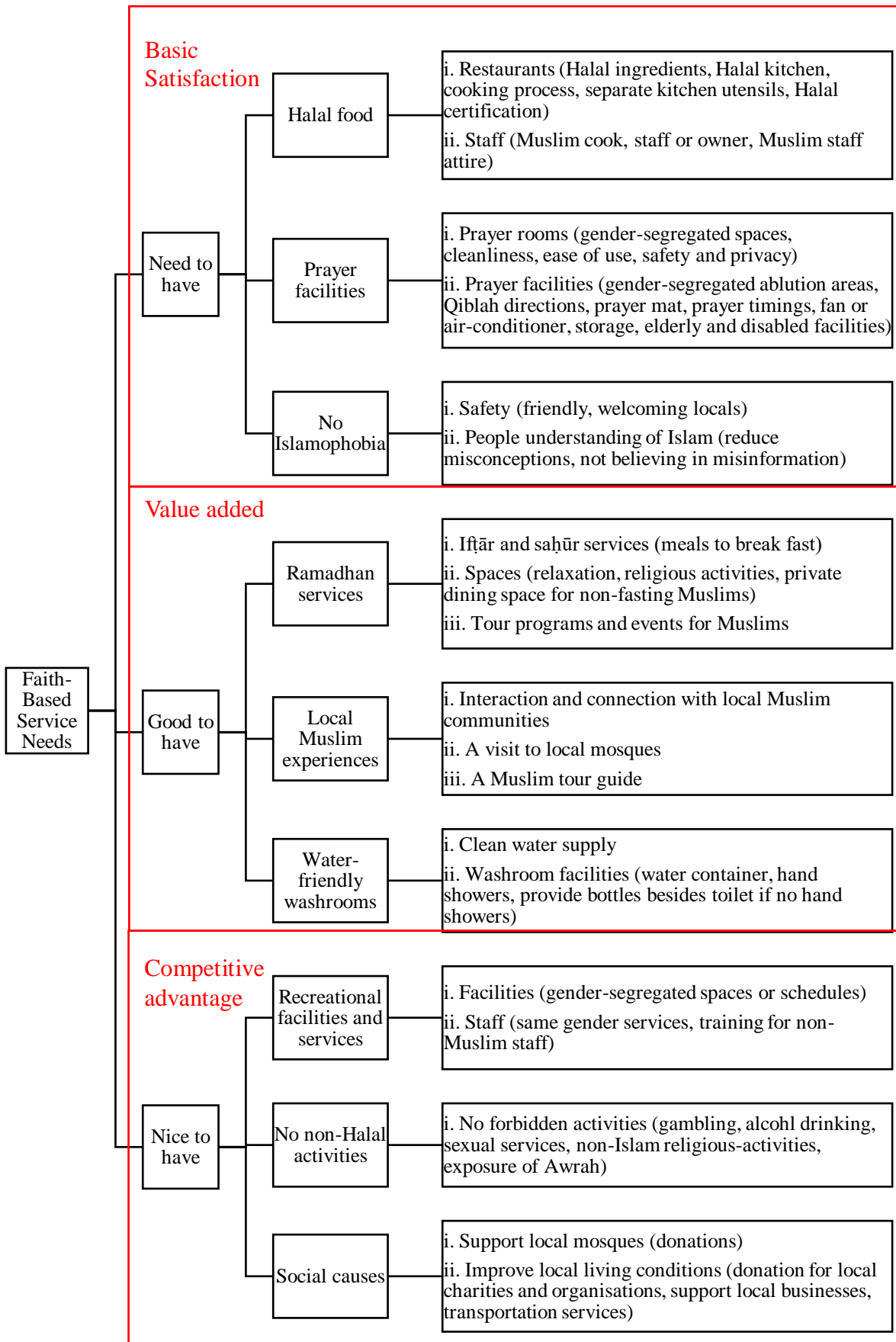
Figure 1: Faith-Based Service Needs Model

Implications

Theoretical Implications

This study has explored deeper into the Faith-Based Service Needs model to understand what constitute each service need of Muslim travellers and how to improve them. Faith-based service needs model is a useful guideline that follows the principles of Islam (GMTI, 2019) which can be used to promote Halal tourism. The model was briefly explained by GMTI (2019) and Rehman (2022). This study re-categorised two service needs and added more details into what really constitute each service need for Muslim travellers. Secondly, this study develops an understanding of what Thai Muslims need when travel to non-Muslim destinations. Findings should provide illumination for non-Muslim destinations on how to improve each need to better accommodate these travellers. Finally, this study also proposes a new Faith-Based Service Need model categorising the basic needs to be satisfied, value added needs to be provided to improve Muslim travellers' experience, and additional needs that will enhance competitive advantage for non-Muslim destinations.

