



**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUSH AND PULL MOTIVATION FACTORS
AND INTENTION TO VISIT MUSLIM-FRIENDLY HOSPITALS FOR MEDICAL
TOURISM AMONG MALAYSIAN MUSLIMS**

By

RIZQ NADIAH BINTI SOBANI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of
Science**

January 2023

IPPH 2023 1

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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Chair : Associate Professor Elistina Abu Bakar, PhD
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The Muslim-friendly medical tourism holds a great potential in assisting with the post-covid efforts for the country. As of current literature, there are no prior research on what drives Malaysian Muslim consumers to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals. This study proposes the effects of push and pull motivational factors on the intention to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals for medical tourism. A structured questionnaire was designed and distributed to 400 respondents who were sampled through multistage random sampling throughout the five zones in Malaysia: North Zone, East Zone, West Zone, South Zone and Borneo Zone. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the data in examining the relationship between the push factors (religiosity, electronic word-of-mouth, and novelty-seeking), pull factors (Islamic attributes, doctor practice, environment and safety, and tourism facilities) and the intention to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals for medical tourism. The result of the analysis denoted that religiosity, Islamic attributes, and environment and safety were the main push and pull factors that respectively predict the consumers intention to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals for medical tourism. Electronic word-of-mouth, novelty-seeking, doctor practice, and tourism facilities were however found to not able to predict the intention. This study can serve as a framework to enhance Malaysia's Muslim-friendly hospitals to cater to medical tourists, both locally and internationally. The findings of this research can also contribute to the government and industry players in their post-covid efforts to revive local medical tourism industry and subsequently boost the Malaysian economy.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**HUBUNGAN ANTARA FAKTOR PENOLAK DAN FAKTOR PENARIK
DENGAN NIAT MELAWAT HOSPITAL MESRA MUSLIM UNTUK
PELANCONGAN PERUBATAN DALAM KALANGAN UMAT ISLAM
DI MALAYSIA.**

Oleh

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Pengerusi : Prof. Madya Elistina Abu Bakar, PhD
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Pelancongan perubatan mesra Muslim memiliki potensi besar dalam membantu usaha pasca covid untuk negara. Menurut literatur terkini, belum terdapat kajian mengenai faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi umat Islam Malaysia mengunjungi hospital mesra Muslim. Kajian ini mengusulkan kesan faktor motivasi pendorong dan penarik terhadap tujuan mengunjungi hospital mesra Muslim untuk pelancongan perubatan. Satu soal selidik berstruktur telah direka bentuk dan diedarkan kepada 400 orang responden yang telah dipilih melalui pensampelan rawak berbilang tahap di seluruh lima zon di Malaysia; Zon Utara, Zon Timur, Zon Barat, Zon Selatan dan Zon Borneo. Analisis regresi berganda digunakan untuk menganalisis data dalam mengkaji hubungan antara faktor pendorong (keagamaan, pemasaran elektronik mulut ke mulut, dan pencarian kebaruan), faktor penarik (sifat-sifat Islam, amalan doktor, persekitaran dan keselamatan, serta kemudahan pelancongan) dan tujuan mengunjungi hospital mesra Muslim untuk pelancongan perubatan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahawa keagamaan, sifat-sifat Islam, serta persekitaran dan keselamatan merupakan faktor pendorong dan penarik utama yang masing-masing meramalkan tujuan pengguna mengunjungi hospital mesra Muslim untuk pelancongan perubatan. Walau bagaimanapun, pemasaran elektronik mulut ke mulut, pencarian kebaruan, amalan doktor, dan kemudahan pelancongan tidak berkeupayaan meramalkan tujuan tersebut. Kajian ini boleh berfungsi sebagai rangka kerja untuk meningkatkan hospital mesra Muslim di Malaysia bagi memenuhi keperluan pelancong perubatan, di dalam dan di luar negara. Penemuan kajian ini juga boleh menyumbang kepada kerajaan dan pemain industri dalam usaha pasca covid mereka

