

Predicting Future Halal Tourist Behavior: Incorporating Holistic Tourist Experience and Virtual Reality Experience

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the role of experience visiting tourism destination in person as well as via VR in predicting Muslim tourist behavioral intention during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data were gathered using an online survey from 291 Muslim tourists from Muslim majority countries as well as non-Muslim majority countries. Partial least square was utilized to assess the behavioral intention model. The result shows that behavioral intention of tourists from Muslim countries is driven by experience quality and experience via VR, while tourists from non-Muslim countries are driven by experience with VR. Further, halal experience is not a significant factor in driving behavioral intention for halal tourists from both Muslim and non-Muslim countries.

KEYWORDS

Covid-19
Halal tourism
Behavioural intention
Virtual reality
Tourist experience

INTRODUCTION

Halal tourism, driven by the enormous demand of halal tourists, is currently expanding fast and has become one of the rapidly growing tourism sectors (Battour, Salaheldeen, & Mady, 2021). Consequently, many tourism destinations try to attract this tourist segment (Preko, Mohammed, & Allaberganov, 2021). In this promising but competitive tourism market, understanding what drives tourists' behavioral intention is imperative (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono, et al., 2020). Considering its importance, halal tourist behavioral intention and its driver have been examined recently. Past studies on halal tourists' intention tend to conclude that fulfilling tourist leisure needs without disregarding Islamic values is essential to create a favorable behavioral intention (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Jia & Chaozhi, 2020). However, past studies on behavioral intention were conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, while any study on what drives halal tourist intention during the COVID-19 pandemic can hardly be found. As COVID-19 changes consumer behavior (Bonfanti, Vigolo, & Yfantidou, 2021), finding new methods that can satisfy tourists' needs and drive their future behavior, during and post COVID-19 pandemic, is important (El-Gohary, 2020; Itani & Hollebeek, 2021).

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For health reasons, in the COVID-19 pandemic, tourists often cannot visit, or have limited access to tourism destinations. But, the availability of VR technology enables tourists to visit virtually and enjoy the destinations without worrying about COVID-19 infection (Kwok & Koh, 2020). Thus, VR tourism has an important role for the tourism industry both during and post the COVID-19 pandemic (Battour et al., 2021; UNWTO, 2020). With its ability to present the destination virtually, VR can offer the experience of visiting the destination which, later, influences their future behavior (Wei, 2019; Wu, Ai, & Cheng, 2019). Therefore, for halal tourists who have experienced visiting a destination in person as well as via VR, their behavioral intention will be influenced by these experiences (Hidayat, Rafiki, & Nasution, 2021). While the literature clearly suggests the important role of these experiences (Altunel & Koçak, 2017; Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono, et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2019), none of the existing studies in halal tourism has examined how experience visiting the destination in person and via VR, impacts on tourist behavioral intention. Integrating those experiences into a single study, disputably, will extend our understanding of halal tourists' behavioral intention both during the pandemic, and post COVID-19.

Next, past studies on halal tourism tend to focus on halal tourists from Muslim countries and lacks attention of halal tourists from non-Muslim countries. In fact, although it is a relatively small segment compared to the whole halal market, halal tourists from non-Muslim countries is a significant segment (Preko et al., 2021; Preko, Mohammed, Gyepi-Garbrah Theophilus, & Allaberganov, 2020). Pew Research (2010), for instance, estimates that, in 2021, about 15 million of Western European and about 7 million Northern American people are Muslim. Considering their relatively high purchasing power, halal tourists from those regions, indisputably deserve to get attention. Further, literature indicates that Muslim behavior from non-Muslim countries tend to be different from that of Muslim from Muslim countries (Milligan, Andersen, & Brym, 2014; Pettersson, 2007). Thus, tourist intention drivers identified in the past studies from Muslim countries (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Jia & Chaozhi, 2020) can hardly be generalized into halal tourists from non-Muslim countries. Thus, a study on halal tourists' behavioral based on their country-of-origin (Muslim countries and non-Muslim countries), will expand our understanding on halal tourist behaviors more comprehensively.

