

Tourist Perception of Japan as a Muslim-Friendly Destination

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ABSTRACT

Muslim-friendly destinations are those that offer Islamic aspects in terms of food, facilities, and accommodation. The term Muslim friendly was coined to make things easier for Muslim tourists travelling abroad to nations like Japan. Previous surveys have revealed that the majority of tourists are aware of the Muslim-friendly terms, but the concern is if all of the facilities given met the expectations of Muslim visitors to the country. Therefore, the study aims to investigate tourist perceptions of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination with all the components of halal. There were 327 respondents who participated in this study which had been conducted through a questionnaire in Google Form. This study focuses on the Malaysian community who have visited Japan before and those who have not. The findings revealed that every halal component including food, facilities, and accommodation is acceptable in terms of tourists' perceptions of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination. This knowledge is important because it allows Muslim tourists to travel to Japan without having to worry about preparing halal situation.

Keywords: *Islam, Sharia, Islamic Tourism/Halal Tourism*

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the research study. The investigation's goal is to learn about Muslim perception of Muslim tourism facilities in Japan. The background of the study, problem statement, research question, research objectives, scope of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, and summary are all included in this chapter.

Japan is becoming a more popular destination for Muslim tourists. In order to attract more Muslim visitors, Japan is restructuring its tourism industry to better serve the specific needs of Muslims (Hariyani, et al.,2017). Japan has long been a preferred destination for global travellers due to its unique culture, beautiful scenery, and spectacular urban landscapes (Sulong et al., 2020). According to Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), Japan is tolerant of different religions and becoming more attuned to the needs of Muslim visitors. Muslim-friendly facilities are *halal* restaurants, mosques/prayer spaces, accommodation, and shops. Hence, based on this, it is interesting to put forward a discussion about Muslim-friendly facilities tourism in Japan.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Almost any research strategy has the ability to benefit the entire community. The importance of the research must be emphasized in the research paper's introduction. It is necessary to emphasize how the research will benefit science and society, as well as its importance. Describe how the study contributed to larger field challenges first, then limiting it down to a particular group that will benefit from the studies. The goal of this study is to help Muslims recognize how important to keep Muslim facilities in Japan in order for Japan to expand its tourism for Muslim travellers.

Secondly, this research will give awareness to Muslim travellers when they travel to Japan. Additionally, the Muslim travellers will get benefit when they travel to Japan because

they have known about the Muslim-friendly facilities that Japan has. To guarantee that tourists are aware of the Muslim-friendly facilities, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) should be consulted. What matters is that the findings of this study can help MOTAC resolve the issue of introducing Muslim travellers to Japan.

Thirdly, this research will assist in the completion of the course subject. The researcher will acquire as much as feasible information and data to complete the study as they will have the opportunity to learn to collect and analyse data. The researcher may also gain knowledge and information on the topic studied which can be used in the future.

Fourthly, this research will recognize customer perception as a medium for Muslim perceptions of Muslim tourism and the satisfaction of Islamic facilities in Japan.

The following are the main objectives of this research study:

1. To study the relationship between food and tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination.
2. To determine the relationship between facilities and tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination.
3. To identify the relationship between accommodation and tourist perception in Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Muslim-Friendly Food

Food is a significant component of tourism (Maknu et al., 2021). The availability of *halal* food and beverages is common in Muslim destinations and Muslim tourists demand *halal* food and beverages when they visit non-Muslim destinations (Verbeke et al., 2013). Most *halal*-related studies about Japan concentrated on its people, industry, and local *Halal* food (Kojima, 2014). YouGov, a United Kingdom based-research company, found that Japanese food is among the top three most popular cuisines worldwide (“Survey,” 2019). The study has also shown that seventy- three percent of Malaysians liked Japanese food (“YouGov.” 2018), mainly street food, which is aplenty and readily available throughout Japan. Street foods resonate with the local culture. One must wander the streets that bustle with life and the smell of street foods to experience the local culture (Maknu et al., 2021). Many *halal* restaurants have opened in Japan's major cities, including Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, and have received *halal* certification. Popular Japanese foods such as Udon and Ramen are certified *halal* at both Narita and Kansai International Airports, allowing Muslim travellers to enjoy Japanese cuisine (Salleh et al., 2019).

