UNVEILING SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS: EXPLORING PERCEIVED VALUES, SATISFACTION, AND REVISIT INTENTIONS IN MUSLIM RELIGIOUS TOURISM

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Abstract

Purpose – This study examines the impact of multidimensional perceived values—encompassing quality, emotional, social, price, Islamic, and wellness—on satisfaction and revisit intention among Muslim religious tourists. Focusing on optional spiritual journeys beyond *Hajj,* the research offers insights into the distinctive behavioral drivers shaping experiences in this growing niche tourism sector in Malaysia.
Design/Methodology/Approach – A mixed-methods approach was adopted. Quantitative data were collected through a structured online questionnaire completed by 280 Muslim respondents and analyzed using PLS-SEM. To enrich and contextualize the findings, qualitative interviews were conducted with 12 participants to explore deeper emotional and experiential dimensions.
Findings – Emotional, wellness, and quality values were found to significantly influence satisfaction, while emotional, Islamic, and social values were key drivers of revisit intention. Price and Islamic values were perceived as essential but did not significantly impact satisfaction, suggesting they are baseline expectations rather than satisfaction enhancers. Qualitative insights revealed that spiritual resonance, emotional healing, and a sense of inner peace were more important than cost or standard religious amenities in shaping positive experiences.
Originality of the research – This study introduces the Muslim Tourist Perceived Value (MTPV) framework, offering a holistic understanding of Muslim religious tourists' motivations and satisfaction. It advances theory by emphasizing emotional and wellness dimensions in non-obligatory religious travel contexts.
Keywords Perceived value, satisfaction, revisit intention, religious tourism, Muslim tourist

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INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism, closely tied to the search for meaning and spirituality, has become a growing focus in tourism research. It goes beyond travel for leisure—it often reflects a deep personal journey of self-discovery and renewal. As Rashid (2018) explains, religious tourism is motivated by a quest for spiritual enhancement, while Buhalis (2022) links it to overall well-being and life satisfaction. Sacred sites such as cathedrals, temples, and mosques draw millions of visitors every year, not only for religious reasons but also for cultural, educational, and recreational purposes (Woodward, 2004). These experiences can be transformative, with Khalid and Ali (2023) showing that religious environments heighten the sense of spirituality and value tourists attach to their journeys. The increasing popularity of such travel has elevated religious tourism into a recognised subfield of study as well as an important niche market within the global tourism industry (Aziz et al., 2020).

What makes religious tourism especially compelling is its universality. Eid and El-Gohary (2015) describe spiritual experiences as transcending religious boundaries, while Bowler (2014) points out that they offer solace and inner peace regardless of faith. From Jerusalem and Makkah to Rome and the Buddhist mountains of China, these sacred places attract millions (Kim, et al., 2020), and an estimated 240 million people participate in pilgrimages each year, primarily Muslims, Christians, and Hindus (Jackowski, 2014). Pilgrimages remain central to many faiths, inspired by figures such as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Jesus Christ, and Gautama Buddha. The enduring appeal of these journeys has not only shaped cultural identities but also turned religious tourism into an important driver of local and global economies (Iliev, 2020).

For Muslims, travel holds a unique spiritual dimension. Islam itself encourages exploration, and religious journeys are seen as a means of enhancing one's faith and well-being. Aminudin and Jamal (2019) emphasise that such travel improves mental health and spiritual awareness, while Huan, et al. (2024) and Hasan (2023) highlight the growing demand for Muslim-friendly packages that reflect these needs. In fact, value perception has consistently been identified as a key factor influencing satisfaction and loyalty among Muslim tourists (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015). This makes understanding perceived

value essential to shaping sustainable religious tourism experiences (Ekka, 2024; Supardin et al., 2025). Yet, despite its importance, Muslim religious tourism beyond the obligatory Hajj and Umrah remains understudied. Journeys such as Rihla and Ziarah, often pursued for self-discovery, wellness, or spiritual fulfilment, are rarely given serious attention in the literature (Almuhrzi & Alsawafi, 2017; Wani, 2018). This study addresses that gap by focusing on Malaysian Muslim tourists, situated in a Muslim-majority country with a strong ecosystem of Muslim-friendly tourism services.

To guide the inquiry, the research applies the Muslim Tourist Perceived Value (MTPV) framework (Isa et al., 2018), which integrates six interrelated dimensions: quality, emotional, social, price, Islamic, and wellness values. By examining these dimensions together, the study seeks to provide a deeper theoretical understanding of how perceived value influences satisfaction and revisit intentions in Muslim religious tourism. At the same time, it offers practical insights for designing tourism experiences that not only meet the functional needs of Muslim travelers but also resonate with their spiritual and emotional aspirations.

1. LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Muslim Religious Tourism

The emergence of the Muslim tourism market has prompted the introduction of various terms aimed at delineating the concept of tourism tailored to the requirements of Muslim travelers. Among these terms, "Islamic tourism," "halal tourism," "Muslim-friendly tourism," and "religious tourism" are commonly employed to elucidate the concept (Fajriyati et al., 2022). Despite their frequent interchangeable usage, these terms inherently possess distinct meanings. Religious tourism, for instance, is distinguished by a heterogeneous and segmented demographic of travelers who pursue diverse contemporary aspirations, including spiritual fulfillment, introspection, tranquility, and guidance (Kim et al., 2020).