untuk memulihkan industri pelancongan perubatan tempatan dan seterusnya meningkatkan ekonomi Malaysia.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 20th January 2023 to conduct the final examination of Rizq Nadiyah Binti Sobani on his (her) thesis entitled “The Relationship Between Push and Pull Motivation Factors and Intention to Visit Muslim-Friendly Hospitals for Medical Tourism among Malaysian Muslims” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the (insert the name of relevant degree).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BIMP-EAGA	Brunei Darussalam–Indonesia–Malaysia–Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area
COMCEC	Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EWOM	Electronic Word-of-mouth
IMANA	Islamic Medical Association of North America
KMO	Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin
MHTC	Malaysia Health Travel Council
NRP	National Recovery Plan
RM	Ringgit Malaysia
SD	Standard Deviation
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TOL	Tolerance
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In this era of globalization, the rapid advancement of technology has made us more globally 'connected' as we have seen travelling between continents becoming much more efficient and plausible, flourishing the two or more-way economies between various countries. According to Prince (2016), the growth of many economic sectors has resulted in the emergence of multiple industries and medical tourism. Medical tourism has been defined as travelling overseas to gain care and health treatment, a phenomenon in both the tourism and healthcare sectors (Enderwick & Nagar, 2011; Yu & Ko, 2012; Subramanian & Vachharajani, 2021). The market for medical tourism has been developing at an incredible pace, promptly becoming among the world's fastest developing fields with a growth of approximately 30% annually (Esiyok et al., 2017; Zarei & Maleki, 2019).

A highly growing and in-demand segment in the medical tourism field is the Muslim-friendly medical tourism. Muslim-friendly medical tourism is where individuals temporarily travel outside their regular environment mainly in search of medical treatments at hospitals that practice Islamic principles in delivery of their services while experiencing the general tourism aspects (Rahman, Sarker & Hassa, 2021). As the number of Muslim populations increases worldwide, so does the demands from Muslim tourists—especially those from North Africa and the Middle East countries where they uphold high Islamic faiths, making them a targeted market segment by many medical tourist destinations (Kadir et al., 2015; Ryan, 2015; Elasrag, 2016; Rahman, Sarker & Hassan, 2021).

Hospitals worldwide can all serve Muslim medical tourists, however, these tourists have certain requirements and needs that can be fulfilled by Islamic medical tourism providers such as the Muslim-friendly hospitals. Muslim-friendly hospitals are where medical services are aligned with the Islamic teachings or principles of Sharia. Muslim-friendly is a term that signifies the convenience of services and facilities which caters explicitly to Muslim needs, as Muslims have religious obligations (ibadah) that must be fulfilled (Rahman, Zailani & Musa, 2017).

Among those needs provided by Muslim-friendly hospitals is the availability of halal food, space for prayer, and gender-separated wards; where at the same time, Muslim medical tourism creates excellent ways to develop a better understanding of Islam among the community members in both ethics and cultural aspects (Rahman & Zailani, 2016). The incorporation of halal in food being served during the treatment where animals such as porcine and its

products, blood, and meat of animals that are not butchered according to Sharia, dead animal meat, disease-carrying insects like cockroaches and flies, and harmful animals like snakes and scorpions are haram to be consumed (Mahjom et al., 2011). Besides food, Rahman et al., (2017) explained that medicines consumed by Muslims in Islam should not only contain ingredients allowed by the Sharia but also be clean, pure, hygienic, and good quality. Other than that, based on the research conducted by COMCEC (2016), Muslim-Friendly Hospital services include allocating qibla direction in the rooms and considering the staff dress code, which covers their *aurah*. Furthermore, Muslim-friendly hospitals provide comfortable places for Muslim patients and staff to perform their daily prayers (Battour, 2016).

Malaysia is a country where Islam is the official religion, with most of the population being Muslims. It has also been an Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) member since 1969 (Rahman & Zailani, 2016). As one of the world's leading halal hubs, Malaysia's role as a Muslim-friendly medical tourism destination mainly focuses on medical tourists from other Muslim countries, particularly those from the Middle East and Indonesia, where the availability of various local facilities aligned with Islamic practices are highlighted (Henderson, 2015). Malaysia has also been pursuing becoming a medical service hub at world-class levels (Nwagbara & Rasiah, 2015). Thus, many clinics and private hospitals have been providing high-quality medical and healthcare services, sparking an enormous growth in Muslim-friendly healthcare practices in Malaysia.