However, every Muslim food must follow the Islamic law that has been set. This is because, even though it is referred to be Muslim-friendly food, there are restaurants that serve both *halal* and non-*halal* meals. This has made it difficult for Muslim tourists to have confidence in the food and to eat it. Every *halal* food must go through certain processes where it is in accordance with the right Sharia. Firstly, they must have the *halal* certification to avoid any doubt of Muslim travellers to eat it. The *halal* certification system has the concept of “from farm to fork.” All stages in the food supply chain, through raw materials, processing and distribution should be *halal* (Kitayama, et al., 2018). At all stages of the food supply chain, there are many requirements based on Islamic beliefs for *halal* certification. A *halal* certification agency licenses a company by ensuring that it complies with *halal* food rules. At the stage of preparing raw materials, livestock in farms should be isolated from pigs and bred by using feeds corresponding to *halal* rules (Kitayama, et al., 2018). Therefore, the difficulty in getting *halal* ingredients is a frequent issue nowadays, and it affects the process of obtaining *halal* certifications. It is difficult to secure *halal* in logistics from manufacturers to retailers or restaurants because almost all products are delivered with non-*halal* products (Kitayama, et al.,

2018). A few distributors take steps to assure *halal* food delivery, but most do not because of the high expenses of complying with *halal* food laws.

According to (Sugibayashi, et al., 2017) because of the restricted availability of *halal* ingredients, the lack of *halal* menus, and ingredient labels that did not offer enough information to determine if it was permissible to ingest, 44 percent of university students said they had difficulty locating food and beverages. This shows that, although Japan provides Muslim-friendly food services, most of them do not follow proper sharia and the number of people who receive a *halal* certification is minimal. This is the concern of Muslim tourists to get *halal* food properly. Even on university campuses where many foreign students attend, Muslim students reported difficulties finding *halal* foods (Sugibayashi, et al., 2017).

According to (Hariani, et al., 2017), non-Islamic countries have a challenging issue with *halal* restaurants and hotels. The difficulty in finding *halal* food is still a topic of discussion today. Although it has been developed in Japan and other countries, the number of adherents is tiny, and most Muslim travellers find it difficult to obtain *halal* food that complies with Islamic law. This problem arises because, even though some restaurants have a *halal* certificate, they continue to offer non-*halal* food. Due to concerns about the meals provided, Muslim travellers have found it difficult to enter. That is why to prevent contamination with non-*halal* foods, they manufacture frozen foods for Muslims in the early morning before processing non-*halal* foods (Kitayama, et al., 2018). Even though this step has been done, it raises issues regarding hygiene in the food preparation process, as it is possible that the cooking utensils used or the processing location for *halal* and non-*halal* food are the same. It is a question mark if the food cleaning is not mixed with two types of food.

This shows that, although Japan and other countries provide Muslim-friendly food, there are some important issues that travellers, especially Muslim tourists, should consider. Restaurants which *halal* food are required to receive a *halal* certificate from specified organizations. Furthermore, a country's lack of *halal* restaurants is a huge concern for travellers, especially for the Muslims. This is an important problem to highlight because there is a small number of *halal* restaurants in Japan, which makes it difficult for Muslim travellers to obtain *halal* food.

Muslim-Friendly Facilities

Several studies have been conducted to examine the availability of Islamic attributes in tourism, including those who found that Islamic attributes have both tangible and intangible aspects. Significant aspects including the availability of prayer facilities (mosque/prayer room, *Quran* and qibla, Muslim-friendly toilets), and *halal* food, while intangible attributes include Islamic entertainment, Islamic dress code, adherence to Islamic morals, and *Azan*. The attributes of Islam are divided into two, namely: the physical nature and the non-physical nature. The physical properties consist of prayer facilities, *halal* food, the *Quran*, and Muslim-friendly toilets. Non-physical attributes include the availability of segregated services, sharia TV channels, sharia entertainment devices, and arts that do not depict the human form (Fajriyati et al., 2020).

