

EFFECTS OF SERVICE QUALITY, UMRAH EXPERIENCE, PLACE ATTACHMENT, PILGRIMS MEMORY AND SATISFACTION ON BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS OF UMRAH PILGRIMS

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By

SHERBINI, AYMAN ALI H

Thesis Submitted to Putra Business School in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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By

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August 2018

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The research in religious tourism that is focusing on understanding tourist behavioural intentions is still limited, especially the research related to Islamic tourism. Umrah, as one of the most important rituals in Islam, need further understanding in terms of the quality services provided and pilgrims experience. The main objective of this research is to examine the relationship between service evaluation variables; service quality and tourist satisfaction, place attachment, Umrah experience, tourist memory with the behavioural intention of Umrah pilgrims. Aiming to improve the tourism industry is applicable to the Saudi Arabia 2030 strategic vision seeking for alternative source of income for the country. To contribute to the marketing body of knowledge and support in the country vision, a model was developed to understand the pilgrims experience and its effect on their behavioural intentions in the future.

Data were collected from 448 Malaysian Umrah performers. A quantitative methods approach was adopted from previous studies to measure each variable used in the research. Analysis of Moments Structure (AMOS) was implemented to analyse the relationships between the variables. The results of structural equation modelling revealed that Umrah experience has direct and indirect impact on behavioural intentions. Although direct effect of pilgrims satisfaction and behavioural intentions was not significant, the indirect effect through pilgrims memory was significant. In addition, Pilgrims memory mediates the relationship between Umrah Experience and behavioural intentions. Place attachment was examined in the study where it was found to be significant on Behavioural Intentions. Quality of services provided in Makkah was examined in the current research and its relationship with Pilgrims Satisfaction was statistically approved. Moreover, Umrah Experience has an effective role as moderator between Place Attachment and Behavioural Intentions.

Theoretically, the study contributed to the body of knowledge by examining the Umrah experience effective domain, in one side, and analyse the antecedents of the pilgrims' Behavioural intentions, on another side. Practically, the study provides management and marketing implications that enable Umrah service providers and Umrah authorities in Saudi Arabia to improve the industry.

Keywords : Umrah Experience, Place attachment, Pilgrims satisfaction, Behavioural Intentions.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

KESAN KUALITI PERKHIDMATAN, PENGALAMAN UMRAH, TEMPAT BERKAITAN, MEMORI JEMAAH DAN KEPUASAN KEPADA NIAT TINGKAHLAKU JEMAAH UMRAH

Oleh

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Fakulti : Putra Business School

Kajian tentang pelancongan berkonsep keagamaan yang mengfokuskan untuk memahami niat dan tingkahlaku seseorang pelancong adalah terhad, terutama sekali yang berkaitan dengan pelancongan Islam. Umrah, iaitu salah satu ibadah yang paling penting di dalam Islam, memerlukan suatu kefahaman dari segi kualiti perkhidmatan yang disediakan dan pengalaman Jemaah umrah. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk memeriksa perhubungan di antara pembolehubah penilaian perkhidmatan; kualiti perkhidmatan dan kepuasan pelancong, tempat berkaitan, pengalaman umrah, memori pelancong dengan niat tingkahlaku jemaah Umrah. Sasaran untuk meningkatkan industri pelancongan adalah sehaluan dengan visi strategi oleh Arab Saudi tahun 2030 untuk mencari alternatif sebagai sumber pendapatan negara. Bagi menyumbang kepada badan ilmu pemasaran dan sokongan wawasan negara, satu model telah dibentuk untuk memahami pengalaman Jemaah Umrah dan kesannya terhadap niat tingkahlaku mereka pada masa akan datang.

Data telah dikumpulkan daripada seramai 448 ahli Jemaah Umrah Malaysia. Pendekatan kaedah kuantitatif telah digunakan yang diambil daripada kajian terdahulu untuk mengukur pemboleh ubah dalam kajian ini. Analysis of Moments Structure (AMOS) telah digunakan untuk menganalisa hubungan di antara pemboleh ubah. Keputusan daripada model persamaan berstruktur ini mendedahkan bahawa pengalaman Umrah mempunyai kesan secara langsung dan tidak langsung terhadap niat tingkahlaku seseorang. Walaupun kesan secara langsung terhadap kepuasan dan niat tingkahlaku Jemaah Umrah tidak berlaku secara ketara, namun kesan secara tidak langsung melalui Memori Jemaah Umrah adalah penting. Tambahan pula, Memori Jemaah Umrah mempunyai hubungan di antara pengalaman Umrah itu sendiri dan niat tingkahlaku seseorang. Kajian mengenai tempat berkaitan telah dikenalpasti iaitu ia

didapati penting kepada niat tingkahlaku seseorang. Kualiti perkhidmatan yang disediakan di Mekah telah diperiksa dalam penyelidikan semasa dan hubungannya dengan kepuasan Jemaah telah diterima secara statistiknya. Di samping itu, pengalaman Umrah memainkan peranan penting sebagai perantara di antara tempat berkaitan dan niat tingkahlaku. Secara teorinya, kajian ini telah menyumbang kepada badan pengetahuan dengan mengenalpasti kawasan pengalaman Umrah berkesan dari satu segi, dan menganalisa latarbelakang niat tingkahlaku para Jemaah dari segi yang lain. Secara praktikalnya, kajian ini memberi implikasi kepada pengurusan dan pemasaran yang membolehkan pemberi khidmat Umrah dan penguatkuasa Umrah di Arab Saudi untuk memperbaiki industri.