More than 40 local private hospitals focused at cities like Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and Johor offer high-quality Muslim-friendly medical care services for local and international patients (Rahman et al., 2017). For example, hospitals under KPJ Healthcare Berhad in Selangor provide affordable Islamic medical treatments and accommodations for patients' families in nearby hotels. They also list nearby attractions and shopping malls to ease the patients and their families. Another hospital such as Al-Islam Specialist Hospital in Kampung Baru, Kuala Lumpur, has a building that is solely for patients' family accommodation, and it is located in front of the famous Kampung Baru Jamek Mosque and next to a Muslim-friendly hotel, Tamu Hotel and Suites which serves as a hotspot for tourism. Many other Muslim-friendly hospitals also provide services for medical travel in terms of accommodations and attractions near their facilities.

Subsequently, medical tourism in Malaysia saw a surge in medical tourists, with 643,000 patient arrivals only in 2011, totaling 127 million USD. This amount increased over the years, where in just 2018 alone, 1.2 million medical tourists' arrivals generated a revenue of 362 million USD for the country (Thomas, 2019). In the booming worldwide development of medical tourism in these recent years, Malaysia has also presented itself as among the top international medical tourism destination surpassing the United States (MHTC, 2020).

According to Sherene Azli, the chief executive officer of Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC), Malaysia managed to draw in 1.3 million medical tourists compared to the United States, with only 550,000 inbound patients as of 2019. She also mentioned that with this achievement, Malaysia was ranked as the top medical tourism destination by the United Kingdom-based International Medical Travel Journal (IMTJ). Malaysia was also crowned as 'destination of the year' by IMTJ for three consecutive years in terms of total inbound medical travellers (MHTC, 2017). The same source also mentioned that modern medical facilities, competitive medical fees, and state-of-the-art medical centers are the vital factors that make Malaysia a renowned medical tourism destination. Another essential aspect that makes Malaysia a prominent destination for medical tourism is that, compared to other countries, medical tourism is monitored and facilitated by the Ministry of Health (MHTC, 2016).

1.2 Problem Statement

The medical tourism industry is a significant segment of Malaysia's economy, with a revenue of 2.93 billion in 2019 and a total of 1.2 million healthcare travellers (MHTC, 2022). Due to Malaysia being a Muslim-majority country and a global halal hub, the country has seen a surge of Muslim medical tourist seeking medical treatment that aligns with the Islamic teachings (Sarwar, 2013). However, this industry has been severely affected by the spread of global pandemic coronavirus diseases 2019 or COVID-19 that originated in Wuhan, China (WHO, 2020). This has negatively affected the medical tourism industry both in Malaysia and worldwide. The wide spread of the virus caused the local government to impose Movement Control Order (MCO) and total lockdowns to curb the disease. The MCO and pandemic had devastating effects on the global economy. According to the International Monetary Fund (2020), this recession showed the most severe economic decline since the Great Depression, estimated to be worse than the Great Recession in 2008-2009 (Winck, 2020).

This, of course, brought devastating downturns to the Malaysian economy. The finance minister at the time stated that the country's economic growth by the first two weeks of MCO, which was previously at 2%, declined to 0.5%. Malaysia's tourism was hit hardest with a loss of more than RM3.37 billion for the first two months of the year, as said by Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin in a press conference on March 13 (Dzulfikly, 2020). Furthermore, Malaysia has also, since of 16th of March, closed its international borders to curb the pandemic. This caused medical tourists to not be able enter the country, resulting in a sharp decline in medical tourists. Due to this, the industry must find new ways to support itself in the short and long term. This serves as the driver of the study, to find how improvements in the Muslim-friendly medical tourism can be made to support the revival of the Malaysian economy.

One of the steps to recovery encouraged by Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri at that time was to enhance domestic tourism to cope

with the loss in the industry throughout MCO. Kumpulan Perubatan Johor (KPJ) president and managing director Ahmad Shahizam Mod Shariff also stated that following the pandemic's downside, efforts to revive domestic and international medical tourism are crucial and boost Malaysia's economy (Chin, 2021). With closed international borders, it has been realized that the domestic medical tourism industry also plays a significant role in supporting economic growth and should be focused on in the effort to revive the economy. It is essential to highlight that this current study was conducted during the COVID-19 lockdown period, centred on domestic medical tourism within the country.