Prayer room availability, a daily need, is another important factor for Muslim *travellers* (Saville and Mahbubi, 2021). For example, in Osaka, a prayer area may be found in one of the city's retail malls. Furthermore, there are more *surau* accessible for Muslims at both Narita and Kansai International Airports (Salleh et al., 2019). Malaysians adore visiting Japan. Due to visa-free travel and the availability of numerous Muslim-friendly facilities such as *surau* and *halal*-certified eateries prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, Japan has welcomed more visitors from Malaysia (Maknu et al., 2021).

Muslim-Friendly Accommodation

The number of Sharia-compliant hotels is growing in the *halal* tourism market and can be found in Muslim and non-Muslim destinations. Some of these destinations promote Sharia-compliant hotels as Muslim-friendly hotels (Battour et al., 2018). Without a norm, being a Muslim-friendly hotel looks different from one hotel to the next (Salleh, et al., 2019). Muslim-friendly hotels, for example, provide facilities for Muslim visitors that are all in accordance with Islamic principles, such as Qibla direction, prayer mats, *halal* meals, alcohol-free drinks, and prayer rooms with the call to prayer (Battour et al., 2018). The Muslim-friendly hotels offer amenities such as core services, augmented services, and actual services. For example, core services consist of key benefits to hotel guests, such as clean rooms and *halal* food. Actual services include more Islamic services than core services, namely prayer times, separate recreational facilities for women and men, *surau*, and mosque locations (Salleh, et al., 2014). Finally, the augmented services consist of an extensive Islamic service (Salleh et al., 2019).

According to this study, Muslim tourists confront various challenges in terms of lodging when going to non-Muslim countries, including the idea of *halal* tourism, which is now being contested in the literature. Many experts consider *halal* tourism to be Islamic tourism, which is debatably harmful (Battour and Ismail, 2016). In early 2019, there was a delicate issue in Indonesia where the Balinese population, which is known for its Hinduism culture, fiercely opposed the notion of *halal* tourism and its execution. Similarly, a rejection storm occurred in the tourist region of Lake Toba, North Sumatra, Indonesia, in mid-2019. When asked, the party's response is the same: they are concerned that the notion of *halal* tourism would annihilate the traditional culture. They do not want to see local religious values being replaced with Islamic religious beliefs. The erroneous perception of *halal* tourism emerges because non-local Muslims are unable to distinguish between *halal* and Islamic tourism.

This study looked at the negative impact of perceived risk on behavioural intention. Traveling to non-Islamic countries such as Thailand (Tavitiyaman and Qu, 2013), as well as Muslim countries such as Turkey, as suggested by Schoreder and Pennington-Gray (2014) in the context of Olympic games travel (Cetinsoz and Ege, 2013). However, there has been little research into Muslims' perceptions of *halal* risk, as well as their perspectives of Islamic principles in non-Islamic countries. As a result, the purpose of this study is to evaluate perceived value, which is primarily based on the Islamic characteristics outlined by (Eid and El-Gohary, 2014), as well as presumed *halal* hazards, in affecting Muslims' intentions to travel to non-Islamic countries.

As a result of present and projected levels of engagement, Islamic tourism provides tremendous potential for the tourist sector globally, especially in Japan. Satisfying the demand, however, offers difficulties due to the unique characteristics and demands of Muslims as travellers as a result of their faith. Outside of the Islamic world, destination authorities and tourism businesses must understand these characteristics, take the necessary steps to meet as many expectations as potential, be eligible, and effective with Muslim audiences. Simultaneously, private businesses and the government must be aware of non-Muslim visitors in order to avoid inconvenience or alienation. Residents are also key stakeholders, and there is a risk of conflict in their interactions with Muslim visitors, which complicates management and resolution.

Tourist Perception

The reasons, attitudes, and views of visitors have a significant impact on the destination choosing process. Perception, according to (Gnanapala, 2015), is the act of selecting, organizing, and interpreting inputs into a meaningful and cohesive image. Motivation arouses

the visitors' desire, then guides them to seek out the appropriate items and services to satisfy their want. As a result, people go to other places in order to consume various commodities and services. Tourists will be happy if their specific demands are met throughout their vacation consuming in the place; or else, they will be disappointed. Tourists will be ecstatic if their vacation experiences exceed their expectations (Gnanapala, 2015). Satisfaction aids in the creation, development, and maintenance of positive public perception and goodwill for a tourist destination or resort. Consumer satisfaction is a measure of how well a destination's products and services meet or exceed customer expectations. Customer satisfaction is often regarded as a key performance measure for a successful business operation (Gnanapala, 2015).