These recognized research gaps drive the authors to examine intention among halal tourists from Muslim as well non-Muslim countries during the COVID-19 outbreak. This study specifically is designed to (1) assess the role of halal tourists' experience when visiting the destination in person and via VR in determining their behavioral intention and (2) to compare halal tourist behavioral intention based on tourists' country-of-origin. From a theoretical perspective, this study expands our understanding of halal tourists' behavioral intention formation based on tourist country-of-origin during the COVID-19 pandemic. From a practical perspective, this study helps tourism destination operators develop strategies to gain and maintain favorable tourist intention in halal tourism during the COVID-19 outbreak.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourist Behavioral Intention in Halal Tourism

Behavioral intention, in tourism, refers to a tourist predisposition associated with a destination, attraction or other tourism product or services (Altunel & Koçak, 2017). This behavioral intention signifies tourists' foreseeable behavior associated with a tourism product or service. The power of this intention to foresee behavior is an agreement with reasoned action and the tripartite theory

(Ajzen, 2005), postulating that an individual's behavior is steered by his or her attitude. Although some scholars maintain that intention is not a surrogate of behavior, intention enables a researcher to assess the tendency of a person's behavior (Pahlevi & Suhartanto, 2020). Thus, this behavioral intention is generally employed to judge tourists' prospect to revisit or endorse a tourism product, service, or destination (Chen & Chen, 2010). Further, during and in the post COVID-19 pandemic, this behavioral intention is also useful for predicting visitor behavior (Itani & Hollebeek, 2021).

In predicting tourists' behavior, Chen and Chen (2010) propose the experience quality-behavioral intention model, suggesting that tourist intention is driven mainly by tourists' perceived experience quality. Itani and Hollebeek (2021) advocate that the tourists' experience visiting a tourism destination, as well as experience visiting the destination via VR, drive their behavioral intention during and in the post COVID-19 pandemic. Next, past studies in halal tourism support the association between halal tourists' perceived experience quality and their behavioral intention. In China, for instance, Jia and Chaozhi (2020) note that Muslim tourists' experience with halal products and services in the destination influence their perception and intention to revisit the destination. In similar vein, a study in the Indonesian context revealed that tourist experience with halal products and services directly impact on tourist intention to recommend the destination (Wardi, Abror, & Trinanda, 2018). Next, recent tourism studies prior to the COVID-19 pandemic agree that halal tourists' experience in the destination drives their intention to endorse and revisit the destination (Rahman, Moghavvemi, Thirumoorthi, & Rahman, 2020; Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono, et al., 2020; Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono, Lu, & Amin, 2021).

Tourist Experience in Halal Tourism

Tourist experience is a tourist reaction towards a tourism stimulus, resulting from his or her participation in a tourism event (Altunel & Koçak, 2017). In halal tourism, as in general tourism, this experience consists not only rational, but also emotional responses and involvement towards the attraction, which, subsequently influences tourist's intention to behave (Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono, et al., 2020). In similar vein, other scholars (Gohary, Pourazizi, Madani, & Chan, 2020; Wardi et al., 2018) believe that halal tourists have social and psychological reactions toward attractions in the destination as well as the destinations as a whole. Thus, halal tourist experiences, as in the case of general tourists, should not be treated as individual, but as multiple dimension which potentially influence their moods and satisfaction (Suhartanto et al., 2021).

In visiting a destination, tourists are driven by many factors. One of the main factors is to fulfil their hedonic needs, i.e., leisure from the visiting experience (Han, Al-Ansi, Koseoglu, et al., 2019; Leo et al., 2020). In fulfilling this need, tourists experience with attractions at the destination is, undeniably, a very important factor. However, for halal tourists, due to their need of consuming products that are compliant with religion values, need not only the hedonic experience, but also halal products and services (Abror, Wardi, Trinanda, & Patrisia, 2019; Jia & Chaozhi, 2020). Therefore, the halal tourist experience when visiting a tourism destination, including during COVID-19 outbreak, should be evaluated from two aspects: (1) tourist experience quality and (2) tourist experience with halal products.

Experience quality Tourist's experience quality, a tourist's value of a tourism experience, is the primary purposes for visiting a tourism destination, i.e. seeking a refreshing experience (Chen & Chen, 2010). Tourists' perceived experience with its cultural, natural, or other tourism attractions, can refresh their mind, increase their knowledge, and motivate them to revisit (Preko et al., 2020). To satisfy this experience, destination operators should create a distinct attraction to create a positive and memorable experience for the halal tourists (Rahman et al., 2020). However, during the COVID-

19 pandemic, tourists face the risk of being infected when visiting a tourism destination. Thus, tourists expect safety measures, such as hygiene and protection, as part of their visiting experience in the destination (Bonfanti et al., 2021; Hidayat et al., 2021). Itani and Hollebeek (2021)'s study on tourist intention to visit a destination during and post COVID-19 concludes that tourist experience related to how the health protocol is applied at the destination, is an important factor. Consequently, in the current pandemic, delivering experience quality should not only present a unique and refreshing experience, but also with minimal health risk (El-Gohary, 2020; Schiopu, Hornoiu, Padurean, & Nica, 2021).