The Muslim-friendly healthcare services which is reliant on international medical tourism should opt to boost their appeal to local patients and consumers so they can improve local medical tourism. Corresponding to the percentage of Muslims in Malaysia, which accounts for about 61.3% of the population, the Muslim-friendly medical centres can appeal to this majority group. Thus, it is crucial to study the local patients' intention to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals for medical treatments and the determinants that influence their choice of medical tourism. Intention towards a destination is strengthened by an individual's motivations to engage in a particular type of tourism (Chi & Phuong, 2021). Despite the abundant of revisit intention studies, the area of study in motivation-future intention relation is still lacking in the Islamic medical tourism research.

According to Thant (2022), it is significant to understand how motivation factors function to develop an individual's aim of deciding specific destinations—in this context, the intention to visit these Muslim-friendly hospitals for medical tourism. A commonly used framework to relate with motivation in tourism research is the push and pull motivation theory, which is a popular theory in the tourism field. However, more research needs to be done on its use in the Islamic medical tourism research. Hence, by using the push and pull motivation theory this research intends to fill in the gap and uncover the unexploited part in this area of study. The relationship between religiosity, electronic word of mouth, and novelty seeking as push factors, and Islamic attributes, doctor practice, environment and safety, and tourism facilities as pull factors, as well as intention to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals for medical tourism which were previously unfamiliar will be uncovered.

1.3 Research Questions

The research aims to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the level of religiosity, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), novelty-seeking, Islamic attributes, doctor practice, environment and safety, tourism facilities, and intention to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals for medical tourism among Muslims in Malaysia?

- ii. How do the push factors (religiosity, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), novelty-seeking) affect the intention to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals for medical tourism among Muslims in Malaysia?
- iii. How do the pull factors (Islamic attributes, environment and safety, doctor practice, and tourism facilities) affect the intention to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals for medical tourism among Muslims in Malaysia?
- iv. What is the most significant factor contributing to the intention to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals for medical tourism among Muslims in Malaysia?

1.4 Research Objectives

General Objective:

To determine the relationship between the push and pull motivation factors and the intention to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals among Muslims in Malaysia.

Specific Objectives:

- I. To determine the level of religiosity, word-of-mouth (WOM), novelty-seeking, Islamic attributes, doctor practice, environment and safety, hospital services quality, and tourism facilities among Muslims in Malaysia.
- II. To determine the relationship between the push factors (religiosity, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), novelty-seeking) and intention to visit.
- III. To determine the relationship between the pull factors (Islamic attributes, doctor practice, environment and safety, hospital services quality, and tourism facilities) and intention to visit.
- IV. To determine the most significant factor contributing to the intention to visit Muslim-friendly hospitals among Malaysian Muslims.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