Pilgrimage, a quintessential facet of religious tourism, involves spiritual journeys to designated sacred sites, where adherents partake in religious rites. The motivations behind religious tourism are multifaceted, encompassing elements such as education, knowledge-seeking, relationship-building, and heightened awareness, all of which propel individuals toward holy locations (Andriotis, 2009). Annually, many pilgrims converge on sacred places to fulfill their spiritual obligations, with Muslim religious tourism embracing four distinct activities: *Hajj*, *Umrah*, *Rihla*, and *Ziarah* (Jafari & Scott, 2014).

Hajj, as one of the five pillars of Islam, imposes specific rituals within a defined temporal and practical framework. This obligatory journey to Mecca and Medina for all Muslims occurs during the final month of the Islamic calendar, *Dhul Hijjah*, on the 9th and 10th of Dhul Hijjah (Jafari & Scott, 2014). In contrast*, Umrah,* an optional Islamic ritual, stands out in terms of its flexibility, as it can be performed throughout the year, except on the days of *Hajj* (Haq & Jackson, 2009). Aminudin and Jamal (2019) illuminate the distinction: *"Hajj* is more time-consuming and involves more rituals, while *Umrah* can be performed in less than a few hours." The pilgrimage tourism associated with *Hajj* and *Umrah* marks a symbolic return of the Islamic movement to the Masjid al-Haram in Makkah and the Masjid an-Nabawi in Medina, two of the holiest sites for Muslims on earth.

Rihla, the third activity, denotes a journey pursued for the sake of knowledge, commerce, health, or scientific investigation, reflecting the diverse objectives that drive Muslim travelers (Kessler, 1992). Renowned figures like Sufi Rumi and Ibn Battuta achieved *Rihla* status through journeys in pursuit of enlightenment and exploration (Mortada, 2003). While Islamic pilgrimages and travel are distinct phenomena, they share an intricate connection, often categorized as religious journeys by anthropologists and scientists (Meri, 2009).

The fourth activity, Ziarah, involves visiting holy sites, such as shrines, mosques, or monasteries, to foster spiritual development (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Muslim Ziarah encompasses visits to specific graves, shrines, mosques, or monasteries for physical and spiritual solace, addressing concerns ranging from personal losses to family business and growth (Jafari & Scott, 2014). However, this practice is viewed critically within Islamic systems, accused of perpetuating local cultural customs rather than aligning with Quranic or Hadith-based Islamic doctrine.

Consequently, Muslim religious tourism bifurcates into two segments: the obligatory *(Rukun)*, represented by *Hajj*, and the optional travels, comprising *Umrah, Ziarah*, and *Rihla.* Beyond the religious spectrum, the motivations of religious tourists encompass seeking divine blessings, healing, and spiritual growth (Božić et al., 2016). Whether religious or non-religious, spiritual tourists may embark on journeys to deepen their relationship with a higher power (Jafari & Scott, 2014). Additionally, admiration, curiosity, and the desire to benefit from the destination's supportive services, tours, and recreational activities contribute to the reasons behind religious tourism (Bideci & Albayrak, 2016). This study delves explicitly into Muslim religious tourism, focusing on optional spiritual tourism activities, excluding the mandatory pilgrimage of *the Hajj*. Furthermore, recent research by Huan, et al. (2024) and Ohlan and Ohlan (2023) underscores the ongoing relevance of these themes in the evolving landscape of religious tourism.

1.2 Muslim Tourist Perceived Value (MTPV)

Understanding the perceived value also provides ample opportunities to determine its link to their satisfaction and loyalty from a Muslim traveler's perspective (Hassan et al., 2022). Generally, scholars have studied extensively on topics relating to the theme of value and its behavioral consequences (e.g., Benkenstein et al., 2003; Gallarza & Gil Saura, 2006; Kwun & Oh, 2004; Nasution & Mavondo, 2008; Petrick, 2002; Santini et al., 2018). Although a myriad of research has been conducted concerning the role of value on consumer behavior, most previous frameworks have presented a one-sided discussion skewed towards only conventional tourism perspectives. The assertion corresponds with the study by Nguyen-Viet and Nguyen (2023), who emphasized the limited attention given to the antecedents and outcomes of place attachment within the context of religious destinations. Except for the study on the pilgrimage of *Hajj* and *Umrah* (Almuhrzi & Alsawafi, 2017; Jafari & Scott, 2014: Wani, 2018), studies on tourism have mainly overlooked the noble values within the broader context of Muslim religious tourism. The failure to review traveling intentions and to investigate several other types of Muslim religion has developed a gap of spiritual ignorance or Sunnah ignorance among Muslim tourists. Thus, this study focuses on the values of Muslim tourists in the context of Muslim religious tourism, examining how they influence tourist satisfaction and intentions to revisit the country.