Kata kunci : Pengalaman Umrah, Tempat berkaitan, Kepuasan jemaah, Niat Tingkah Laku.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 3 August 2018 to conduct the final examination of Ayman Sherbini on his thesis entitled "Effects of Service Quality, Umrah Experience, Place Attachment, Pilgrims Memory and Satisfaction on Behavioural Intentions of Umrah Pilgrims' 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 Doctor of Philosophy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UNWTO United Nations World Tourism Organization

WTTC The World Travel and Tourism Council

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization

WTO World Tourism Organization

GDP Gross Domestic Product

SCTA Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities

KAEC King Abdullah Economic City

AMOS Analysis of Moments Structure

HSP Hajj Service Provider

SEM Structural Equation Modeling

EFA Exploratory Factor Analysis

CFA Confirmatory Factory Analysis

RMSEA Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

CFI Comparative Fit Index

IFI Incremental Index of Fit

TLI Tucker-Lewis Index

NFI Normed Fit Index

GFI Goodness-Of-Fit Index

AGFI Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with the background of the current study, highlighting the development of the tourism industry in the world and its importance for countries economy. It also includes the global tourism industry's performance, especially religious category. Then, the chapter addresses the problem statements covering various issues and gaps that will be examined in this study. It is followed by the research objectives, questions and its contributions. The chapter also identifies the scope of the study, definition of key terms and end with the organisation of the thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

The tourism industry is one of the rapid developing sectors in the world. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reported that the number of international tourists started with 25 Million tourists in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000 and reach 1235 Million by 2016 (UNWTO, 2017b). With this figures, individual investors and countries pay their attention to attract as many tourists as they can, keeping their eyes on the estimated number of the international visitors, which is 1.8 billion by 2030 as published in UNWTO report (2016). In addition, The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) expected that the tourism industry would provide 380 million jobs directly by 2027 (WTTC, 2017). According to UNWTO annual report (2016) the International Tourist Arrivals grew for the seventh consecutive year in 2016 to reach 1.2 billion, which is 4% over 2015. This phenomenon not only gain the attention from investors, but also by research and scholars who are interested in understanding the tourist behavioural intentions.

The tourism industry is classified into different categories depending on the specific travel experiences that the visitors are seeking for. These categories are including therapeutic tourism, cultural tourism, scientific tourism, safari or adventure tourism and lastly religious tourism (Daher, 2006). In the context of religious tourism, some scholars consider it as a type of heritage tourism (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Regardless of what is the category of tourism that religious tourism belongs to, scholars differentiate between religious tourism and Islamic tourism. While Islamic tourism is concerned with Halal hospitality which provides product and services under Islamic Shariah law (Battour, Ismail, & Battor, 2011), religious tourism is concerned with religious sites and tourists who motivated by religious reason or faith (Laderlah, Rahman, Awang, & Man, 2011). The present research has the same concern of the religious tourism which is about the religious sites and shrines.

The religious tourism category is a significant part of global tourism markets. Religious tourism, or faith tourism (Olsen, 2013), is a pilgrimage concern about pilgrims strongly motivated by religious reasons. Although it is considered as the oldest form of tourism (Rinschede, 1992), it is still one of the most attractive industries in the world. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 60% of the world's population practises a religion, and this population is the foundation of religious tourism (UNWTO, 2011). From the academic perspective, researchers recognize the enormous potential of this phenomenon and the growth of this number might encourage academician for advanced studies and apply improvements in this industry (Alecu, 2010; Collins-Kreiner & Gatrell, 2006). However, the literature on pilgrimage and religious tourism is still fragmented and lacks of synthesis and holistic conceptualization (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Hence, the religious tourism industry required more research and study in this particular field.

One of the significant religion worth to consider in today's societies is Islam. According to Pew Research Centre Report (2015) Muslims are expected to grow twice as fast as the overall global population from 1.6 billion in 2010 to nearly 2.8 billion in 2050. Consequently, Muslims are projected to rise from around 23%, which is a quarter of the world's population, in 2010 to 30% in 2050. In addition, Muslims have the highest Total Fertility Rate as of 2010-2015 with a global average of 3.1 children per women (Pew Research Center, 2015). The figure shows that Muslims population is expected to grow as the total number and as a percentage of all the people among the world's major religious groups in the world. This number of Muslims in the world is representing the foundation for Islamic religious tourism industry, which is about tourists concern in visiting Islamic sites. These Muslims are coming from different countries, with different cultures and societies that make understanding their behaviours quite challenging and required more studies, especially when they practice their religious activities in some city. The most important holy sites for Muslims located in Middle East region, precisely in Saudi Arabia.

The tourism industry in the Middle East region is considered as one of the fastest growing markets in the world over the past decade (Hamarneh, 2014). The area includes Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen (UNWTO, 2014). Although some of the Middle East countries are suffering from Arab Spring (revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests, riots, and civil wars in the Arab world), this region is expected to grow more than double of its current annual international arrival, from 50 million to be 134 million by 2030 reaching 8% of the global tourism share (UNWTO, 2014). This forecast encourages the Middle East countries to change their economic view and the diversity of national income sources as an attempt to reduce their reliance on natural resources like petrol and gas. These countries have invested in upgrading infrastructure to build a suitable environment for tourists to visit the country like the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia (UNWTO, 2017a).