In a halal tourism study, Battour, Ismail, Battor, and Awais (2017) examined tourist motivation and satisfaction in Malaysia, reporting that halal tourists experiences with attractions and services, such as natural scenery, tourism atmosphere, and local culture influence tourist satisfaction and stimulate their intention to revisit. Recent studies prior to COVID-19 pandemic (Ratnasari, Gunawan, Mawardi, & Kusuma, 2020; Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono, et al., 2020) noted that perceived experience quality with the visit significantly influences revisit and endorse intention among Muslim tourists. The authors believe that the link between experience quality and tourist intention, prior and during the pandemic, is not different, and accordingly, the following hypothesis is stated.

H1: Experience quality positively influences behavioral intention

Halal experience In tourism, halal experience refers to a tourist's encounter with products (including services) in a tourism destination that are compliant with Islamic values (Battour et al., 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, besides quality, a risk free of the virus, is an important component of a halal product (Hidayat et al., 2021). For halal tourists, the availability of these religion-associated products is an important factor in their visiting experience in a tourism destination as reported in several past studies (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Wardi et al., 2018). Past research report that halal experience impacts on halal tourists' behavior. In Malaysia, for instance a study (Isa Salmi, Chin Phaik, & Mohammad Nurul, 2018) reports that both non-physical and physical halal elements impact on tourist intention not only to revisit but also to recommend the destination. Battour, Battor, and Bhatti (2014), using the term Islamic attributes, report a significant effect of these attributes on tourist intention. Similarly, scholars (Abror, Patrisia, Trinanda, Omar Maznah, & Wardi, 2020; Suhartanto et al., 2021) report a significant relationship between experience with Muslim-friendly tourism products and halal tourists' intention towards the destination.

H2: Halal experience positively influences behavioral intention

Spillover theory (Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, & Lee, 2001) suggests that people's experience with a section of their life will 'spill over' into his or her evaluation of other parts of his or her life. Based on this theory, tourists' experience with one element of a destination impacts on their experience with other elements of their travelling to the destination. As the main purpose of tourists' visiting is for leisure while their need for halal products is driven by their personal beliefs (Preko et al., 2020; Suhartanto, Dean, Chen, & Kusdiby, 2020), it is expected that tourist's experience with halal products impact on their experience quality. A recent study prior to the COVID-19 pandemic on millennial Muslim tourists visiting non-Muslim countries (Suhartanto et al., 2021) reports a favorable relationship between halal experience and the quality of tourism attraction.

H3: Halal experience positively affects experience quality

Tourist Experience with VR

In virtual tourism, the tourist experience are complex reactions, including psychological, physical, as well as social aspects to the virtual tourism attraction (Wei, 2019). Hidayat et al. (2021) maintain that methods recommended to lower the effects of COVID-19 in halal tourism is by offering interesting and safe experiences by adopting touch-less technology such as virtual reality. Further, experience with VR strengthen tourist engagement and help other tourists who are unable to visit in person due to many reasons, including the risk of infection by COVID-19 (Hidayat et al., 2021). Although the VR experience in tourism industry is important, this experience is complex and has multi-dimensions (Kim, Lee, & Jung, 2020; Tussyadiah, Wang, Jung, & tom Dieck, 2018; Wei, 2019; Wu et al., 2019), consisting the content of tourism attraction and the system that enable tourists to enjoy a tourism attraction.

VR system A VR, system is a system of interrelated elements that enable delivering and presenting an environment virtually. A high quality VR system is indicated by the reliability, response time, convenience of access, and flexibility of the VR device (Lee, Lee, Jeong, & Oh, 2020). A past study confirms the vital role of system in various technological-based businesses, including in transportation, commerce, as well as augmented reality (Battour et al., 2021; Jung, tom Dieck, Lee, & Chung, 2016). In VR tourism, a tourist's attachment to the technology system was a key driver of tourist intention to visit a tourism destination (Kim et al., 2020). Thus, VR tourism operators need to develop an excellent VR system as a method to delivering tourism service. In the COVID-19 pandemic, due to its limited access to the destination in person, tourist attachment with VR technology will help to keep the destination in mind and thus affect their future behavioral intention towards the destination (El-Said & Aziz, 2021). Li, Song, and Guo (2021)' study in a COVID-19 pandemic study, reveals that system attributes significantly impact on tourist perceived VR presence.

