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PRACTICES (IJHEMP)[www.ijhemp.com](http://www.ijhemp.com)EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT ON  
ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS TOWARDS  
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## Abstract:

This study is aimed at examining the impact of religious commitment on Malay Muslim behavior to select a halal hotel which attitude is considered a mediating variable. The research findings are beneficial for both academicians and practitioners in the domain of Islamic tourism. The study is based on the Theory of Reasoned Action, arguing that religious commitment affects the willingness of Malays to note their intention and dislike the halal hotel selected. A Structural Equation Modeling approach was adopted to analyze the data drawn from the survey of 492 respondents at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Respondents who agreed to participate in the survey had to sign the consent form. It was discovered that religious commitment has a significant impact on the attitude as well as the behavioral intention of consumers when the obtained effect sizes are equal to .306 and .443, respectively. On the other hand, the attitude serves as a partial mediating factor with an effect size of .129. The research findings may be useful for hoteliers wishing to develop their marketing strategies to attract Malay Muslim customers who consider the intention to select a halal hotel as well as their attitude.

## Keywords:

Religious Commitment, Behavioural Intention, Attitude, Halal Hotel, Islamic Tourism

## Introduction

The tourism industry has always been considered as one of the world's most important and fastest growing economic branches. For the years, it has greatly contributed to the overall global economic progress. Current niche within the tourism industry that nowadays attracts more and more attention is Islamic tourism. The main reason for the increasing popularity of such types of products and services is the constantly growing Muslim population across the world and their increasing income level (Abdirahman et al., 2016). Generally, Islamic tourism offers a great range of events, experiences, and activities that meet Islamic believes and principles. Halal hotels are one of the pieces of Islamic tourism. These are the hotels and places that provide customers with only those services and benefits that correspond to Islamic law, Shariah. Such trend as an increasing demand for halal hotels is in accordance with the broader tendency of increased Muslim preference for products and services that correspond to their religious requirements and needs (Rahmiati & Fajarsari, 2020).

In a country like Malaysia, where the majority of the population adheres to the Islam religion, and where the concept of halal hotels has been prominent, the impact of religious commitment on behavioural intention to choose halal hotels could be well examined. Despite the fact that Malaysia has a diverse and multicultural society, it remains one of the most popular tourist destinations for the Muslim visitors (Martiasari & Hendratmi, 2022). These facts call for the detailed investigation of factors affecting people's intention to choose halal hotels. Religious commitment, therefore, is one of the key determinants that may impact this final decision (Ithnan & Ariffin, 2020). Religious commitment is a dimensional construct of religiosity, comprising two aspects: the cognitive one, of which the major indicator is beliefs and values that people corrupt themselves with; the second one is the behaviouristic aspect, with the indicator of church attendance and other religious practices (Haque, Chowdhury, & Yasmin, 2019).

There is a gap in the literature that is of relevance for future studies. This gap is important in the context of Malaysia as the interaction between religious values and consumer behaviour is complex and multidimensional. This study seeks to find out more about the impact of religious commitment on the behavioural intention of Malay Muslims in Malaysia to choose halal hotels. The mediating variable in this case scenario is attitude. This study will explain why and how religious values influence customer behaviour as far as Islamic tourism is concerned through explaining its direct effects on attitude and behavioural intention as well as indirect impact via attitude.

## Literature Review

### *Islamic Marketing and Tourism*

Islamic marketing is a relatively new sphere of investigation that gained much interest due to the rise of muslim consumers in the world's market. This discipline explores the effect of Islamic values and traditions on customers' behaviour, marketers' strategies, and business overall (Putra et al., 2016). Aiming to satisfy the needs of Muslim travellers that want their journey experience to be compatible with their top Islamic values, scholars pay particular attention to the emergence of Islamic tourism as a relatively separate discipline (Isa et al., 2018). One of the central concepts of Islamic tourism is halal tourism or tourism, which is performed in compliance with Islamic law and includes services that respond to the necessities and propensities Muslim tourists might have (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015).

The increased interest in Islamic tourism is, to a greater extent, associated with the demographic peculiarities of the global Muslim community. Being one of the fastest-growing populations in the world, Muslims increase the demand for products and services that meet Islamic standards (Rahman & Laderlah, 2018). For the hospitality industry sector, primarily in Muslim countries, such as Malaysia, it is a new challenge and opportunity. Therefore, the concept of halal hotels has emerged as a new trend in the tourism sector. These accommodations offer a range of services that conform to the Islamic rules, including halal food render, absence of alcoholic drinks, and resting areas for practicing religious rites (Sabidin, 2016).

### ***Religious Commitment and Consumer Behaviour***

Religiosity is a overriding factor in the understanding of consumer behaviour within Islamic marketing. Religious commitments, inclinations or activities and the way these are transmitted into everyday behaviour were used to describe this affiliation (Agarwala, Mishra, & Singh, 2019). Among the key components of religious commitment that are relevant to Islamic marketing is a particular interest in products and services that should conform with certain the principles inspired by Islam (Puteh, Sukiman, & Yafiz, 2021). Studies have also demonstrated that consumers exhibiting a high degree of religious commitment, who use their values to follow specific products or services more ethically related (e.g. halal food) and involved in certain faith-based practices are significantly likely choosing market input as Shariah-compliant financial tools (Johan & Putit, 2016; Junaidi, 2022).