Saudi Arabia, as a state, beginning with the foundation by Abdul Aziz Al Saud in 1933. Islam is the only religion practised by locals in the country, and the state known as "The land of two holy mosques" which refers to holy mosques (Al-Masjid An-Nabawi) in Medinah and (Al-Masjid Al-haram) in Makkah (Mufeed & Gulzar, 2014). This country is on the top of the Middle East countries in terms of international tourists arrivals statistic in 2013 with 25.6% of the total visitors to Middle East (UNWTO, 2014). In addition, UNWTO (2017b) reported that although Saudi Arabian tourist arrival has no growth between 2016-2017, this destination maintains it is rank as the subregion's top destination with 18.049 thousand international visitors spending around 11.096 Million US\$. More than half of these entries are travelling to two of Islam's holiest cities, Makkah and Medina (Hamarneh, 2014).

Makkah (or Mecca) in Saudi Arabia is the most important religious city for Muslims across the globe because it holds the Kaaba (a cube-shaped black stone building in Makkah that Muslims turn in for their daily prayers), which is the most sacred site in Islam, inside Al-Masjid al-Haram. This massive number of Muslims are dreaming of reaching this destination to participate in Hajj (the Muslims fixed date pilgrimage), perform Umrah (flexible date pilgrimage) or both together. These rituals have been performed in the same manner for the last fourteen hundred years since the emergence of Islam. According to Hajjar (2014), the number of visitors for Umrah purpose for 1435H (2013-2014) is over 6 Million, and the number is increasing gradually. Since this number of people coming for Umrah is high, managing the quality of their experience is challenging. There are some researchers conducted studies about Hajj pilgrimage (e.g. Ali & Abdullah, 2004; Darfoon, 2013; Haq & Jackson, 2009; Catherine Henderson, 2011; Nojoum, 2008), however, the research about Umrah pilgrimage are still limited (Wahab, Ahmad, & Masruki, 2012).

Umrah is an act of Sunnah (done by Prophet Mohammad, peace and blessings be upon him) of individual worship starting by Ihram from the Miqat, followed by visiting Masjid al-Haram for Tawaf (circling the Ka'aba seven times counter-clockwise) and Sai'e (travelling seven times between the Marwah and Safah hills), and ending with shaving off or cutting short all of the hair (Murad, 2006). While all Islamic scholars are agreed that Umrah is prescribed in Islam and is an act of virtue, they disagree with ruling on Umrah. Some of them view it as Sunnah and Mustahabb (not obligatory). Nevertheless, other scholars view ruling on Umrah is required once in a lifetime, like Hajj (Al-Munajjid, 2015). With the respect of the ruling on Umrah for the first time, many Muslims around the world decides to perform Umrah for several times. These performers mostly visited the holy places to worship to fulfil their religious and spiritual needs (Shinde, 2012). However, these factors would not be enough for them to revisit the same place, and there might be other factors affecting their decisions.

Generally, researchers in different tourism fields examine the influence of factors on the tourists' behavioural intentions. These factors could include; quality of service provided (e.g., Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Murray & Howat, 2002), tourists satisfaction (e.g., Assaker, Vinzi, & O'Connor, 2011; Brady et al., 2005), place attachment (e.g., Alexandris, Kouthouris, & Meligdis, 2006;

Ramkissoon, Graham Smith, & Weiler, 2012; Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010) and tourists memory (e.g., Loureiro, 2014). The current study aims to explore Umrah performers' experience in addition to these factors and examine their impact on the pilgrims behavioural intention in an Islamic religion tourism context.

The best definition of experience would fit in this context is clarified by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) who suggested that customers may have two types of experiences; functional and enjoyable. While functional experience refers to the products (goods and services) functions, the enjoyable experience related to the sensations generated when consumers consume a particular product. Pizam (2010) gives an example of this experience and how it is not necessarily associated with the quality of services provided. He compared between an experience of staying in a high-priced hotel and sleeping in a tent at Bedouin tent at the Sahara Desert. Visitors could have better memorable experience in the desert than the hotel. Similarly, the Umrah performers' experience who might not face satisfied services in Makkah, but they still have a memorable experience. This as a result raised after the interviews conducted for the current study.

The interviews were conducted with 7 Umrah past performers and travel agents' coordinators in Malaysia. The questions asked were all about their experience during Umrah journey and how they feel about it. The experience with the quality of services provided during Umrah was also part of the conversations. They mentioned services such as; transportations, accommodations, food and the staff guiding the tours. In terms of transportations, they complained about the long waiting time for buses moving to Masjid and return to the hotel. A coordinator of Hajj and Umrah services for more than 20 years raised that "although the transportation in Makkah became better, we find a new problem every year". In addition, the rest and relaxation (R&R) stop on the highway between Makkah and Madinah are not clean, and the water pressure in toilets is slow. Moreover, their accommodations are a lower standard than what they expected and distant from Masjid in Makkah. Makkah hotels are not at their satisfaction level comparing with hotels in Madinah. Moreover, they complained about the food provided by Umrah operators as it is not tasty and in a small portion. Most of them believe it is better to buy food from outside the hotel as a variety of types can be found everywhere in Makkah and Madinah. Lastly, they are not satisfied with operators' services provided in the holy places. Despite all the complaints about these services, most of them have the intention to re-perform Umrah when they have money and time.

Therefore, the current research will include service quality effects in examining Umrah performers' satisfaction level and their behavioural intention. However, service quality is not the only factor affects tourist behavioural intention, the current study will include Umrah experience, place attachment, tourist satisfaction and memory in the proposed framework. Accordingly, the next section will discuss the problem statement related to the current study.