VR content VR content refers to tourism information and attractions of a tourism destination directed towards tourists and presented via VR (Wu et al., 2019). Developing a unique and attractive presentation could improve tourist experiences and should be the VR tourism operators' consideration when developing VR tourism. Developing attractive and appealing VR content is challenging and costly (Kwok & Koh, 2020), but also duplicating the rich tourism destination into the VR environment is not easy (Guttentag, 2010; Tussyadiah et al., 2018). However, if managed appropriately, VR content can present a unique and memorable experience that tourists can enjoy from anywhere (Guttentag, 2010; Wei, 2019). This unique and memorable experience with the VR content will encourage tourists to revisit the destination and endorse others to visit in person as well as via VR (Wu et al., 2019). During this pandemic, tourist attachment with VR content will keep their attraction in their mind and thus impact on their future behavioral intention (El-Said & Aziz, 2021).

The purpose of a tourist visiting a tourism destination via VR is seeking leisure as in the case if they visit the destination directly. This hedonistic leisure purpose can occur only if the VR can present the tourism attraction and the destination clearly and fascinatingly via VR system or application (Kim et al., 2020; Lee, Lee, & Jeong, 2021). Further, El-Said and Aziz (2021) note the importance of ease of use of the VR system in affecting tourist enjoyment of VT during and in the post COVID-19. Accordingly, it is expected that a high quality of VR system will make the VR content attractive and enjoyable.

H₄: VR system positively affects VR content

Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), describing human-computer interactions, is a suitable approach to explain the association between experience with VR and future intention towards a

tourism destination. Csikszentmihalyi (1975, p. 4) describe flow as “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter”. It is a comprehensive feeling that a person feels when he or she performs with complete attachment (Kim & Ko, 2019). This explanation suggests that, when a tourist in flow, he or she changes into a mode of experience and is absorbed in an activity during travelling (Nusair & Parsa, 2011). This feeling is portrayed by narrowing of the focus of awareness, losing of self-consciousness, and sense of control over the environment (Nusair & Parsa, 2011). This flowing sense is expected to occur when tourist experience visiting a tourism destination via VR (Wu et al., 2019).

Past studies in VR tourism provide support for flow theory, suggesting that flow experience resulting from visiting VR will lead to satisfaction, favorable attitude, and intention to repurchase (El-Said & Aziz, 2021; Han, An, Han, & Lee, 2020; Kim & Ko, 2019; Kim & Hall, 2019). Itani and Hollebeek (2021) report tourist absorbed with VR presentations significantly impacts on tourist intention to visit the destination. In the COVID-19 pandemic, tourist captivated and satisfied with a virtual tour will keep the attraction in their mind and thus impact on their behavioral intention towards the destination (El-Said & Aziz, 2021). None of the past studies has tested this relationship and this experience visiting VR and tourist intention in the context of halal tourism. The authors argue that experience with VR, both with the system and the content, influence positively on halal tourists' behavioral intention.

H5: VR system positively affects behavioral intention

H6: VR content positively affects behavioral intention

In tourism, traveling is a consumption system where tourists' behavior before, during, and after travelling is interrelated (Woodside & Dubelaar, 2002). Visiting the destination in person as well as via VR are both tourists' experiences in fulfilling their leisure need. Thus, they are part of the tourist' consumption system and, predicted, to be related to each other. As VR content displays virtually the tourism destination, tourist experience in person with the destination is expected to influence their expectation on what they will see through VR.

H7: Experience quality positively influences VR content.

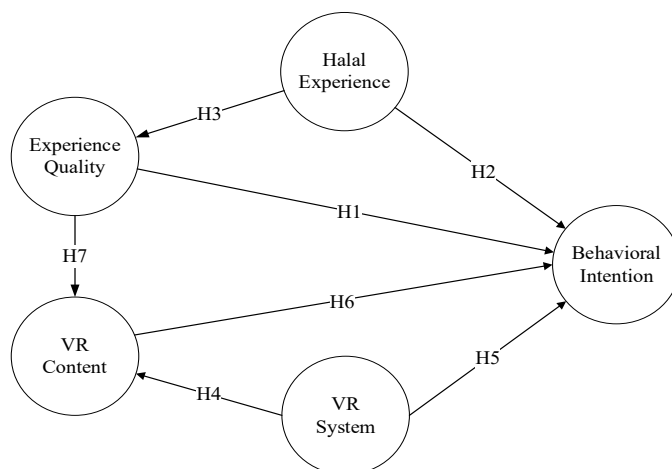


Figure 1. The proposed model of halal tourist intention

RESEARCH METHOD

Tourists' behavioral intention, experience visiting tourism destination, and experience with VR tourism have been broadly assessed in past tourism studies. Therefore, the measurement variables in this study were adapted from the extant literature (Table 1).