The process of evaluation is heavily influenced by their perceptions of service quality and product performance (Gnanapala, 2015). Religion is one of the cultural elements that influences perception and behaviour. As a result, religion has an impact on how individuals perceive others. (Battour, et al., 2018) found that people are more relaxed with those who have the same social and cultural surroundings. Muslims might also go to non-Muslim nations for recreational, religious, and educational purposes, according to the *Quran*. However, Islam has urged its adherents to refrain from engaging in any action that violates Islamic law (or sharia), since this might taint their religion (Maknu, et al., 2021).

When visiting non-Muslim nations, Muslims must follow Islam's precepts, such as eating and drinking *halal* (permissible) food and beverages whenever and wherever feasible. In other words, Muslims must abstain from taking any food or beverage that is *haram* (illegal) or *syubhah* (questionable) (Maknu et al., 2021). Because Islam forbids it, a religious Muslim does not consume alcohol, eat pork, or engage in usury transactions (Aji, et al., 2021). *Halal* risk is defined by the perception of *halal* availability and Islamic worship facilities in non-Islamic nations, whereas Islamic value is defined as the value felt by Muslims regarding physical and non-physical features (Aji, et al., 2021). Muslim tourists, on the other hand, are required to follow certain attire, behaviour, eating, and prayer guidelines (Salleh, et al., 2014).

Research Hypothesis

The literature reviews highlighted that the independent variables like Muslim-friendly food, Muslim-friendly facilities, and Muslim-friendly accommodation do affect the tourist perception in Japan. Therefore, the study plans to examine the level of effect among these variables. Based on the literature discussed, the hypotheses of this study are summarized in the following manner:

- H₁** There is a significant relationship between food and tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination.
- H₂** There is a significant relationship between facilities and tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination.
- H₃** There is a significant relationship between accommodation and tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination.

Research Framework

Figure 1 below shows the research framework for the study.