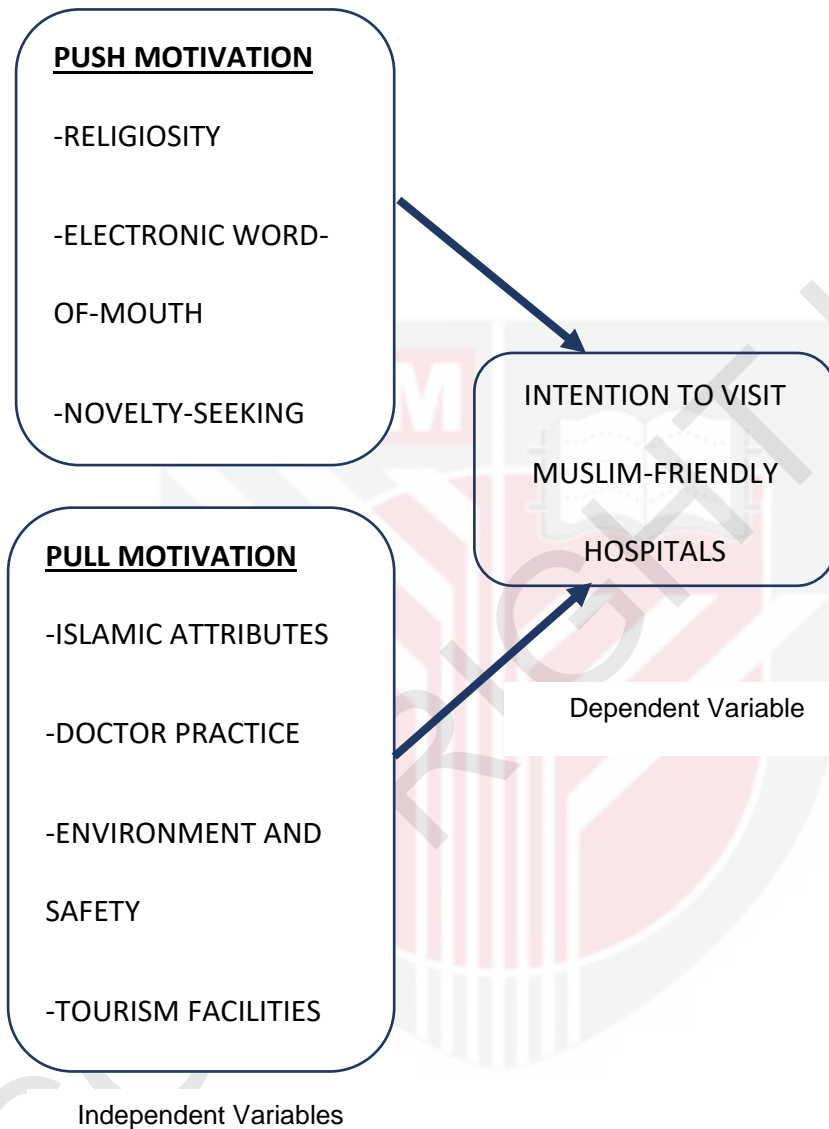


Figure 1.1 : Conceptual Framework of the Study

1.6 Hypothesis

H₀1: There is no significant prediction of intention to visit by the push factors religiosity, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), novelty-seeking) and pull factors (Islamic attributes, doctor practice, environment and safety, tourism facilities).

H₀1a: There is no significant relationship between religiosity and intention to visit.

H₀1b: There is no significant relationship between electronic word-of-mouth and intention to visit.

H₀1c: There is no significant relationship between novelty-seeking and intention to visit.

H₀1d: There is no significant relationship between Islamic attributes and intention to visit.

H₀1e: There is no significant relationship between doctor practice and intention to visit.

H₀1f: There is no significant relationship between environment and safety, and intention to visit.

H₀1g: There is no significant relationship between tourism facilities and intention to visit.

1.7 Significance of Research

This research aims to enhance the literary framework of Muslim-friendly healthcare services and improve the country's economy amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. From research by Cengizci et al. (2020), it was found that the knowledge of the components of push and pull motivation can assist in attaining goals that can help in the prediction of future decision-making designs and empower the industry. Besides that, Kewina, Adam, and Abdel Aziz (2021) also mentioned that understanding the pattern of how their motivation influences tourists' intentions is vital to keep vacationers intact. In contrast, the consumer will be drawn in to get treatment in Muslim-friendly medical centers. This shows that this study can benefit practitioners in developing better marketing and advertising strategies that can appeal to international and local medical tourists regarding their healthcare needs.

To fill the knowledge gap, this study attempted to utilize the push-pull motivation theory to explore consumer motivations for visiting Muslim-friendly hospitals, a novel approach in the tourism field. To effectively market a new service form, it is vital to understand its push and pull factors and its relationship with intention. The interaction between these variables can help marketers, and

hospital developers properly segment potential consumers to determine the best motivation for their visit. Furthermore, the push-pull motivation theory enhances the theoretical understanding of both Muslim-friendly and medical tourism, providing practical strategies in marketing for practitioners in these fields.

Ultimately, the finding of this research can assist policymakers in preparing strategies to improve the Muslim-friendly related facilities to recover from the effects of the pandemic in the short and long run once international borders are safe to be opened. The result of this study will not only assist the upcoming research on Muslim-friendly healthcare but also how aid policymakers and tourism planners in developing better approaches that appeal more to local consumers alike. It can also greatly contribute to the study in Muslim-friendly medical tourism field.