Table 1. Construct variable and its sources

Construct (Indicator)	Sources
1. Experience quality (5)	(Altunel & Koçak, 2017; Chen & Chen, 2010; Suhartanto, Dean, Chen, et al., 2020)
2. Halal experience (5)	(Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Han, Al-Ansi, Koseoglu, et al., 2019; Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono, et al., 2020)
3. VR system (4)	(Lee et al., 2020; Wei, 2019).
4. VR content (5)	(Rauscher, Humpe, & Brehm, 2020; Wu et al., 2019),
5. Behavioral intention (2)	(Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; El-Said & Aziz, 2021; Itani & Hollebeek, 2021)

The construct items (see Table 2) were determined with 5-point Likert scale; 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. Prior to collecting the data, the questionnaire, in English, was examined by three academics in halal tourism to check its suitability for collecting the data. Next, the questionnaire was pretested on 20 Muslim tourists to check the clarity of the instructions and the questions, ensuring minor adjustments of its instructions and question wording prior to collecting the data.

This study focuses on halal tourists experience visiting tourism, non-Muslim tourism destinations across Europe, North America, and Asia, in person and via VR. Therefore, the sample of this study was tourists who have both experiences, visiting the destination personally and through VR. The sample from Muslim-countries are from Arabs countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey, while the sample from non-Muslim countries are mainly from Western Europe, Canada, US, and Australia. Considering its sample spread of locations and the Covid-19 pandemic, an online survey was employed for collecting the data by applying the Amazon Mechanical Turk in December 2020 to January 2021. This method was used as it is an efficient method to collect data from a large geographical area and it is a common method employed in studies on tourist' behavior (Buhrmester, Talaifar, & Gosling, 2018; Kees, Berry, Burton, & Sheehan, 2017). Using this process, 291 completed questionnaires (145 from Muslim countries and 146 from non-Muslim countries) were gathered and are suitable for testing the hypotheses.

SPSS (v.26) and PLS (SmartPLS and WarpPLS) were employed to analyze the data. The SPSS was used to assess the descriptive statistics, while PLS was used to examine the construct reliability and validity. Next, PLS was also employed to assess the structural model, including testing the suitability of the model to explain the data as well as to examine the hypotheses developed. The PLS was selected as it is suitable for analyzing the not normally distributed data as in the case in this study. Further, PLS is a suitable method to examine theoretical models (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). Lastly, this study uses full collinearity VIFs test to evaluate the existence of common method variance, as suggested by Kock and Lynn (2012).

RESULTS

Data Analysis

Table 2 exposes that young and males' respondents dominate the respondent's profile, consistent with past halal tourism studies (Han, Al-Ansi, Koseoglu, et al., 2019; Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono, et al., 2020).

Table 2. Respondents' demographics profile

Variable		Muslim Countries		Non-Muslim Countries	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	101	70%	98	67%
	Female	44	30%	48	33%
Age	20-29	21	14%	10	7%
	30-39	99	68%	76	52%
	40-49	22	15%	35	24%
	>50	3	2%	25	17%
Education	High School	25	18%	4	3%
	College Degree	56	39%	77	53%
	University Degree	64	44%	64	44%
Occupation	Government Employee	16	11%	9	6%
	Private Employee	91	63%	69	47%
	Student	12	8%	39	27%
	Entrepreneur	18	12%	26	18%
	Other	8	6%	3	2%
Type of tourism destination	City	89	61%	36	25%
	Nature	23	16%	73	50%
	Cultural	13	9%	21	14%
	Other	20	14%	16	11%

Measurement Model

Testing the full collinearity VIFs resulted in a value of 1.826, less than 5, the recommended value (Hair et al., 2017), suggesting that this study does not have problem with common method variance. Next, the evaluation of measurement model was intended to assess the constructs' validity and reliability. The data analysis results in values of outer loading higher (than 0.6), composite reliability (CR) of more than 0.6, and average variance extracted (AVE) of more than 0.5. All of these values suggest that the construct variables used in this study are reliable and valid (Hair et al., 2017).