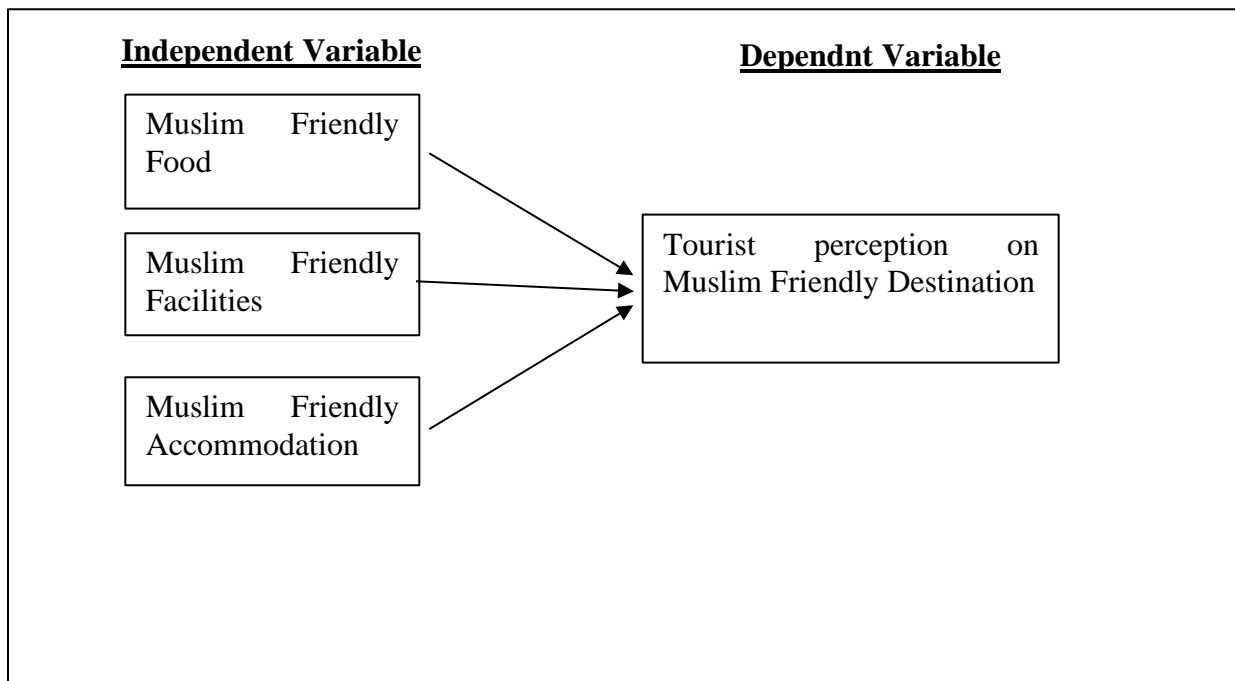


Figure 1: Research Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A quantitative approach was chosen for this study. According to (Aliage and Guderson, 2002), quantitative study explained the gathering of data that has been broken down using scientific methods (specific measurements). Quantitative approaches are used to generate numerical data.

The questionnaire was used to collect primary data in this study. The question must be relevant to the research topic, which is the perception of tourists of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination. Quantitative research is used to quantify a problem by generating numerical data that can be analysed statistically. This is used to assess attitudes, opinions, behaviours, and other specific factors, as well as to extrapolate results from a larger population sample. This is due to the fact that quantitative data can help a researcher gain more confidence in a trend by allowing researchers to derive numerical facts.

Data Collection

Data collection refers to the process of gathering, measuring, and evaluating correct insights for research purposes using established and approved procedures. A researcher's hypothesis may be evaluated based on the facts gathered. Data collection is the practice of gathering, measuring, and evaluating correct insights for research purposes using established and approved procedures. A researcher's hypothesis may be evaluated based on the data collection technique used. To create questionnaires, the Online Google platform, which is a digital platform, was used. Questionnaires were distributed through online apps such as Whatsapp, Facebook, and Instagram to make it easier for respondents to determine the distribution of questionnaires, particularly those who have visited Japan and seen the impact of Muslim travellers' desire to visit *halal* non-Muslim countries. Respondents were instructed to explain how to eliminate social desirability bias. The survey was conducted in two intermediate languages: Malay and English. The information was gathered in less than a month. The answer should take no more than ten minutes to complete. Tourists were asked to fill out surveys, and researchers inquire about their leisure time. The researchers asked for collaboration from the entire group. The researchers used WhatsApp and Facebook to make survey distribution easier for academics.

Sampling

According to Bhardwaj (2019), sampling is defined as a procedure to select a sample from an individual or from a large group of a population for a certain kind of research purpose. There are two types of sampling methods, which are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling means that every item in the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample (Taherdoost, 2018). Non-probability sampling, on the other hand, is a sort of sampling in which each member of the population has an unknown chance of being chosen for the sample (Bhardwaj, 2019).

The researcher selected respondents from each Malaysian community using a random sampling method which is probability sampling with some having prior travel experience to Japan and others having no prior travel experience to Japan. The survey was intended to be completed by 384 people, according to the researchers.

Data Analysis

There were two types of data analysis used in this study, namely frequency analysis, descriptive statistic and Pearson correlation analysis. The data obtained was analysed using SPSS version 22.

FINDINGS

Results of Frequency Analysis

Table 1: Frequency Analysis

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Demographic Profile		
Gender		
Male	146	44.6
Female	181	55.4
Age		
20-29 years old	136	41.6
30-39 years old	110	33.6
40-49 years old	57	17.4
50 years old	24	7.3
Races		
Malay	302	92.4
Chinese	14	4.3
Indian	4	1.2
Others	7	2.1
Marital Status		
Single	182	55.7
Married	145	44.3
Occupation		
Student	93	28.4
Government sector	59	18.0
Private sector	113	34.6
Housewife	31	9.5
Self-Employee	31	9.5

Income		
Below RM1000	104	31.8
RM1001-RM2000	22	6.7
RM2001-RM3000	42	12.8
RM3001-RM4000	35	10.7
RM4000 and above	124	37.9
Experiencing of Travelling to Japan		
Yes	206	63.0
No	121	37.0

Results of Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Hypothesis	P-Value	Results (Supported/Not Supported)
H₁: There is a positive relationship between Muslim friendly food and tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination.	.000	H₁ is supported.
H₂: There is a positive relationship between Muslim friendly facilities and tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination.	.000	H₂ is supported.
H₃: There is a positive relationship between Muslim friendly accommodation and tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination.	.000	H₃ is supported.