Satisfaction in the tourism context is interpreted as a tourist's total evaluation of destination attributes (Fajriyati et al., 2022). The overall satisfaction during a stay in a destination depends not only on the experience with tourism services. It is influenced by many endogenous and exogenous factors (Vojtko et al., 2022). This study implemented the new measurement proposed by Isa et al. (2018) called Muslim Tourist Perceived Value (MTPV). The MTPV framework builds upon prior models such as SERVQUAL and PERVAL by incorporating context-specific dimensions relevant to Muslim religious tourism. While SERVQUAL focuses primarily on service quality through five dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy), and PE RVAL emphasizes consumer value in terms of quality, price, emotional, and social value, both frameworks are primarily rooted in secular, Western service contexts. MTPV extends these models by integrating Islamic and wellness values, capturing both spiritual compliance (e.g., halal services, prayer facilities) and holistic well-being (mental, emotional, and physical). These additions recognize that Muslim tourists—particularly in religious travel contexts—derive value not only from functional service quality or hedonic experiences but also from faith alignment and spiritual restoration.

The dimensions in MTPV include quality and price (i.e., cognitive value), emotion and social (i.e., affective value), physical and non-physical attributes (i.e., Islamic value), which represent the level of tourist experience after using the products and services (i.e., reflection on experience). Giving value to consumers in hospitality and tourism is a strong foundation for competitive advantage (Lai et al., 2018). Tourist satisfaction is another variable influencing revisit intention (Osman et al., 2024). Satisfaction is essential because numerous researchers have investigated the positive impact of customer satisfaction on an organization's profitability. Therefore, the consequences of tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction must be taken into account. Eid and El-Gohary (2015) argue that perceived value has a significant and positive relationship with customer satisfaction and revisit intention. Research conducted by Smith et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of customer perception, particularly the perception of satisfaction following a theoretical service encounter. Likewise, satisfied tourists are more likely to revisit and develop loyalty when effectively catered to, as they are better able to meet customer needs and preferences (John & Supramaniam, 2024). This perception of satisfaction was correlated with intentions to make repeat purchases and share positive recommendations.

2. METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining a structured quantitative survey with follow-up, in-depth, qualitative interviews. The dual-phase design enabled a robust examination of the MTPV framework, validating hypotheses through statistical modeling and enriching the interpretation of results through a thematic exploration of lived experiences.

2.1 Quantitative Phase: Survey-Based Analysis

The quantitative component was initiated by developing and distributing a structured questionnaire. The instrument was designed in English and then translated into Malay through a back-translation process to ensure linguistic accuracy (Ozolins et al., 2020). The questionnaire was vetted by academic experts for clarity and cultural appropriateness. It was divided into five sections: demographic data, perceived value dimensions (quality, emotional, social, price, Islamic, and wellness), satisfaction, revisit intention, and perceived travel remedies. Responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). A pilot test involving 30 respondents ensured the instrument's reliability and clarity. Subsequently, a purposive sampling strategy was applied to recruit 280 valid participants, all Muslim adults (18 years and above) with experience in optional religious tourism activities such as *Umrah, Ziarah*, or *Rihla* (excluding *Hajj*). Data was gathered online and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This technique enabled the simultaneous evaluation of multiple latent constructs and the testing of the study's hypothesized relationships.

2.2 Qualitative Phase: In-Depth Interviews

A qualitative phase was conducted following the quantitative analysis to contextualize further and interpret the statistical findings. A subset of 12 participants was purposively selected from the original survey pool based on two key criteria: (1) demographic diversity (gender, age, and occupation) to reflect a broad range of perspectives, and (2) variation in satisfaction levels, as identified from survey responses. This purposeful sampling strategy ensured a balanced representation of both highly satisfied and less satisfied participants, allowing for a richer understanding of the emotional and experiential factors influencing satisfaction and revisit intentions. These semi-structured interviews were conducted online and lasted between 15 to 25 minutes. The interview guide explored themes such as emotional resonance, satisfaction, perceptions of Islamic and wellness values, and behavioral intentions. Questions were open-ended to encourage depth and authenticity in responses. Examples include: "What moments during your trip were spiritually or emotionally meaningful?" and "How did this journey influence your desire to return or recommend it to others?"

The qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis, following the six-step process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis began with familiarisation, where the researcher read through the transcripts multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of the content. Next, initial codes were created by identifying meaningful segments across the dataset. In the theme development stage, related codes were grouped to form broader patterns that captured key ideas. These themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflected the data and were distinguishable from one another. In the next step, the themes were defined and named, capturing their essence in a concise and meaningful way. Ultimately, the themes were synthesised into a clear and coherent narrative, connecting participants' experiences to the study's broader objectives. This approach helped uncover more profound insights and patterns in the data, enriching the understanding of the quantitative findings.

2.3 Data Collection

A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents, separate from the primary participant group, to enhance the clarity and reliability of the survey instrument. The finalized questionnaire was distributed via a web-based platform, successfully collecting 280 valid responses by the end of March 2025. This sample size falls within the recommended range of 151 to 400 participants commonly adopted in structural equation modeling (SEM) studies, as noted by Schuberth, et al. (2023). A purposive sampling approach was employed to ensure the relevance and quality of the data. Participants were required to meet three key criteria: (1) self-identification as Muslims, (2) being 18 years of age or older, and (3) having participated in at least one Muslim religious tourism experience, excluding the obligatory *Hajj* pilgrimage. The individual tourist served as the primary unit of analysis in this study. Survey invitations were disseminated through web links and email, enabling broad and efficient outreach while maintaining respondent confidentiality.