1.3 Problem Statements

Although Umrah is a religious journey mainly connected with worship in Islam, pilgrims concern and complain about services provided during Umrah trip. According to Abdullah (2015), the commercial travel agencies in Malaysia which offer Umrah and Hajj recorded the highest disputed cases in the Tribunal for Consumer Claims (TTPM) since 2010-2013. The number of these cases became 3,454 cases involving over RM21 million between 2012 until September 2016 as Siti Nor Minu, the Tourism and Culture Ministry (MOTAC)'s tourism licensing division undersecretary, reported in a press conference (Borneo Post, 2016). In the same period, her division in the ministry received 214 complaints involving Umrah travel fraud, and there were 231 police complaints with losses of more than RM9 million. She said that most pilgrims realised they had been cheated upon arrival whether the problem with the accommodation provided or other matter related to the travel agents and immigration. In addition, Selangor Mufti Datuk Seri Mohd Tamyes Abd Wahid said in Malay daily *Berita Harian* that "It is a better option to have the umrah management system placed under the Prime Minister's Department and its monitoring overseen by Tabung Haji to solve the problems of umrah fraud cases" (MalayMail, 2017). In the same context, the ministry's deputy secretary-general Haslina Abdul Hamid announce in the first B2B Umrah and Muslim Holidays for 2018 that penalties for tour operators who offer fraudulent umrah packages and services should be increased to be more painful for these operators, and more actions will be taken with the new minister and deputy (The Star Online, 2018). These stiffer penalties for Umrah operators not only proceeded in Malaysia, similarly, the Indonesian government promises to terminate license from Hajj and Umrah travel agents after increasing number of fraud cases on potential pilgrims (Achyar & Oktora, 2014). It appears that Umrah pilgrims face challenges when visiting Makkah when performing Umrah. However, to date, there has been little discussion about Umrah issues in the academic body of knowledge. The current study attempts to enhance the academic research in this field by examining the quality of services provided in Makkah and its relation to the pilgrims' satisfaction and behavioural intentions.

Umrah journey, as an act of religious tourism mainly includes two parts; rituals such as Tawaf (seven circuits around the Holy Kaaba) and tahallul (cutting of hair or shaving), and other services provided by Umrah travel agents and authorities such as accommodation and transportation. The current research will be one of the studies exploring the Umrah journey from a travel-related angle. The travel-related aspects for religious tourism are essential to be understood further in order to identify the factors affecting visitors' decision to visit and re-visit the place (Tripathi, Choudhary, & Agrawal, 2010). If these factors are not discovered for religious places, the destination has the possibility to lose visitors in the future (McCain & Ray, 2003) and the frequency of re-visit the holy places could be dropped (Tripathi et al., 2010). It appears that Makkah might face the same dilemma in the future and Muslims who would like to perform Umrah may lose their intention to re-visit Makkah, especially after the Saudi Government raised the Umrah fees for 2,000 Riyal (RM2,150) for second entry effective 2 October 2016 (Astro Awani, 2016). Therefore, one of the current research objectives is to study how significant are the travel related aspects

such as (experience, services provided and satisfaction) on the pilgrims' future decision to re-perform Umrah.

Although Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia has not mentioned that the services provided in holy cities might affect the visitors' future decision to re-perform Umrah, the Ministry indicate that improving the service quality in its future action plan. Mohammed Albejaoa, the general director of Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in Madinah Branch, has taken an action plan to verify the quality of services provided to pilgrims by implying 94 indicators KPI-service (Okaz Newspaper, 2015). In addition, the Saudi 2030 vision aims to improve the quality of the services offered to Umrah visitors in order to develop the Umrah industry in the country (Alarabiya News, 2016). The Saudi 2030 vision has an objective to diversify the country resources of the economy; the Umrah industry is one of them. Therefore, the current study is firmly in supporting the country plan to enhance this industry.

Enhancing Umrah services as a part of tourism industry in the country has some debatable points among Muslims. Despite the political tensions caused by religious extremism over the last few decades, Islam itself is not against the concept of tourism (Aziz, 1995). Indeed, applying the tourism concepts on Makkah as tourism destination might have a role in improving the services provided there. Yet, there is a part of Muslim societies who are sensitive in considering the religious places as a tourism destination, and they still can not accept to meet visitors with other interests and motivations than worship (Kovjanic, 2014). It might be because they would like to avoid non-Muslims visitors. Nevertheless, Makkah and Madinah are sacred sites restricted for Muslims only. In addition, tourism, as a business, often include activities and behaviours unacceptable in Islamic societies' values and cultural traditions (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010a). Thus, some Muslims try to avoid the concept of tourism in studying the religious places. However, the traditional view of a religious destination no longer fulfils the comfort/luxury-driven needs of the new generation pilgrims (Shinde, 2006). Accordingly, InterContinental Hotels Group, the current market leader in Saudi Arabia with 24 hotels throughout the Kingdom, announced the opening of a further 9 outlets including the world's largest Holiday Inn in Makkah (Global Travel Industry News, 2015). This development indicates that the hotel market leaders recognize the new generation transformation of services required. The current study will work in understanding the view of the services provided which help these hotels leaders to recognize the services and products need improvement.

Since the number of pilgrims coming to Makkah is high, managing the services provided and their experience is not an easy task. The Saudi government represented by the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah takes in its consideration this challenge number of visitors dealing with people coming from different countries and varied cultural background. In addition, the government is under pressure to increase the number of Umrah (pilgrimage) visas issuing to each country (Aldosari, 2013), which accordingly required development in Makkah infrastructure, transportation, accommodation and other services. For example, there are around five million Umrah visas issued every year (Arab News, 2012), and 2.08 million hajjis (pilgrims who visit Makkah to do

Hajj) visited the Kingdom on 2014 (Hajj Statistics Report, 2014). With this significant number of visitors to Makkah, however, there are only limited studies of academic research done in evaluating services quality provided there (e.g. Darfoon, 2013; Eid, 2012; Jabnoun, 2003). Measuring the quality of services will be significant for Hajj and Umrah authorities within Saudi Arabia as well as Umrah service providers who could improve the level of service as a result of the research findings.