Table 2 shows the results of Pearson Correlation Analysis by the hypothesis, p-value and result. For H₁, there is a positive relationship between Muslim-friendly food and tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination with a value of .000. Then, for H₂ there is a positive relationship between Muslim-friendly facilities and tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination with a value of .000. Lastly, for H₃ there is a positive relationship between Muslim-friendly accommodation and tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim friendly destination with a value of .000.

Results of Descriptive Statistics

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	
Muslim Food	Friendly	I understand the concept of <i>halal</i> food.	4.65	.633
		<i>Halal</i> Food restaurant are easily found in Japan.	3.43	.950
		I feel confident with the restaurant that have <i>halal</i> logo.	4.23	.795
		I feel confident to eat <i>halal</i> food at the same place serves non-<i>halal</i> food.	2.66	1.319
		The convenience of getting <i>halal</i> food is easily found in Japan.	3.57	.975
Muslim Facilities	Friendly	Prayer facilities are easily found in Japan.	3.46	.932
		Prayer facilities follow the correct Islamic sharia and do not mix with other religions.	3.87	.943
		The Muslim friendly hotel provides prayer mat in each room.	3.30	1.072
		There are many mosques in Japan.	3.14	.937
		Muslim friendly toilets are easily found in Japan, where every toilet provides a water pipe for each room.	3.32	1.120
Muslim Accommodation	Friendly	Muslim friendly accommodation is easily found in Japan.	3.40	.992
		Accommodation follows the correct Islamic Sharia and does not mix with other religions.	3.21	1.144
		The hotel assures that the room is clean and well maintained.	4.39	.786
		The hotel assures us that beer is not stored in the hotel room's refrigerator.	3.36	1.112
		There is a separate room or floor for unmarried couple between male and female.	3.18	1.177

Tourist Perception	Muslim friendly services and facilities are available at the destination.	3.62	.928
	There was a Muslim friendly holiday in Japan, and it was safe destination.	4.04	.866
	There is an awareness of <i>halal</i> and it is used in destination marketing.	4.01	.821
	Muslim Friendly is well-received in Japan's society.	4.06	.832

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

As for recommendations for future researchs, the researcher suggested for this study to provide insights for future studies in order to improve them. Improvements can be made by providing vision and focus on other researchers so it can help to achieve the goal of the study. This is because the researcher mentioned that a small percentage of respondents did not understand the question and thus chose not to respond or responded without thinking, for example. Therefore, with a summary and simple information, the questions posed should attract the attention of the respondents.

After that, it is recommended to provide questions that facilitate the respondent. The vocabulary or questions used must be simple to comprehend. This is because the respondent will not understand the question if the question is hard and thus choose not to respond to the questionnaire.

Last recommendation is focus on how to get participants to fill out the questionnaire without pressure. This is to ensure that the answers given are relevant and not offered at random. The researcher must ask the respondents some questions before distributing the questionnaire to ensure that they are truly seeking to answer the questions. In addition, the researcher must persuade respondents to include personal information and skills in order to complete the questionnaire without fear of personal information being leaked because their data will be kept private.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has been accomplished to discover the tourist perceptions of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination. Three independent variables, which is Muslim-friendly food, Muslim-friendly facilities and Muslim-friendly accommodation have been chosen to examine their relationships with the dependent variable, which is tourist perception of Japan as a Muslim-friendly destination. A total of 327 respondents from the age of 20 years old until 50 years and above were selected from all the states in Malaysia to examine their perceptions about all the components of *halal* destination in Japan. Based on research findings, the independent variables of Muslim-friendly food, Muslim-friendly facilities and Muslim-friendly accommodation were found to influence the dependent variable, which is tourist perception with positive correlations between variables.

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