2.4 Methodological Contributions

This study makes a significant methodological contribution by introducing the MTPV framework, a novel conceptual model tailored to Muslim religious tourism. By integrating six dimensions—quality, emotional, social, price, Islamic, and wellness values—the framework captures the multifaceted experiences and motivations of Muslim travelers. This approach moves beyond the conventional single-dimensional models often used in tourism research, offering a nuanced tool for examining satisfaction and revisiting intentions within niche tourism segments.

The study also employs partial least squares-based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess the relationships between perceived value, satisfaction, and revisit intention. This advanced technique enables the simultaneous evaluation of multiple latent constructs, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings. Moreover, operationalizing the MTPV dimensions through a structured and culturally validated questionnaire ensures the appropriateness and accuracy of the data collection, setting a benchmark for future studies in this area.

By focusing on underexplored dimensions, such as emotional and wellness values, and integrating optional religious activities like *Rihla* and *Ziarah*, this research broadens tourism methodologies to include subjective and experiential aspects of travel. These advancements enhance the understanding of Muslim religious tourism and offer a replicable model for examining value-driven satisfaction and loyalty in other niche tourism markets.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 Respondents Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of 280 Muslim respondents involved in optional religious tourism. The sample is predominantly female (57.9%), indicating a strong presence of females in spiritual travel. The largest age group is 40–49 years (36.4%), suggesting that midlife adults are most engaged in these journeys, possibly reflecting a stage of deeper spiritual exploration. A majority are married (57.9%), though a notable proportion of divorced individuals (14.3%) also participate, which may suggest a personal search for healing or transformation. Occupation-wise, the private sector accounts for the highest share (40.0%), followed by civil servants (30.0%), reflecting the interest of working professionals in spiritual tourism. In terms of travel frequency, most respondents have undertaken 1 to 5 trips in the past five years (84.3%).

Table 1: **Demographic Profiles of Respondents (*N* = 280)**

Demographic	Categories	Frequencies (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	162	57.9
	Male	118	42.1
Age	18 -29 years	48	17.1
	30-39 years	84	30.0
	40-49 years	102	36.4
	50-59 years	28	10.0
	60 above	18	6.4
Marital Status	Single	96	27.9
	Married	176	57.9
	Divorced	40	14.3
Occupation	Student	36	12.9
	Civil Servant	84	30.0
	Private Sector	112	40.0
	Self-employed	28	10.0
	Unemployed	20	7.1
Number of trips in the past five years	Once	114	40.7
	2 - 5 times	122	43.6
	6 - 9 times	24	8.6
	10-13 times	12	4.3
	More than 14 times	8	2.8

Source: Author

3.2 Reliability and validity test

The partial least squares-based structural equation modeling approach was applied for data analysis (Hair et al., 2017). Standardized factor loadings (SFL), composite reliability (CR), Cronbach's alpha (CA), and average variance extracted (AVE) scores were used to test the reliability and validity of the latent constructs (see Table 2). The results indicate acceptable reliability: the SFL of the observed indicators ranges from 0.794 to 0.952; the CR of the latent constructs ranges from 0.840 to 0.933; the CA of the latent constructs ranges from 0.713 to 0.918; and the AVE of the latent constructs ranges from 0.712 to 0.929. Therefore, the scales show acceptable reliability and convergent validity of all latent constructs (Hair et al., 2009).

Table 2: **Measurement Model Assessment**

Construct	Items	Sources	SFL	CA	CR	AVE
Emotional	I am happy with the purchase of a tourism package.	Eid and El-Gohary (2014)	0.914	0.940	0.944	0.869
	The tourism package that I purchased made me feel relaxed.		0.922			
	The tourism package I purchased gave me a positive feeling.		0.952			
	The tourism package I purchased gave me pleasure.		0.942			
Islamic	Availability of prayer facilities	Eid and El-Gohary (2014)	0.840	0.882	0.914	0.680
	Availability of Halal food.		0.794			
	Availability of Shari'ah-compatible toilets.		0.853			
	Availability of segregated services.		0.839			
	Availability of Shari'ah-compatible entertainment tools.		0.795			
Price	The tourism package was a good purchase for the price.	Eid and El-Gohary (2014)	0.887	0.879	0.916	0.732
	The tourism package purchased was reasonably priced.		0.845			
	The price was the main criterion for my decision.		0.829			
	The products and services offered at tourism destinations were economical.		0.860			
Quality	The tourism package purchased was well-organized.	Eid and El-Gohary (2014)	0.890	0.905	0.933	0.778
	The quality of the tourism was maintained throughout.		0.836			
	The tourism package had an acceptable level of quality.		0.919			
	The tourism package purchased was well-made.		0.880			
Revisit	I intend to participate in similar religious tourism activities at this destination.	Baker and Crompton (2000)	0.902	0.826	0.896	0.717
	I would recommend this religious tourism experience to others, which may encourage me to revisit it.		0.718			
	If I plan another religious trip, this destination is my preferred choice.		0.950			
Satisfaction	My choice to visit the destination was a wise one.	Isa et al. (2018)	0.712	0.799	0.882	0.767
	This experience was exactly what I needed.		0.911			
	Overall, I am satisfied with the products and services the destination provides.		0.901			
Social	I feel accepted after purchasing the tourism package.	Choi et al. (2017)	0.875	0.912	0.938	0.790
	The spiritual tourism package enhanced the way people perceive me.		0.929			
	The tourism package I purchased gave me social approval.		0.910			
	Many people whom I know purchased the tourism package.		0.839			
Wellness	The tourism package had value for my quality of life.	Chen and Petrick (2013)	0.904	0.926	0.947	0.818
	The tourism package was beneficial for my physical health.		0.918			
	The tourism package was beneficial for my mental wellness.		0.917			
	The tourism package relieved my tension.		0.879			