Fornell-Larcker criterion was operated to evaluate discriminant validity of the variable constructs. The result shows that the values of constructs' AVE square root (range from 0.709-0.826) are higher than the values of the construct correlation (Range from 0.377 to 0.672). This result indicates that the discriminant validity of the constructs is sound (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 3. The measurement test results

Construct/Item	Loading**	CR	AVE
VR content		0.835	0.503
Felt totally captivated.	0.723		
Felt time passed quickly.	0.741		
Felt happy.	0.701		
I had a unique experience.	0.680		
I felt refreshed in my mind.	0.699		
VR system		0.820	0.533
The VR was user friendly.	0.745		
The VR screen was highly vivid.	0.669		
The VR screen was highly detailed.	0.737		
The VR image was very realistic.	0.767		
Experience quality		0.809	0.515
I felt occupied with the activity.	0.726		
I had a special experience.	0.701		
The employees gave me excellent services.	0.647		
I felt refreshed in my mind.	0.790		
It assisted me to comprehend something new.	0.471		
Halal experience		0.900	0.644
The halal accommodation products/services	0.829		
Halal facilities (e.g., prayer rooms etc.)	0.809		
The availability of halal food and beverage	0.784		
The quality of halal food and beverage	0.805		
Conformity of the services with Islamic values	0.785		
Behavioral intention		0.811	0.683
I intend to visit the destination	0.830		
I intend to endorse others to visit the destination	0.822		

Note: ** All significant at $p < 0.01$

Structural Model

The structural model test was conducted to judge the fitness of the model and testing the hypotheses proposed. Succeeding Chin, Peterson, and Brown (2008) endorsement, a bootstrapping with 5,000 iterations was employed to estimate the propose model of behavioral intention. The result reveals that R^2 for behavioral intention is 0.478. The value of R^2 exhibits that all exogenous variables explain 47.8% of behavioral intention. This results suggests that the explanatory power of the model is large (Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin, & Lauro, 2005).

Next, this study tested Q^2 , f^2 , and goodness-of-fit (GoF) to evaluate the proposed tourist intention model. The test reveal Q^2 values are 0.294 for intention, 0.066 for experience quality, and 0.222 for VR content. The positive values of Q^2 indicate that the proposed model predictive power is satisfied (Hair et al., 2017). Testing f^2 resulted in a values range from 0.002 to 0.395, signifying that the impact of the determinant variables on R^2 values of the endogenous constructs is substantial (Hair et al., 2017). Next, testing the GoF resulted in the value of 0.488, indicating that the fitness of the model is large (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). With all those criteria, the requirements for the proposed model fitness are met (Hair et al., 2017).

The testing hypotheses results (Table 4) display that experience quality directly influences behavioral intention (β : 206, $p < 0.01$), a support for hypothesis H1. Next, halal experience effect is not significant on behavioral intention, but significant on experience quality (β : 0.377, $p < 0.01$). Thus,

hypothesis H2 is not supported but H6 is supported. Behavioral intention is influenced directly by both the VR system and VR content (β : 0.312 and β : 0.305), both at $p < 0.01$. Therefore, hypothesis H5 and H6 are reinforced. As expected, VR content is directly influenced by both VR system and experience quality (β : 0.548, $p < 0.01$ and β : 0.219, $p < 0.05$), reinforcing hypothesis H4 and H7. Finally, total effect column (the sum of indirect and direct effect) notes that tourist intention is influenced by the VR system, VR Content, and experience quality, but not by halal experience.

Table 4. Hypotheses test result

Relationship (Hypothesis)	Direct effect		Indirect Effect		Total Effect	
	β	t-value	β	t-value	β	t-value
Experience quality => Behavioral intention (H1)	0.206	2.747**	0.067	2.452*	0.273	3.559**
Halal experience => Behavioral intention (H2)	-0.04	0.761	0.103	2.919**	0.064	1.093
Halal experience => Experience quality (H3)	0.377	5.854**	-	-	0.377	5.854**
VR system => VR content (H4)	0.548	7.071**	-	-	0.548	7.071**
VR system => Behavioral intention (H5)	0.312	4.268**	0.167	2.621**	0.479	6.724**
VR content => Behavioral intention (H6)	0.305	3.382**	-	-	0.305	3.382**
Experience quality => VR content (H7)	0.219	2.373*	-	-	0.219	2.373*
Halal experience => VR content	-	-	0.083	2.102*	0.083	2.102*