Measuring the pilgrims' satisfaction and understand their expectation is critically important information for the academic communities. According to Rot et al. (2014), religious destinations are not at visitors satisfaction level, and these destinations need to meet the travellers' needs and demands. While many of these destinations unable to reach their visitors' satisfaction and needs, this research will be conducted to understand the visitors' satisfaction. This visitor satisfaction will be explained by the Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) developed by Oliver (1980). The theory argued that performance-specific expectation and expectancy disconfirmation were playing major roles in customers' satisfaction decisions. The current research plays an essential role in extending the EDT implications. The Umrah pilgrims in this sense will judge on services provided depending on their expectation before consuming. If they have different perceived services than they expected, the disconfirmation occurs.

Not only satisfaction is essential in this study, measuring service quality at the tourism distniation is also an important task to consider. Makkah (as it is the most important religious destination in Islam) is the target in the investigation of this study. The study raises important questions about the quality of service provided for Makkah visitors, and empirical research studies the rationale and purpose for re-visiting intentions. It appears that the Ministry of Umrah and Hajj in Saudi Arabia recognize the importance to understand the pilgrim's satisfaction when it introduced the first "Pilgrims Take Care Unit" in ministry on February 2014 (Alriyadh Newspaper, 2014). This unit has been introduced by Mohammed Albejaoa, who stated that the unit aims to provide an on-going channel of communication with pilgrims and strengthen the capacity of the ministry branches to achieve satisfaction pilgrims and improve operations. Moreover, the government 2030 Vision has highlighted the importance of Umrah pilgrims completely satisfied with their pilgrimage experience (Alarabiya News, 2016). The current research will provide valuable information to understand the current level of satisfaction.

Although research on service quality has a long history, the literature says very little about service quality in religious tourism setting. According to Achyar and Oktora, (2014), there is a lack of study in understanding the Umrah participants' experience, satisfaction and value of purchased travel package. This lack of information about pilgrims performing Umrah is visible in terms of their expectations and perceptions of services delivered during their journey and its impacts on their satisfaction. Pilgrims from outside Saudi Arabia typically travel on a tour package provided either by a public or private tourism company or travel agency. The present study is an attempt to examine the role of their Umrah experience on the level of satisfaction that may lead to affect their behavioural intentions. In addition, the study seeks to evaluate

service quality in religious tourism settings, particularly in Makkah. Also, develop a comprehensive framework to examine the relationship between service evaluation variables; service quality and tourist satisfaction (identified by Zabkar, Brencic, & Dmitrovic, 2010), place attachment, Umrah experience, tourist memory with the behavioural intention. This comprehensive framework mainly explained by two integrated theories; Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) and Social Exchange Theory (SET). While EDT explained the pilgrims level of satisfaction on the services provided in Makkah, the SET plays an essential role in clarifying the interpersonal interaction between pilgrims and locals in Makkah and among Umrah pilgrims themselves.

From tourism marketing perspective, it is important to investigate the interrelationships among service quality, visitor satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Although tourism research have shown that improved service quality will contribute to increase visitor satisfaction, and both constructs influence visitors' future behavioural intentions, there is still a lack of guidance in the tourism marketing literature in understanding the interrelationships among service quality, visitor satisfaction and behavioural Intentions (Cole & Illum, 2006). In addition, it is valuable to examine mediating effect on the relationship to evaluate the direct and indirect impact. Therefore, the current study will examine the interrelationships with mediating role of tourist memory to extend the tourism marketing literature.

In general, all types of tourism involves hedonistic aspects including longing to experience different kinds of bodily and/or spiritual pleasure (Jansson, 2002). However, spiritual dimension of tourism in pilgrimage and religious tourism context need more research (Conover & Timothy, 2006; Phukan, Rahman, & Devdutt, 2012). The spiritual engagement will be held in pilgrims Memory, and it may affect their behavioural. There are some studies examined the tourist memory influence in several tourism categories; rural tourism (Loureiro, 2014), lodging and tourism setting (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007), however, it appears that there is a lack of studies in religious tourism. Therefore, pilgrims' memory and place attachment are essential to be studied in religious tourism as consequences of the spiritual experience (further details in Chapter 3). The current research will shed light on these two variables and explore their relationships with behavioural intentions. Table 1.1 shows a summary of problem statements provided by the author.

