

Exploration of core motivational factors of Muslim friendly spa utilization among the spa goers

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Abstract

Wellness and spa industry become a part of revenue contributor to Malaysia. To attract more traveller and local to wellness and spa industry, the motivational factor plays crucial part in determining the customer behaviour. As Muslim friendly spa has been introduced as a new type of preference for spa, a study on core motivational factors of Muslim friendly spa utilization among spa goers will be conducted. A qualitative method will be conducted that focusing on in-depth interviews 10 different spa goers with different profession and demographic. The expected result will be factors in utilization of Muslim friendly spa product and services among spa goers.

Keywords:

Muslim Friendly Spa, Push Factor, Pull Factor, Wellness

1 Introduction

Wellness becomes major reason for a person to travel inside or outside the country. People nowadays, care more about healthy lifestyle, anti-aging, weight control, as well as beauty. As one of the sectors in wellness industry, spas are a place that people choose to have relaxation, beauty therapy, rejoice and rejuvenation after a tiring day of work. It is not only limited to women; man, nowadays tend to visit spa as the benefit of visiting spa have been known. The global Wellness Institute (GWI) released an industry report showed the global wellness tourism industry includes spas and more health-orientated treatment centres has generated revenues of US\$494 billion in 2013 while US\$94 billion represented the global spa industry with 7.7% of growth rate and European nations as dominance (Oxford Business Group, 2016).

In Malaysia, wellness and spas sector also included in major contributor to country revenue. According to Lim (2019), Malaysia is listed in the top 10 wellness tourism markets in the Asia-Pacific with expenditure standing at US\$5 billion (RM20.5 billion), and 8.3 million trips with a growing trend for wellness vacations and packages. The wellness sector become crucial to each country as the benefits can help in promoting good performance of human. The meaning of wellness is being worldwide used and the understanding can be differ based on the impact of globalization. For optimal well-being, wellness is defined as the integration, balance, and harmony of the mind, body, soul, and emotions. A research of Malay Muslim Malaysian conducted by Baharudin et al., (2015) revealed that, wellness encompassed of three categories which are (1) relationship with Allah: spiritual aspects; (2) self: physical, food and nutritional, psychological, financial, and occupational aspects and; (3) others: social, environmental, and cultural aspects. As spa sector growing and expanding, the treatment and services provided can attract tourist and also local to try and experience it.

The numbers of Muslim travellers come into Malaysia also increase year by year. This led Malaysia to be a Halal hub tourism as many sectors in Malaysia introduce the concept of Muslim friendly to convince Muslim traveller and local people in visiting Malaysia. In addition, majority Malaysian citizen is a Muslim and Islam is an official religion as stated in Malaysia constitution. As the fact Islam is major religion in Malaysia, the demands in Halal travel, food and stay become priority. According to Tourism Malaysia (2021), Islamic Tourism Malaysia (ITC) has introduced Muslim-friendly accommodation recognition (MFAR) to cater for Muslim travellers both locals and international. The demand in Halal product and services by Muslim consumer increasing as it's been a trend to become pretty and follow trend in Korean country. Malaysia has once again topped the list of best Muslim-friendly holiday destinations for Muslim travellers as mentioned in MasterCard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2021. As increasing numbers in Muslim travellers, Malaysia should prepare the environment or facilities and services according to Muslim faith-need. The facilities and services provided should not only focusing on hospitality such as in hotel and homestay. The spas sector should also be taken into consideration as this sector become well-known for health purposes not only for women but also for men.

There are a lot of conventional spas operated all around the world including Malaysia but increasing demand in Halal product and services makes the visitor or spa goers tend to choose Muslim friendly spa as their preference. The increasing demand in halal and Shari'ah compliant products and services bring the urges in spa sectors to introduce Muslim friendly spa as a new product that Muslim local and traveller can visit without doubt. Amanie Webmaster (2017) said that Shari'ah is an Islamic law based on the teachings of Qur'an and Sunnah, prescribing both religious and secular duties and sometimes, retributive penalties for law breaking. She further adds that the compliance with Shari'ah by a Muslim individual should cover all spheres of his life and Shari'ah is always working together with the very essence of humanity; various problems of human communities, throughout the globe are triggered by the individual, familial, social, and international ecosystem imbalance as a result of non-compliance to the Shariah.