Note: SD: Standard deviation; SFL: Standardised factor loading; CA: Cronbach's alpha; CR: Composite reliability; AVE: Average variance extracted.

As shown in Table 3, the square roots of the AVE of each latent construct exceed the construct's correlation with other constructs, indicating adequate discriminant validity. Moreover, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) value is smaller than 0.85, which supports discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). Therefore, it is summarized that the psychometric properties of each latent construct, especially for the present study, are acceptable (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Table 3: **Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) Criterion**

	EMO	ISL	PRI	QLT	REV	SAT	SOC	WN
EMO								
ISL	0.477							
PRI	0.884	0.495						
QLT	0.833	0.568	0.851					
REV	0.827	0.592	0.661	0.666				
SAT	0.832	0.585	0.763	0.781	0.836			
SOC	0.833	0.476	0.842	0.755	0.681	0.669		
WN	0.857	0.572	0.783	0.695	0.752	0.873	0.798	

Note: ISL: islamic value; PRI: price value; EMO: emotional value; QLT: quality value; SAT: satisfaction; REV: revisit intention; SOC: social value; WN: wellness

3.3 Structural Model

The structural model exhibits a satisfactory fit, as indicated by the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR = 0.075), which falls below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.08 (Henseler et al., 2016; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The analysis presented in Table 4 unveils noteworthy relationships within the hypothesized framework.

Table 4: **Study's hypothesis testing**

Direct Effect	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
$H1_a$: Quality → Satisfaction	0.227	1.975	0.024	Accept
$H1_b$: Emotional → Satisfaction	0.283	2.204	0.014	Accept
$H1_c$: Social → Satisfaction	-0.190	1.910	0.028	Reject
$H1_d$: Price → Satisfaction	0.049	0.404	0.343	Reject
$H1_e$: Islamic → Satisfaction	0.057	0.764	0.222	Reject
$H1_f$: Wellness → Satisfaction	0.470	3.425	0.000	Accept
$H2_a$: Quality → Revisit	-0.158	1.606	0.054	Reject
$H2_b$: Emotional → Revisit	0.560	4.241	0.000	Accept
$H2_e$: Social → Revisit	0.152	1.651	0.049	Accept
$H2_d$: Price → Revisit	-0.166	1.246	0.106	Reject
$H2_e$: Islamic → Revisit	0.167	1.932	0.027	Accept
$H2_f$: Wellness → Revisit	-0.138	0.890	0.187	Reject
H3: Satisfaction → Revisit	0.510	4.456	0.000	Accept

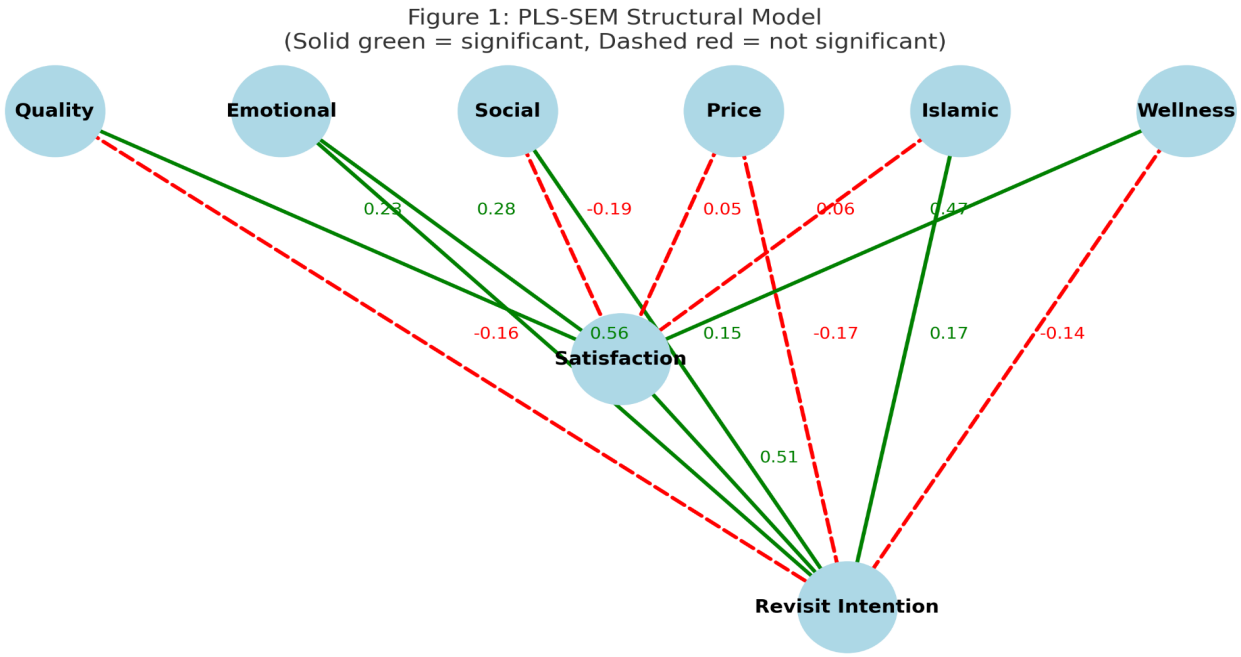
Note: *p-value of 0.01, 0.05 (Hair et al., 2017)