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$; **significant at $p < 0.01$

Table 5. The relationship between variables based on country-of-origin

Relationship	Country-of-origin			
	Muslim		Non-Muslim	
	β	t-value	β	t-value
Experience quality => Behavioral intention	0.271	3.639**	0.081	0.523
Halal experience => Behavioral intention	-0.072	1.137	0.052	0.547
Halal experience => Experience quality	0.384	5.391**	0.410	3.325**
VR system => Behavioral intention	0.274	3.123**	0.372	2.625**
VR content => Behavioral intention	0.278	3.430**	0.344	1.961*
VR system => VR content	0.505	7.215**	0.591	3.658**
Experience quality => VR content	0.224	2.606**	0.233	1.19

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$; **significant at $p < 0.01$

Table 5 displays the result of testing the association between variable tested based on country-of-origin. The result shows that the behavioral intention for halal- tourists from Muslim countries tend to be driven by experience quality, the VR system, and VR content equally. In contrast, for halal tourists from non-Muslim countries, their intention is influenced by experience with the VR system and VR content. Finally, Table 4 indicates that halal experience is not a significant factor in influencing behavioral intention but a significant driver for experience quality for both samples.

RESULTS

First, this study assesses behavioral intention among halal tourists based on their country-of-origin (Muslim countries and non-Muslim countries) during the COVID-19 pandemic. In predicting the behavioral intention, this study integrates tourist experience visiting the destination in person and via VR as the determinants. The data analysis discloses that the behavioral intention model is a fit. Thus, the integration of experience visiting the destination via VR and visiting experience in person increases the prediction power of behavioral intention among halal tourists. This result implies that, in the current pandemic, halal tourists from both Muslim countries and non-Muslim countries perceive that their experience visiting the destination in person and via VR reinforce their behavioral intention towards the destination. Specifically, experience quality with the attraction in the destination and both the VR system and VR content foster tourists' behavioral intention during the COVID-19 pandemic. Theoretically, the finding of this study extends the experience quality-behavioral intention model (Chen & Chen, 2010; Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono, et al., 2020) suggesting that, for halal tourists from Muslim countries as well as non-Muslim countries in the COVID-19 pandemic, behavioral intention is not only driven by tourist experience directly visiting the destination but also by experiences through VR.

Second, this study reveals the importance of experience with VR in influencing behavioral intention during COVID-19 for both halal tourists from Muslim as well as non-Muslim countries. In both samples, experience with the VR system and VR content significantly affect behavioral intention to revisit and recommend although its degree of influence is different. While the existing VR tourism literature notes that virtual technology can represent, introduce, and enrich the visitor memory of the tourism destination (Kim & Hall, 2019; Tussyadiah et al., 2018), this finding signifies that the influence of experience with VR goes further. The experience via VR will positively or negatively spark tourist future behavior, indicated by their intention to revisit, and endorse the destination as reported in previous studies (Han et al., 2020; Kim & Hall, 2019). This finding reinforces Schiopu et al. (2021) conclusion that, in the COVID-19 pandemic, tourists tend to avoid unsafe experiences and treat VR as an alternative for conventional travelling. Therefore, providing VR services that can be accessed through a firm's website or mobile applications is a strategic method to influence future tourists' behavior, not only during the pandemic but also post pandemic. Conceptually, this study supports flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) in describing human-computer interactions in the context of halal VR tourism.

Third, in term of tourist perceived experience quality, this study notes a conflicting finding between the sample from Muslim countries and non-Muslim countries. While experience quality is a significant factor in influencing intention to revisit and recommend for halal tourists from Muslim countries, this factor is not a significant factor for halal tourists from non-Muslim countries. The finding for the sample from Muslim countries corroborates with past studies' finding in halal tourism which reveal that experience visiting the destination is key factor in influencing future behavior for halal tourists from Muslim countries (Abror et al., 2020; Han, Al-Ansi, Olya, & Kim, 2019; Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono, et al., 2020). While previous researchers have not evaluated the role of experience quality for halal tourists from non-Muslim majority countries, the finding from this research highlights the behavior differences between Muslim from Muslim countries and Muslim from non-Muslim countries (Norris & Inglehart, 2012; Pettersson, 2007). Theoretically, while this study offers a support for experience quality-behavioral intention (Chen & Chen, 2010; Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono, et al., 2020) on halal tourists from Muslim countries, it also does not fully support the finding for halal tourists from non-Muslim countries.