Wang et al., (2016) proposed travel motivation influence travellers' cognitive image and cognitive image interacts with affective image to form individuals' expectations toward travel destinations. The study in motivational factor, tourist satisfaction and tourist preference are must things to do to in measuring or promoting Muslim friendly spa as a tourist product. The past study Rahman (2014) found Islamic attributes, destination attributes and quality of service as well as tourist's satisfaction are underlined as the major factors for Islamic tourist's destination loyalty in Malaysia. The spas practitioner can use the element gained by the researchers to improve their services and uses of product based on customer preference. A result from motivational study in Muslim friendly spa sector can help Muslim traveller and local to choose Muslim-friendly based services provided as their preference. Research focusing on the motivational factors in patronizing Muslim friendly spa nonetheless is very limited. There are descriptive accounts the spa sector, much promotional material and many claim, however little published academic research.

This research gap has been taken as an opportunity to investigate spa-goers behaviour and perception in the involvement of Muslim friendly spa activities in Malaysia. More specifically, this study will be examining the pull and push factors that motivate the spa goers undergo treatment and consume product and services provided at the Muslim friendly spa concept. The push factors are the intrinsic and intangible desire that drive the customer or tourist to visit the Muslim friendly spa while, pull factors are the vice versa.

Motivation research designed to probe consumers' minds in order to discover the deep, often subconscious or latent reasons and goals underlying everyday consumption and purchasing behaviors (Kozinets, 2010). This research is being made to explore the motivational factors; push-pull factors that lead a consumer or spa-goers in choosing Muslim friendly spa as their preference rather than other conventional spas. In tourism industry, it is important for a marketer to have in-depth understanding on customer motivations. The Halal industry in Malaysia shows increasing in trend. The demand for Halal products and services among the community is increasing due to the awareness gained to use halal products and services and Muslim faith-need. The result in the push-

pull factors can help spa practitioner to have good understanding on their customer or spa-goers preference in patronization of Halal or Shari'ah compliant spas products and services. As Malaysia introducing Muslim-friendly Tourism (MFT), Muslim friendly spa also can be as a product of MFT that can attract more travellers to Malaysia.

There a splendid amount of conventional spa operated all around the world. As Muslim friendly spa has been introduced as a new type of preference for spa, a study on core motivational factors of Muslim friendly spa will be conducted. The purposes of this study are to explore motivational factors related to spa goers on utilization of Muslim friendly spa products and services. This research will be conducted in Kuala Terengganu area which claims' as Muslim friendly spa. To complete this research, a few research questions will be generated:

- 1) What is the profiling of spa goers?
- 2) What are push-pull factors utilization on Muslim friendly spa products and services among spa goers?
- 3) What are understandings or perceptions of Muslim friendly spa among spa goers?

This research will provide the understanding and factors on utilization of Muslim friendly spa products and services among spa goers. Specifically, this research will benefits community and spa practitioner. By community, this study will help in expel the curiosity and doubt in consuming product and undergo treatment in Muslim friendly spa. Besides, for spa practitioner, the result from this research will provide deepen understanding on spa goers on demand related to Muslim friendly spa products and services.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Muslim Friendly Spa

According to the International Spa Association (ISPA), there are eight types of spas available around the world. The eight types of spas are club spa, day spa, cosmetic spa, cruise ship spa, destination spa, medical spa, mineral spring, resort or hotel spa and Muslim friendly spa. The Muslim friendly spa was a new addition to the spa types in Malaysia and in Malaysia, Muslim friendly spa also known as Muslimah spa. All the treatment and services provided by this spa are the same. There is no solid framework or amendment construct by authority and government regarding standard to be follows by spa operator and practitioners in Muslim friendly spa. To understand the concept of Muslim friendly spa in Malaysia and its contribution to spa sector and tourism industry, a few studies from different scholar on Muslim friendly spa have been reviewed.