In substantiating Hypothesis 1a, the observed relationship between perceived quality and destination attachment is statistically significant (β = 0.227, t = 1.975, p = 0.024), thereby warranting the acceptance of H1a. Similarly, the positive correlation between emotional value and satisfaction (β = 0.283, t = 2.204, p = 0.014) substantiates H1b. However, the study does not find a significant impact of social value on satisfaction (β = -0.190, t = 1.910, p = 0.028), leading to rejection of H1c. The absence of a significant relationship between price and satisfaction (β = 0.0496, t = 0.404, p = 0.343) prompts the rejection of H1d. Moreover, the inconsequential relationship between Islamic value and satisfaction (β = 0.057, t = 0.764, p = 0.222) leads to rejecting H1e. Conversely, a positive relationship is established between wellness value and satisfaction (β = 0.470, t = 3.425, p = 0.000), aligning with H1f.

Moving forward, the analysis of relationships on revisit intentions (H2) reveals that Hypotheses 2a, 2d, and 2f, positing connections between quality, price, and wellness with revisit intentions, respectively, lack empirical support and are consequently rejected. On the other hand, emotional, social, and Islamic values emerge as influential factors, substantiating the acceptance of Hypotheses 2b, 2c, and 2e. Finally, the assertion in Hypothesis 3, positing a relationship between satisfaction and revisit intentions, is supported with a robust linkage (β = 0.510, t = 4.456, p < 0.001). The cumulative explanatory power of the model,

as indicated by the R-squared statistic of 0.634, suggests that the six value dimensions account for 63.4% of the variability in revisit intentions within the context of Muslim spiritual tourism. The structural model in Figure 1 encapsulates a visual synthesis of the hypothesized relationships, providing a comprehensive overview of the statistical narrative.

Figure 1: **PLS-SEM Structural Model of Muslim Tourist Perceived Value (MTPV)**



Note: Solid green = significant, Dashed red = not significant

3.4 Qualitative Analysis: Deepening the Understanding Through In-Depth Interviews

A follow-up qualitative study was conducted using in-depth semi-structured interviews to complement and enrich the insights derived from the survey-based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). This phase explored the deeper meanings, emotions, and contextual factors underlying the quantitative relationships identified within the MTPV framework. By engaging directly with the voices of Muslim travelers, the qualitative analysis offers a nuanced perspective on how various dimensions of value influence satisfaction and revisit intentions in religious tourism.

The qualitative findings broadly aligned with the quantitative results, providing deeper explanatory insights. For instance, participants frequently emphasized that the emotional and spiritual ambiance of their journey—moments of peace, prayer, and connection—was far more influential in shaping their satisfaction than material or logistical elements. This supports the quantitative model's strong statistical significance of emotional and wellness values. Several respondents described their trips as "healing experiences" or "soul-restoring," reinforcing the argument that religious tourism is a spiritual and psychological remedy for Muslim travelers. Interestingly, while Islamic values such as halal food and prayer facilities were expected and appreciated, they were often taken for granted, which may explain their limited statistical impact on satisfaction in the survey. Participants confirmed that these services are considered baseline requirements, not differentiating features. One interviewee stated, "If halal food or a place to pray is not available, I would not even consider going. However, once it's there, I'm looking for something deeper that touches the soul." This reflects that Islamic values serve as qualifiers rather than satisfiers or delighters.

Similarly, the qualitative responses shed light on why price showed an insignificant relationship with satisfaction. Many participants perceived their journey as a spiritual investment rather than a transactional purchase. Emotional resonance and spiritual fulfillment were cited as outweighing any financial considerations. For example, one respondent noted, "I didn't choose the cheapest package. I chose the one that felt most spiritually complete. You can't put a price on peace of mind." These insights emphasize that value in religious tourism extends beyond cost and is deeply rooted in emotional and experiential dimensions.

Furthermore, the interviews highlighted how satisfaction serves as a bridge to revisit intention. Several participants expressed a strong desire to return, not because of the destination's features, but because of the emotional imprint and spiritual transformation they experienced. Satisfaction was described as a reflection of the services rendered and a memory-laden, internal state that motivates repeat behavior.