Table 1.1: Summary of Problems Statements

NO.	Practical consideration	Academic attention	The Problem Statements
1	Abdullah (2015) highlights that the commercial travel agencies in Malaysia which offer Umrah and Hajj recorded the highest disputed cases in the Tribunal for Consumer Claims since 2010-2013	There has been little discussion about Hajj and Umrah travel agencies (Achyar & Oktora, 2014)	There is a lack of empirical research about the quality of service provided by Umrah agents.
2	94 indicators KPI-service representing the scientific methodology to verify the quality of services provided to pilgrims and visitors has been launched in 2015 (Okaz Newspaper, 2015)	If these factors are not discovered for religious places, the destination possible to lose potential visitors in the future (McCain & Ray, 2003) and the frequency of re-visit the religious places could be dropped (Tripathi et al., 2010)	There is a possibility to drop in the frequency of re-visiting religious places.
3	InterContinental Hotels Group, the current market leader in Saudi Arabia with 24 hotels throughout the Kingdom, announced the opening of a further 9 outlets including the world's largest Holiday Inn in Makkah (Global Travel Industry News, 2015).	The traditional style of a religious destination no longer fulfils the comfort/luxury-driven needs of the pilgrims of the new generation (K. a. Shinde, 2006)	The religious tourism destinations have to adapt with a new generation of pilgrims and their new requirements
4	There are around five million Umrah visas issued every year (Arab News, 2012), and 2.08 million hajjis (pilgrims who visit Makkah to do Hajj) visited the Kingdom on 2014 (Hajj Statistics Report, 2014)	With this significant number of visitors to Makkah, there are just a few numbers of academic research manage to study the services quality provided there (e.g. Darfoon, 2013; Eid, 2012; Jabnoun, 2003)	Saudi Government is under pressure to improve services quality provided in Makkah. And to increase the pilgrims capacity.
5	Introduced the first "Pilgrims Take Care Unit" in Ministry on February 2014 (Alriyadh Newspaper, 2014)	According to Rot et al. (2014), religious destinations are not at visitors satisfaction level and these destinations are adapted to the traveller's needs and demands	Increase the disputed cases in the Tribunal of unsatisfied customers.
6	Prince Sultan bin Salman, president of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) states that tourism in Saudi Arabia requires greater efforts from officials as well as citizens for its success (Arab News, 2012)	Achyar and Oktora (2014), stated that there is a lack of study in understanding the Umrah participants' experience,	The lack of information about Umrah pilgrims expectations make

(Source : Author's compilation)

1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the issues discussed earlier, the fundamental objective formulated for this study is to examine the relationship between service evaluation variables; service quality and tourist satisfaction (identified by Zabkar, Brencic, & Dmitrovic, 2010), place attachment, Umrah experience, tourist memory with the behavioural intention of Umrah pilgrims.

The following specific research objectives are addressed to guide the entire research work:

- 1. To examine the inter-relationship between the Services Quality (SQ), Umrah Pilgrims Satisfaction (PS) and the Pilgrims Behavioural Intentions (BI) in the religious tourism industry.
- 2. To determine the moderating role of Umrah Experience (UE) on the relationship between Services Quality (SQ) and Umrah Pilgrims Satisfaction (PS) in the religious tourism industry.
- 3. To examine the mediating role of Pilgrims Memory (PM) between:
 - a Pilgrims Satisfaction (PS) and Behavioural Intention (BI) of Umrah performers.
 - b Umrah Experience (UE) and Behavioural Intention (BI) of Umrah performers.
- 4. To determine the influence of Pilgrims Memory (PM) on Place Attachment (PA) in a religious tourism context.
- 5. To examine the role of Place Attachment (PA) on Behavioural Intention (BI) in the religious tourism context.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, the research questions would be:

- 1. Is there any significant interrelationship between the Quality of Services provided, Pilgrims Satisfaction and their Behavioural Intentions?
- 2. Does the Umrah Experience moderate the relationship between Service Quality and the Pilgrims Satisfaction in the religious tourism industry?
- 3. Does Pilgrims Memory play a mediating role between Umrah Experience and Behavioural Intentions of Umrah performer? And between Pilgrims satisfaction and their Behavioural Intentions?
- 4. Does Pilgrims Memory have an effect on Place Attachment in the context of religious tourism?
- 5. Is there any significant effect of Place Attachment on Behavioural Intentions?

1.6 The Significance of the Study

This study aims to extend the current body of knowledge by examining the antecedents affecting the tourist behavioural intentions in the religious destination. These variables are the service evaluation variables (service quality and tourist satisfaction), place attachment and tourist memory. The Umrah experience influences on the behavioural intentions (re-visit and referral the destination) effective domain will be examined in Makkah, the Muslim City of Heaven (Raj, 2007).

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

In terms of the literature on religious destination, this study aims to extend the current literature by examining how tourist memory and place attachment towards religious cities would influence the tourist behavioural intentions in the future. There has been little discussion reported on the measurement of these constructs in the religious tourism industry; the current study tends to focus on their relationship with behavioural intentions as a part of the whole research. This relationship might hold considerable explanatory power in predicting tourist behavioural intentions in the future.

Another point to consider is the influence of Umrah experience on the tourist behavioural intentions effective domain. The current study suggests that not only the service evaluation variables such as service quality and tourist satisfaction can influence the tourist behavioural intentions, but there could also be some specific variables related to the tourist experience such as Umrah experience could have a considerable impact on these intentions. It is suggested that Umrah unique activities could leave extraordinary emotions in the tourist memory that accordingly affect their future decision to re-visit Makkah and referral this city to other Muslims. The same experience might play a moderating role on the causal relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction.

In addition, the current study will propose that the quality of service provided in religious destinations has a direct effect on tourist satisfaction. This could contribute to understanding how service quality in religious destination might be predicted as an antecedent to tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention. The previous studies on service quality issues pay little attention to the context of a religious tourism destination. Further, understanding this quality may help the academician in the marketing field to formulate better marketing strategies for the religious destination.

In general, the research will apply the framework to be extended in the tourism literature. The current research forms the framework from previous studies that examined several models, and it introduces a new integrated model for tourism literature. In addition, the framework explained by integrated theories; Social

Exchange Theory (SET) and Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), which differentiated the current work than other research applies only one theory.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

The research will conduct an empirical study in the marketing of religious tourism, which will provide evidence for the application of the current research conceptual model in the industry. This study will extend the existing religious service quality body of knowledge from one side, and provide empirical value in building and developing the religious destination from another side. The finding of the study can also help to identify and evaluate the variables affecting the tourist future decision to re-visit the destination. This could guide the marketers to concentrate their work and effort on the variables affecting the tourist decisions most.