Last, this study reveals that in both samples, halal experience is not a significant factor in influencing their behavioral intention, but it is a significant factor in influencing perceived experience quality. This finding suggests that, for halal tourists visiting non-Muslim destinations, halal experience is not a significant driver for their behavioral intention. However, the availability of halal products and services in the destination will strengthen their overall experience visiting the destination. This finding implies that the availability of halal products in the destination will increase their perceived experience with the destination, but not lead them to revisit and endorse the destination. This outcome corroborates with previous researcher's (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Jia & Chaozhi, 2020) conclusion that halal tourists visiting non-Muslim destinations tend to have lower expectations that their halal needs will be met. For halal tourists from non-Muslim countries, this study offers a support for the conclusion that Muslims raised in western countries gradually absorb western values and become less involved with religion (Maliepaard, Lubbers, & Gijssberts, 2010; Milligan et al., 2014). This feeling of tolerance and involvement with the religion causes the need of halal products not a main factor in influencing their future behavior in travelling. The positive effect of halal experience and perceived experience quality, theoretically, offers a new evidence on Spillover theory (Sirgy et al., 2001) in the context of halal tourists from Muslim countries as well as non-Muslim countries.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

First, this study emphasizes the significance of VR experiences, both in terms of system and content, in affecting halal tourist behavior from both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. As a result, destination service providers, tour operators, hotels, and tour booking websites, as well as official tourism organizations, should invest in marketing their products using premium content VR platforms during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. In terms of the VR system, the VR tours should be accessible. In other words, people from various backgrounds, ages, and gadgets should be able to use it. People with varying degrees of computer literacy will be drawn to the VRs and navigation in the VRs should be as easy as possible. An orientation or tutorial should be included at the beginning of the virtual trip. Furthermore, for those interested in the VR as a technological novelty, it is essential to make the most of the digital format, in which a person is not bound by real-world physics. This might be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as allowing the user to view places and objects from various angles, providing "X-ray" vision to see multiple layers of buildings or streets, or allowing the viewer to see what the site looked like in the past.

Second, a key factor in influencing halal tourists from both Muslim and non-Muslim countries is the quality of the experience when visiting the destination. Thus, there is a need for optimal efforts both financially and non-financially by destination operators in improving the tourist experience both by visiting the destination via VR or visiting the destination directly. These efforts include a focus on elements that enhance the quality of the visiting experience, such as peace of mind, escape, and learning. Further, continuous innovation by the tourism attractions must meet and exceed tourist expectations. In addition, competent staff, who can convey comprehensive information and serve tourists satisfactorily, will increase behavioral intentions to halal tourist visit.

Halal tourists have various degrees of faith-based understanding and devotion. Strictly observant Muslims can expect that most of their religious needs will be met while traveling, whereas less observant Muslims may prioritize essential needs, for instance, prayer facilities and halal food. Destinations that can cater to varied religious needs at all levels will be the most successful in offering a one-of-a-kind tourist experience to its halal tourist clients. Providing a variety of halal tourism

products and services such as halal food restaurants, alcohol-free accommodation, separate leisure facilities for men and women, room facilities and halal room settings such as toilets with bidet showers, prayer rugs, and signs indicating the direction of the qibla is important to develop a favorable experience for halal tourists, both from Muslim and non-Muslim countries. In addition, providing halal services and products in places halal tourists mostly visit, such as airports, shopping malls, and restaurants is recommended.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although contributing to our understanding on halal tourists' behavioral intention from Muslim as well non-Muslim countries, this research bears several shortcomings. First the sample of halal tourist from Muslim countries was gathered from few Arab countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey. Similarly, the sample of halal tourist from non-Muslim countries was collected from only a selected number of Western Europe countries, North America, and Australia. While these groups of countries as the country-of-origin share some similarity, they are culturally different, resulting in a limited generalization of this study's findings. Thus, future studies can examine halal tourist behavioral intention models in other country of origin, for instance between Muslim countries other than those used in this study (e.g., Arab countries only) or other non-Muslim majority countries such as East Asian countries (China, Japan, and Korea). Second, the health risk and trust issues related to Covid-19 are important factors that possibly influence tourist behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. The future study could include these two factors as other behavioral intention drivers. Last, this study does not focus on a specific tourism destination but a mix of tourism destination, such as a city, a cultural destination, and natural destination. As these are different types of tourism destinations, further studies may wish to focus only on certain type of tourism destination.

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