Limitations and Future Work

This study encountered a few challenges and limitations. First, this study only explored the needs of Muslim travellers using the Faith-Based Service Needs model of GMTI. There are several Muslim-friendly tourism standards including Salam Standard (a global standard created by Lagitasu Travel), MS 2610:2015 (Standard Malaysia), and TS 13683 (Turkish Standard Institution) (COMCEC, 2017) that may provide better guidance. Future work could explore different standards or compare various standards to develop a comprehensive model. Secondly, the data was collected among 40 Thai Muslim travellers and findings may not represent all Muslims in other context. Future research should expand the sample size to include Muslim travellers from other countries. Next, this study proposed a conceptual model based on interviews with a small sample size which requires further validation. Future work could develop measurement items and validate the model through empirical research. Lastly, limited data was provided to support social causes need, which require further attention from future research.

Practical Implications for Non-Muslim Destination

Despite lack of Halal-friendly facilities and services, Muslim travellers still favour non-Muslim destinations (Al-Ansi et al., 2022). Findings of this study should provide insightful implications for tourism operators in non-Muslim destinations. First, non-Muslim destinations should promote Halal tourism to all. While Halal tourism as a niche tourism, Halal tourism is a tourism for all (Mohsin et al., 2020). On the one hand, Muslim travellers are highly sensitive to the consumption of Shariah compliant tourism products and services (Battour and Ismail, 2016). On the other hand, non-Muslims are becoming more aware and support for health and food safety owing to the pandemic (Ruangsriroj and Suvittawat, 2022). Other than Muslims, Halal tourism that emphasises cleanliness and hygiene is suitable for travellers who seek safe and hygienic travel products and services. In terms of food, non-Muslim destinations could provide Halal food service in a few ways, such as obtaining Halal certificates, employing Muslim cook or staff, or providing separate kitchen and dining utensils. They should also allocate a prayer room or area at major airports, tourist attractions and Halal restaurants such as those in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea (Battour and Ismail, 2016; Said et al., 2022).

Secondly, non-Muslim tourism players should equip themselves with Islamic-related training, knowledge and skills. Halal tourism is often understood as Halal food-related services or merely refraining Muslims from being in contact with pork and alcohol. Tourism players should be reminded that Halal tourism is inclusive of Halal food and other non-forbidden activities. Although it depends on the travellers' intention to conform to the Islamic principles, tourism players need to understand what constitute Halal and Haram. Other than food, they should be aware of the need for prayer facilities (gender-segregated prayer rooms and ablution areas), safety (no Islamophobia), Ramadhan services, water-friendly washrooms and other necessities to better cater to the modern Muslim demand. It is recommended that they can learn from various Muslim-friendly tourism standards, such as those released by GMTI (about food, prayer, Ramadhan services, and recreation), Standard

Malaysia (about food, prayer, wellness, training at hotels and tour operators), Turkish Standards Institutions (about management, offerings, design, operations, and conduct), or Instituto Halal (about availability of Qur'an, prayer rug, Halal food, Qiblah, prayer times and rooms) (COMCEC, 2017).

Next, non-Muslim destinations should create new or improve existing tourism offerings. It is common that Muslim travellers still encounter inconveniences or discomfort even in Muslim-friendly destinations. Inconveniences cause by lack of Muslim-friendly facilities and services can be improved by creating or improving offerings. For example, tourism players should provide information about nearby mosques and prayer times (Papastathopoulos, 2022) via mobile apps like those that are available in Japan and Taiwan (Said et al., 2022), or provide bidet (hand shower) in toilet like those that is made available in Malaysia, or increase the ease of use of such facilities to avoid similar mistakes in South Korea (Said et al., 2022). Non-Muslim destinations could also refer to how Malaysia has consistently improved facilities and services for Muslim families. To ensure safety of women travellers, non-Muslim destinations can follow the UAE that was rated as the world's safest country in 2021 or to offer women-only accommodations and spa such as that offered in the Grand Hyatt Al Khobar Hotel in Saudi Arabia. As for discomfort cause by Islamophobia, tourism players could mitigate local people's Islamophobia towards Islam by increasing public knowledge on Islamic principles or demonstrating Muslim philosophies, civilisation and culture (Al-Ansi et al., 2022).

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