There is dereliction in Saudi Arabia tourism industry agencies and authorities in understanding the visitors' needs and wants, especially the pilgrims. Prince Sultan bin Salman, president of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) states that tourism in Saudi Arabia requires greater efforts from officials as well as citizens for its success (Arab News, 2012). Service and products providers should pay attention to define and classifying religious tourists to be able to communicate every pilgrimage criteria differently (Rot et al., 2014). The finding of the current study will give some advice for the city authorities and policymakers to move steps further towards the improving tourists' satisfaction level and consequently affect their behavioural intentions. This advice could also be valuable for investors in Saudi Arabia service industry after they understand the current position of services quality provided and what is the level of satisfaction. Table 1.2 summarises the research objectives, research questions and the research contributions.

The current research will assist the Saudi Arabian government in revenue policies by enhancing the Umrah industry, as alternative revenue of oil. A report by CNN published on October 26, 2015, argue that Saudi Arabia run out of cash in less than 5 years. The report depended on a dire report by the International Monetary Fund warned most of the OPEC leader; Saudi Arabia, Oman and Bahrain about this matter. Therefore, these countries should enhance the income from non-oil sectors in their countries; tourism could be one of them. The religious tourism sector in Saudi Arabia can be defined as one of the significant revenue ensuring fiscal sustainability for the country. The current research attempts to improve this sector by studying the quality of services provided in Makkah and considering the effective factors influence the behavioural intentions of pilgrims.

It is important also to highlight that the current research is in the direction of the strategic planning of the Saudi government. As it announced in April 2016, the government introduce a vision to replenishing the country's source of income called "Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030" (see Alarabiya News, 2016). Referring to the vision the

government looking to reach 15 million satisfied Umrah pilgrims by 2020 and increasing the capacity to welcome 30 million Umrah visitors yearly. Indeed, the religious tourism sector in Saudi Arabia can soothe the pain of oil price accrued in 2014. CNN Money (2016) reported that although the tourism industry GDP in Saudi Arabia comparatively small accounting for just 3.5% GDP, compared to 40% of oil, the pilgrim's revenue could reduce Saudi Arabia's oil pain.



Table 1.2 : Summary of Research Objectives, Research Questions and Research Contributions

Research Objective	Research Question	Research Contribution
1. To examine the inter- relationship between the Services Quality (SQ), Umrah Pilgrims Satisfaction (PS) and the Pilgrims Behavioural Intentions (BI) in the religious tourism industry.	1. Is there any significant interrelationship between the Quality of Services provided, Pilgrims Satisfaction and their Behavioural Intentions?	The study aims to extend the current literature by examining the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction. Also, the research seeks to examine whether positive tourist
2. To determine the moderating role of Umrah Experience (UE) on the relationship between Services Quality (SQ) and Umrah Pilgrims Satisfaction (PS) in the religious tourism industry.	2. Does the Umrah performer Experience moderate the relationship between Service Quality and the Pilgrims Satisfaction in the religious tourism industry?	satisfaction directly influences behavioural intentions. There is a limited discussion on measuring this relationship in a religious tourism context. The Umrah performer experience may play a moderating role in the causal relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction.
3. To examine the mediating role of Pilgrims Memory (PM) between: 1- Pilgrims Satisfaction (PS) and Behavioural Intention (BI) of Umrah performers. 2- Umrah Experience (UE) and Behavioural Intention (BI) of Umrah performers	3. Does Pilgrims Memory play a mediating role between Umrah Experience and Behavioural Intentions of Umrah performer? And between Pilgrims satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions?	The study aims to enhance the current literature by examining whether Umrah Experience could leave extraordinary emotions in the tourist memory that accordingly affect their future decision to re-visit Makkah and referral this city to other Muslims. Also, contribute to the body of knowledge by examining tourist memory as a mediator in this relationship.

4. To determine the influence of Pilgrims Memory (PM) on Place Attachment (PA) in a religious tourism context.	4. Does Pilgrims Memory have an effect on Place Attachment in the context of religious tourism?	The study aims to a better understanding of tourist memory and its impact on place attachment in the behavioural intentions effective domain.
5. To examine the role of Place Attachment (PA) on Behavioural Intention (BI) in the religious tourism context.	5. Is there any significant effect of Place Attachment on Behavioural Intentions?	The aim is to enhance the current literature regarding place attachment influences on other constructs in the tourism industry.

(Source: Author's compilation)

1.7 The Scope of The Study

The scope of this study includes Malaysian pilgrims who performed *Umrah* at least once in the last five years. This period of time is based on a study of memory and tourism experiences by Kim (2010), which found many of experiential factors of past travel experiences influence one's memories. However, this study aims to examine the variables mainly from the same Umrah season when the pilgrims perform Umrah. In terms of chosen Malaysian Umrah pilgrims, this study has chosen them for many reasons. Firstly, the number of Malaysian Umrah pilgrims is quite high comparing to other countries pilgrims. For example, Malaysian pilgrims are one of the top five nationalities leads Umrah pilgrims in Madinah 2015 (Alwatan News, 2015). It comes along with other nationalities namely; Egyptian, Pakistan, Indonesia and India. More importantly is the percentage of these performers are more likely to be frequent visitors. A study conducted by Wahab, Ahmad and Masruki (2012) with 2022 survey questionnaires at different locations in Malaysia for the month of January-May 2011 found that 83 percent (1,679 respondents) are repeated visitors to Makkah for Umrah. Comparing to other nationalities, Malaysia Umrah performers are in the top three of the highest Umrah repetition rate nationalities list recorded by King Fahd Haj Research Center 2004 (Arab News, 2004). Malaysian pilgrims come as the second highest repeated pilgrims percentage followed by Morocco, Pakistan, Iran, Mali and Kuwait. Thus, it is essential to understand what experience they live there could affect their decision to revisit Makkah.