Spas have become something that is not uncommon in society. The high demand for visiting spa among Muslims has also been a concern. Muslim customer concern on Islamic view in visiting spa and the guideline followed by spa operator to perform a treatment using product and services that is permitted by Islam. A research conducted by Yaman et al., (2012) showed that, there are relationship between health and beauty

treatment in Islamic context. It being conducted based on two selected case studies in Klang Valley Spa, which declared themselves as Muslim friendly spa and using on-site observation and survey questionnaire for methodology. The outcome of the study shows the familiarization of Islamic Spa Practices (ISP) among customer and the number of services and design that conducted based on ISP by each spa. Islamic Spa Practices (ISP) is the only practices approved by Malaysia Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) that follow guideline to be declared as Muslim friendly spa. In addition, the study gives details on the definition, history, and also basic type of spas provided. Besides, Yaman et al., (2012) also stated the criteria of forbidden services to be performed at spas as being mention in Islamic Spa Practices (ISP).

Furthermore, the usage of Islamic Spa Practices (ISP) itself is not enough to cope with the urgency on the real implementation or regulation by government. To be a spa with a full concept follow shariah, the product and services used must derived from criteria in Al-Quran and Hadith. An article by Halim and Mohd Hatta (2017) discussed on the issues on spa practices and criteria needed for Muslim in usage of spa products and services. The article also includes the explanation on the usage of beauty and personal care product regarding to Islamic context. She further added to the writing on concept of Maqasid shari'ah and its relation to Halal spa product. In order to make a spa that is Shari'ah compliant, five elements should be taken into consideration, which are protection of: (1) religion; (2) human life; (3) mind; (4) progeny or descendent and; (5) property. Other than Malaysian Standard (MS) to be used on control mechanism for product safety, Halim and Mohd Hatta (2017) also added a suggestion on spa products and services that are in line with Shari'ah requirement to be made into consideration by government.

While visiting spa centre and other wellness centre, the segregation or isolation between sexes often become concern, especially for women as they have to cover their aurah as directed by syara'. As the Muslim population increasing worldwide, this thing is taken into consideration. The introduction to Muslim Friendly Tourism in Malaysia has opened up space and opportunities in developing the spa sector in tourism industry and also to attract more Muslim traveller visiting our country. As our country moving toward Muslim Friendly Tourism, the right regulation or amendment on Muslim friendly spa should be form as for other sector in tourism such as hotel and homestay already have its own Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) to be followed in shariah compliant concept. As the study conducted, Jamaluddin et al., (2018) have proposed a conceptual framework on Muslim friendly spa. This study discussing on the direction of this sector as it shows an increasing in interest and potential for tourism market. Spa is divided into two basic element that is tangible element and intangible element. As stated in a conceptual framework by Jamaluddin et al., (2018), to be a Muslim Friendly spa, it must consist of Maqasid Shari'ah and Qawaid Al Fiqhiyyah to guide operators to be in line with Shari'ah concept and also the basic element that is tangible and intangible elements.

2.2 Motivational Concept: Push and Pull Factor

Motivation is a reason a person act on behaviour as the result from a stimulant. Research in tourist motivation has been practices in many past literature (Crompton, 1979; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). The research in motivational factor being conducted to study the psychological reason for a person choosing to temporary escape from their current situation. In tourism scope, push and pull factors become a popular motivational concept to be explore as its study the tourist behaviour on visiting a destination. Muslim friendly spa has become an activity that are familiar with today's society as the growth of this kind of spa. Motivational factor exploration in 'push' and 'pull' has been chosen as it is an effective approach for examining the tourist motives (Dann, 1977; Klenosky, 2002). By using this approach, the factors that are affecting the tourist behaviour on visiting Muslim friendly spa can be obtained and the result from this study can be contribute to promote Muslim Tourism Industry in Malaysia. A few reviews on past paper has been conducted.