Through this qualitative layer, the study was able to uncover hidden dimensions such as "emotional solidarity," "spiritual immersion," and "transformative fulfillment," which may not be fully captured through structured surveys alone. These themes offer valuable direction for refining the MTPV framework and developing future scales or model extensions. Moreover, the narratives gathered through interviews provide compelling, real-world context for stakeholders seeking to design, market, and manage Muslim religious tourism experiences.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study examines the intricate relationships between perceived value, satisfaction, and revisit intention within the context of Muslim religious tourism. Our findings, encompassing the acceptance of hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1f, H2b, H2c, H2e, and H3f (see Table 4), align consistently with earlier studies in the literature (Jamal et al., 2023; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2025; Hallak et al., 2018). Notably, this study examines perceived value as a catalyst that enhances satisfaction and subsequently influences Muslims' revisit intentions. Both variables emerge as precursors to revisit intention, with satisfaction acting as a mediator between perceived value and the intention to revisit.

In the broader context of tourist-perceived value (Ahn & Back, 2019; Eid & El-Gohary, 2014; Pencarelli & Forlani, 2018) and satisfaction (e.g., Çoban, 2012; da Cunha & Louro, 2024), our results highlight that quality, emotional, and wellness values distinctly contribute to the satisfaction of Muslim tourists visiting religious destinations. This study, thus, contributes to our understanding of Muslim tourists' value perceptions and satisfaction with tourism destinations, with these value dimensions proving significant ($R^2 = 0.702$) in predicting revisit intention. Miocevic (2024) noted that travelers are likely to revisit destinations that meet their work and leisure requirements. The results drawn in this study support the research conducted by Nguyen-Viet & Nguyen (2023), underscoring the importance of investigating these associations within the setting of places of worship. Hence, the subsequent discussion explores the theoretical implications derived from the study's results.

The study highlights the significant impact of Muslims' perceptions of quality on their satisfaction (H1a). This may stem from the increasing priority placed on quality aspects in religious tourism destinations, encompassing halal food, worship places, and Sharia-compatible art and entertainment options. Given the primary objective of Muslim religious tourism—seeking meaning, spiritual well-being, and emotional fulfillment in individual lives—tourists evaluate destinations not merely based on the quality of products and services but also on the overall enjoyment offered (emotional value, H1b), aligning with the findings of Adirestuty (2019). Another study by Joo et al. (2020) highlighted that fostering a sense of closeness and emotional connection to the place visited enhances tourists' travel satisfaction and strengthens revisit intentions. Moreover, Hoang et al. (2024) support the assertion that in competitive market contexts, the success of hospitality enterprises hinges significantly on providing high-quality services and attaining customer satisfaction. Consequently, destinations catering to Muslim tourists are more likely to be revisited if they offer excellent tourism experiences that align with the visitors' expectations and preferences.

Furthermore, our results reveal that wellness values have a significant influence on tourists' satisfaction with Muslim religious tourism (H1f). The motivation for embarking on a journey often arises from stress in various facets of life, prompting individuals to seek respite from their everyday concerns. The wellness aspect of tourism serves as a precise remedy, addressing the spiritual and emotional needs of Muslim tourists, aligning with the observations of Idrus et al. (2020). For Muslim tourists, religious tourism serves as a means to spiritually rejuvenate, utilizing faith as a potent tool to navigate life's challenges. Typically, Muslim travelers embarking on religious pilgrimages such as *Hajj* and *Umrah* to Makkah and Medina engage in various activities to nurture their emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. Besides, An et al. (2022) further emphasize the significance of considering tourists' emotional connection, fostered through resident interactions, when measuring their overall experiences. This emotional solidarity transcends mere satisfaction and highlights the more profound impact such interactions can have on tourists. Valente-Pedro et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of addressing physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, highlighting the significance of self-care, stress management, and adopting a healthy lifestyle to facilitate the body's inherent healing mechanisms. This highlights the perception among Muslim tourists that wellness considerations are integral to their experiences during religious tourism endeavors.

Contrary to expectations, the study found that price and Islamic values had no significant impact on satisfaction H1d) in Muslim religious tourism. The insignificance of price suggests that participants perceived their travel as a spiritual investment rather than a cost-sensitive decision (Nurohman et al., 2023). This aligns with the qualitative insights, where travelers emphasized emotional and spiritual fulfillment over affordability. In a highly competitive market with standardized pricing, Muslim tourists prioritize experiential richness—such as inner peace, healing, and reflection—over cost, thereby challenging conventional models that directly link price to satisfaction (Arenoe et al., 2020). Similarly, the insignificant role of Islamic values—such as halal food and prayer facilities—reflects their status as baseline expectations, not differentiating features. These elements are assumed to be available and thus do not enhance satisfaction unless absent. Satisfaction is instead driven by deeper emotional, wellness, and spiritual experiences. These findings signal a paradigm shift in Muslim religious tourism—from ritual compliance to emotional connection and transformative meaning. For tourism providers, this means moving beyond basic religious infrastructure to curate immersive, spiritually resonant journeys that foster loyalty and revisit intention.