Another reason to choose Malaysian pilgrims is that their spending value in Umrah trip is relatively high. According to Utusan Malaysia (2008), the total cost of spending Umrah performance in Malaysia is approximately around RM488.8 million annually, which around RM3450 for each person with the total of 141778 Malaysian visited Saudi Arabia in the same year (MAS Tourism Annual Report, 2008). This makes the Malaysian pilgrims spending is higher than other nationalities especially, Egyptian pilgrims, as the highest Umrah repetition rate nationality, which spending around RM3040 per pilgrims (Alborsa News, 2015).

Makkah will be examined from a marketing perspective as the scope of the current study. This study will apply quantitative methods conducted to elicit the tourists' perception towards this city. The unit of analysis is individual Umrah performers that include Malaysian residents only. The population for this study is based on the average number of Malaysian travelled to Saudi Arabia with Umrah visa only in the last three years, as these are the only available information by the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Kuala Lumpur. The sample comprises any Malaysian Muslims aged 18 and above excluding the agents' operators because they may have other purposes than performing Umrah. The data will be collected within the Umrah seasons of 1438H/2016-2017AD.

1.8 Definition of the Key Terms

Operational definitions of constructs are discussed below;

Service Quality

According to Parasuraman et al. (1994), service quality is the degree of discrepancy between customer normative expectation of the service and the perception of the service performance. The current research aims to examine service quality from the same perspective.

Religious Destinations

It refers to any event, religious festival, or memorable place (Khan, Haque, & Rahman, 2013). This may include destinations related to different religions. The current study will focus on Makkah, in Saudi Arabia.

Tourists Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is the outcome of the interaction between a tourist's experience at the destination area and the expectations he had about that destination (Abraham Pizam, Neumann, & Reichel, 1978).

Behavioural Intention

It is defined as "the degree to which a person has formulated conscious plans to perform or not perform some specified future behaviour" (Warshaw & Davis, 1985). The intentions will be investigated in the current study is the intention to re-visit the destination and referral this city to other Muslims.

Place Attachment

Place attachment is defined as the emotional bond between an individual and a particular spatial setting (Williams, Patterson, & Roggenbuck, 1992). The current study proposes place identity and place dependence for its measurement.

Tourist Memory

The memory in tourism context can be regarded as positive consequences of memorable travel experience (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Umrah performers Experience

Similar to the tourist experience, which is the subjective mental state felt by participants during a service encounter (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). These services are provided in Makkah for Umrah performers leaving them with a particular experience.

1.9 The Organisation of The Thesis

The current research will be illustrated according to the following chapters;

Chapter 1 discusses the background and motivations of the research and statements of problems that will be examined in the study. In addition, the chapter includes objectives of the research and the questions that will be solved. Moreover, the significance of the research discussed in two parts; theoretical and practical. Finally, the chapter defined the scope of the study and definition of the key terms used in the research.

Chapter 2 evaluates the current scenario of the Religious tourism industry from the aspects of its past and present development and achievement. The chapter starts with an overview of the tourism industry in the world, and then, it identifies the definitions, background and the importance of religious tourism. In addition, the chapter considers the religious tourism in Islamic sites, especially in Saudi Arabia. It also consists of the imperative of developing the tourism concept in Makkah.

Chapter 3 introduces in details the literature review of aspects related to the research. There is an overview of the marketing elements considered in the research. Then, the chapter considers the definitions, dimensions and measurement methods for all variables examined in the current research namely service quality, tourist satisfaction, tourist experience, place attachment, tourist memory and behavioural intentions. Lastly, the chapter identifies gaps in the literature that will be addressed in the current research.

Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical concepts of the present research. It consists of underpinning theories and related models that will be covered in the research. It shows how the current research hypotheses developed from previous research. Finally, the chapter explains proposed a conceptual model.

Chapter 5 presents the research methodology, which includes research design and data analysis. The research design consists of data collection and measurement methods, sampling design and measurement of each variable examined in the research. In addition, the chapter consists of the progress of pilot study and survey administration. Moreover, the chapter shows hypotheses that will be testing in the current research.

Chapter 6 reveals the results of the data analysis. It shows the preliminary data analysis results as well as the multivariate data analysis. The results of preliminary data analysis consist of the measurement model, assessing the normality and discriminant validity. In addition, the results of multivariate data include testing the mediating and moderating role of variables.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by discusses the finding of the research results. It includes discussion of each variable examined in the conceptual framework. In addition, the chapter consists of the contribution of the research in two manners; practical and theoretical. Finally, it shows the limitations and recommendations for future research.

1.10 Chapter Summary

The chapter highlighted the background of the study and problem statements. While the background of the study indicates the root of the study and information about the industry of tourism, the problem statements consider the description of the issues need to be addressed in the current research. In addition, the chapter consists of the research objectives and questions that the study seeks to solve. In addition, it overviews the two types of significance; theoretical and practical of the current research. Mainly, the theoretical contribution of the research aims to add knowledge to the literature of marketing and tourism. On the other hand, the practical contribution aims to improve the industry of tourism from practical and managerial sides. Moreover, the chapter identifies the scope of the research where the research will be applied. Finally, it ends with the definition of key terms will be used in the research and organisation of the research.

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