To help in promoting and booming wellness and spa sector in Malaysia a study on tourist reason on visiting this kind of sector should be conducted. Hashemi et al., (2015) has conducted a research to facilitate understanding of the relationship among tourist motivation, satisfaction and revisit intention. Hashemi et al., (2015) has made a conceptual research framework on tourist revisit intention. Pull and push factor become an independent variable in Hashemi et al., (2015) study as this factor is a major variable that affect tourist to visit spa and wellness centre. The push factors including medical, experience, adventure, relaxation, sport/fitness and pull factor such as attraction become independent variables to support mediating variables that is international tourist motivation and satisfaction. As the result from listed push and pull factor in the study, spa operator and practitioner can use this factor to attract more tourist to visit their wellness and spa centre.

Study on motivational factors contribute in developing appropriate marketing strategy for spa sector market. Pull and push factor can be a key attribute to study the reason for human behaviour on choosing Muslim friendly spa. As a research conducted by Azman & Chan (2012), a qualitative study is use to provide deepen understanding on health and spa tourist' profiles and their key motivational factors using pull and push factor approach. The framework from this research are obtain from previous theory and literature in related field. The modification applied in this study are based on health and spa tourism. From past study and theory, push factors are internal motives/intrinsic factors, personal needs/wants and attitudes, perception/learning motivation. Contrast with pull factor, the motivation theory involved are external motives/extrinsic factors, external environment and destination attributes. Azman and Chan (2012) conducted a qualitative survey to have in-depth understanding in this factor. As a result, Azman and Chan (2012) conclude that push factor of needs/want is major factor significant to spa tourism over pull factor.

3 Proposed Research Methodology

To accomplish the objective from the research, qualitative research method will be conducted. A qualitative research method will be used to get deep information and understanding about push-pull factors and perception of Muslim friendly spa among spa goers. The spa goers will be asked open-ended question during interview session on their experience visiting Muslim friendly spa and their preference in Muslim friendly spa. A group of 10 spa goers' will be interviewed and the result from the interview will be documented and taped for further usage in writing and data analysis.

This study will be done by using the purposive sampling method. Boddy (2016) and Sandelowski (1995) concluded that a qualitative sample sizes of 10 may be adequate for sampling among a homogenous population. A group of 10 participants will be choose based on their experience in visiting Muslim friendly spa in range less than one year to more than five year experience. This study will be conducted in Terengganu. The participants will be chosen from vary demographics to get more information on their motivational factor. The participant will be undergoing in-depth interview on their views, experience, belief and motivation in specific manner regarding to their perspective on utilizing Muslim friendly spa product and services.

For data collection, the participant will be undergoing an interview session between 15 to 20 minutes separately. All notes, respond and thought from participant will be recorded by audio recorder tools. The interviews will be translated into words and will be used in research writing. For analysis purposes, the NVivo qualitative computer program will be applied. It will also involve critical thinking to synthesize the data, examine the interview from spa goers' insight and to corroborate with the findings with other data resources. To confirm the validity and reliability of the study, researcher will be referring to previous research, peer check and also comparing with past finding. The key point of push and pull factors will be structured from the reading in past study and will be used in interview session and as the data being analyze, the factor that motivate the spa goers to Muslim friendly spa will be known.

4 Conclusion

Understanding spa goer's preference and motivation on choosing type of spa may help in increasing wellness and spa industry market. In order to determine the pull and push factor affecting the preference of spa goers in choosing Muslim friendly spa, a qualitative research method will be done. The result from this research may resulted on core motivational factors of spa goers in utilization of Muslim friendly spa products and services.

5 About the author

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