4.1 Theoretical and Managerial Contributions

This study introduces the MTPV framework, a comprehensive conceptual model specifically developed to understand perceived value from the perspective of Muslim tourists. By incorporating six dimensions—quality, emotional, social, price, Islamic, and wellness values—the framework offers a nuanced approach to exploring the multifaceted elements that shape Muslim tourists' satisfaction and revisit intentions. It addresses a significant gap in the existing tourism literature, which has primarily overlooked non-obligatory religious travel and undervalued experiential and wellness aspects in Muslim tourism contexts (Hassan et al., 2022).

The empirical findings demonstrate the differential impact of these value dimensions on overall tourist satisfaction. Quality, emotional, and wellness values emerged as the most influential predictors of satisfaction and revisit intention. These results align with current research emphasizing the complex and affective nature of satisfaction, where emotionally fulfilling and spiritually uplifting experiences enhance tourist loyalty (Jamal et al., 2023; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2025). Yan and Jia (2021) observed that even religious sites with limited historical significance can evoke strong emotional and aesthetic responses due to their natural beauty and ambiance. Moreover, this study confirms that satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived value and revisit intention, underscoring its pivotal role in reinforcing loyalty and positive behavioral outcomes (Nguyen-Viet & Nguyen, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). Interestingly, the study challenges established assumptions by revealing that price and Islamic values do not significantly impact satisfaction. This suggests that Muslim tourists prioritize experiential richness, emotional engagement, and wellness over cost considerations or the mere presence of religious infrastructure (Almuhrzi & Alsawafi, 2017; Huan, et al., 2024). These findings prompt a re-evaluation of traditional satisfaction models, suggesting that future research and practice should broaden the scope of perceived value beyond basic Islamic amenities and affordability.

From a practical perspective, the study offers several strategic recommendations for tourism stakeholders. First, emotional and wellness dimensions should be central to the design of tourism experiences. This can be achieved by integrating spiritually uplifting activities, personalized reflection opportunities, and halal wellness services into travel packages. These elements cater to the holistic needs of Muslim travelers and differentiate their offerings in an increasingly competitive market. Second, stakeholders should shift their focus away from price-based competition. The insignificant role of price in driving satisfaction suggests that Muslim tourists are willing to invest in experiences that are both of high quality and emotionally resonant. As such, marketing strategies should emphasize the spiritual, emotional, and transformative value of travel, rather than promoting discounts or affordability alone.

Third, maintaining high service quality across all touchpoints is essential. Consistent excellence enhances satisfaction, from transportation and accommodation to customer support and guide services. Implementing real-time feedback mechanisms and continuous service training can further ensure quality consistency. Fourth, social influence plays a critical role in shaping revisit intentions. Tourism providers can leverage this by promoting group travel options, encouraging testimonials, and collaborating with Muslim influencers to build trust and credibility. Social proof, especially within religious communities, can significantly enhance the attractiveness of travel offerings. Lastly, destination managers must invest in the holistic development of religious tourism infrastructure. Cleanliness, accessibility, spiritual ambiance, and safety are non-negotiable aspects that directly influence tourist perceptions. Digital tools, such as mobile apps that offer halal location maps, prayer times, and destination insights, can also enhance the overall experience for Muslim tourists.

4.2 Limitation

A key limitation of this study is the exclusion of the *Hajj* pilgrimage, which may affect the broad applicability of the findings to Muslim religious tourism as a whole. *Hajj* is not just another spiritual journey—it is a religious obligation for all non-disabled and financially capable Muslims, deeply rooted in Islamic faith and identity. The motivations, emotions, and expectations surrounding *Hajj* are often quite different from those associated with optional religious or spiritual travel, such as visits to Islamic heritage sites or wellness-based retreats. By focusing only on non-mandatory forms of travel, the study may overlook essential aspects of the Muslim pilgrimage experience. For instance, *Hajj* often brings a stronger sense of spiritual fulfillment, religious duty, and communal identity that may influence future travel intentions and perceptions in ways that differ significantly from those of voluntary religious tourism. As *Hajj* draws pilgrims from a wide range of cultural, economic, and regional backgrounds, the exclusion could narrow the diversity of perspectives captured. Despite the study still offering valuable insights, especially into emerging forms of Islamic and wellness tourism, the absence of the *Hajj* means the findings may not fully reflect the broader dynamics of Muslim travel behaviour. Future research that includes both compulsory and voluntary religious journeys would provide a more complete picture of the motivations, experiences, and spiritual outcomes that shape Muslim religious tourism today.

Additionally, the study was conducted exclusively among Malaysian Muslims, who generally enjoy a stable sociopolitical environment and relative socioeconomic homogeneity as part of the majority population in a Muslim-friendly country. This limits the generalizability of the findings to Muslim travelers in minority contexts or conflict zones, such as those in Europe, South Asia, or the Middle East, where religious tourism may be shaped by concerns about safety, marginalization, or restricted access to Islamic infrastructure. Future research should pursue cross-cultural and cross-regional comparisons to better understand how contextual factors influence Muslim tourists' experiences. For instance, how does minority versus majority status shape perceptions of value and satisfaction in religious tourism? Similarly, to what extent do security concerns and socio-political stability moderate the relationship between perceived value, satisfaction, and revisit intention? Addressing these questions would provide deeper insights into the dynamics of Muslim religious tourism across diverse settings.

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