1.8 Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Push Factors

Conceptual definition: The intrinsic and intangible individual aspirations and desires (Chen & Mo, 2014) that direct the need for travel (Crompton, 1979).

Operational definition: In this study, the intrinsic and intangible aspirations were assessed using religious motivation, eWOM, and novelty-seeking.

Pull Factors

Conceptual definition: Associated with the attributes of the destination, which attracts the visitors and relates to its perceived features and characteristics of the location (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

Operational definition: In this study, the attributes of the destination were measured by the respondents' motivation for Islamic attributes, doctor practice, environment and safety, and tourism facilities.

Religiosity

Conceptual definition: "The bodily action or human activity Islam), the mind or understanding of God (iman), and the spirit or actualisation of virtue and goodness (Ihsan)" (Mahudin, et al., 2016, p. 113).

Operational definition: Religiosity refers to individuals' level of being religious, where in this research it is assessed using comprehensive evaluation of a Muslim's religious beliefs and practices by their striving for worldly and

hereafter affairs, avoiding bad behaviours, being humble, teach family on to always remember the greatness of Allah S.W.T, being grateful, truthful, and ability to strengthen relationship with Allah S.W.T at any given time.

Electronic Word-Of-Mouth

Conceptual definition: A form of informal communication on the internet directed to the consumers and is linked to the characteristics or use of goods and services (Litvin et al., 2008).

Operational definition: Electronic word-of-mouth was measured by how the respondents view the online comments and feedback of hospitals by their popularity, quantity, quality, and rankings.

Novelty-seeking

Conceptual definition: An individual's attribute refers to the inclination to pursue new experiences with solid emotional sensations (Arenas & Manzanedo, 2016).

Operational definition: Novelty-seeking was measured in terms of how much one's vacation would have these attributes—new experiences, sense of discovery, change of environment, and adventure.

Islamic Attributes

Conceptual definition: Factors that are vital in accommodating the needs of Muslims such as availability of halal food, the convenience of the facility for prayers, and the dress code according to the Syariah and the prohibition of gambling and alcoholic drinks (Battour & Ismail, 2014).

Operational definition: In this study, the Islamic attributes refers to the Muslim-friendly attributes available at the hospitals itself and were measured by the respondents' motivation towards availability of halal food for warded patients, separation of staff by gender (male and female) during treatment, agreement of having non-Muslim donors by patients and family, availability of sophisticated praying facilities (e.g., *tayammum* sand, ablution spray, kiblah direction) and presence of Sharia-friendly toilets at the hospital.

Doctor Practice

Conceptual definition: Involving the mastering of an area of knowledge in medicine and consecutively putting it to practice or educating others (Klein, 2006).

Operational definition: Doctor practice refers to the doctors' interpersonal skill

and knowledge experienced by individuals during treatment and was measured by the respondents' agreement towards the doctors' adaption of Islamic values in their practice during treatment.

Environment and Safety

Conceptual definition: Environment is the incorporation of all the range of elements available in the area, including humans, natural, and physical factors (Butler, 1991); Safety is defined as a "condition where nothing goes wrong (injuries, accidents/incidents/near misses) or more cautiously as a condition where the number of things that go wrong is acceptably small" (Hollnagel, 2014)

Operational definition: Environment and safety was assessed through the respondents' urge to travel to a state with a good environment and safety regarding its security, hygiene, weather, variety of shopping places, local's friendliness, and information available.

Tourism Facilities

Conceptual definition: An always ready-to-be-used tourist support service offering a great price and quality to fulfil the needs of travellers (Mill, 2010).

Operational definition: The tourism facilities refer to facilities available for the convenience of the tourists at the destination and were measured by the respondents' want to travel for the travel distance, ease of tour arrangements, quality of tourist places, reasonable prices, and variety of attractions.

Intention to visit

Conceptual definition: Predicted future behaviour of an individual to visit a specific destination (Kiage, 2018).

Operational definition: The intention to visit was measured by the respondents' prediction, plan, intention, and willingness to make time and effort to visit a Muslim-friendly hospital for medical treatment in the future.

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