For instance, religious commitment significantly influences consumer behaviour as it also appears in halal tourism. According to the study by Elsitasari and Ishak (2021) and Lada et al. (2009) religious commitment has a significant impact on Muslim consumers in selecting halal-certified restaurants. Likewise, in Islamic financial services research religious commitment has been observed to affect obviously on consumer choice of Shariah-compliant products and connected with information asymmetry (Abror et al., 2019). The results imply that religious commitment is an important influence on consumer behavior where religion plays a prominent role.

### ***Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Behavioural Intention***

Attitude is directly related to the Theory of Reasoned Action by stating that an individual's attitude towards a behaviour is one of the primary predictors of behavioural intentions as per definition (Ajzen, 1991). In this theory, attitude refers to the individual's positive or negative perception regarding whether a specific behaviour should be practiced. In other words, attitude is a person's favourable or unfavourable evaluation about performing a behaviour (Farhat et al., 2019). In terms of the present study, the notion of attitude is highly relevant since the concepts of attitude formed by religious commitment and intention to select halal hotels are directly related (Reni & Ahmad, 2016). A more positive attitude towards halal hotels formed by the beliefs that such services are in line with the person's religious values and practical needs will result in a greater intention to make the selection. Therefore, as per the TRA, if an individual believes that halal hotels are right because they align with the individual's religious and ethical standards, their positive attitude toward the matter will result in a stronger intention to select the halal hotel all else being equal. Thus, understanding attitude is crucial both for general knowledge about intentions and behaviour, and specifically for the present study to determine how it is changed or formed by the concepts of religious commitment and the

subsequent effect of attitude on the behaviour of selecting a halal hotel in the context of Islamic tourism (Mohamad & Basah, 2022).

### ***Attitude as a Mediator***

Attitude has a mediating effect on religious commitment and behavioural intention. Attitude: refers to an overall appraisal of a behaviour by an individual, can be shaped through various factors such as; beliefs, values and past experiences (Ajzen 1991). With halal tourism a salient profile, an individual's religious commitment as well as their need to follow Islam when travelling is likely to determine a positive attitude towards halal hotels (Ithnan & Ariffin, 2020). Somehow, this change of mindset can have a greater chance they will select Halal hotel. Attitude has been investigated as a mediating factor in several studies of Islamic marketing. For example, Rahim & Amin (2011) reported that attitude serves as the mediator between religious commitment and intention to use Islamic financial products. This notion was initially confirmed by Sparks and Pan 2009, who found positive religious beliefs had a direct influence on consumer purchase intentions as well as an indirect impact mediated the extent to which consumers held halal-certified products in high regard (Aziz et al., 2019). The results address the necessity for attitudes as a mediator to convert religiously compliant value into consumer behaviour.

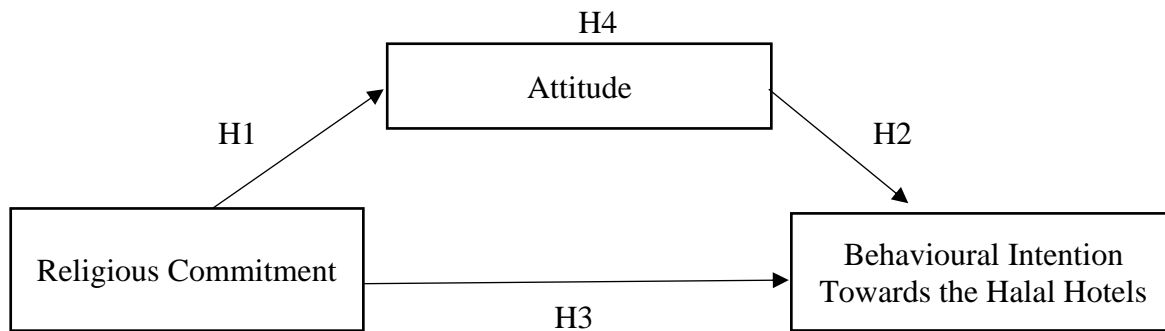
### ***Behavioural Intention in Islamic Tourism***

In the TRA, behavioural intention is basically what a person would expect to do according to attitude and social norm (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The term behavioural intention used in Islamic tourism specifically, indicate the probability of selecting halal hotels and other Islamic tourism service as a Muslim consumer. Behavioural intention was been reported as a robust determining factor of actual behaviour in many studies, especially in the context where religious values were significant (Amin, 2013; Lada et al., 2009). In the case of halal hotels, religious commitment and attitude are probably relevant behavioural intention. A Muslim traveller who is highly committed to religious belief for instance, may view halal hotels in a good or positive manner as it fits well with his/her religion (Mokhlis, 2009). This positive attitude will then directly effects on a strong behavioural intention to choose halal hotel for their stay. Thus, it is paramount for marketers and hotel operators to understand the factors that affect consumers in terms of behavioural intention if they want to successfully attract Muslim consumers who belong in this rapidly growing halal tourism market (Stephenson, 2014).

### ***Conceptual Framework***

This study includes the religious commitment factor as a predictor of both attitude and behavioural intention, underpinned with Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The study intended to provide a more accurate explanation of how the religious values affect the behaviour of consumers in the context of Islamic tourism. One of the main contributions of the study is the focus on the mediating role of attitude in the relationship between religious commitment and behavioural intention. The mediating effect of attitude is particularly applicable in the case of halal hotels, as consumers' choice can be affected by both their religious beliefs and their general attitudes towards the hotel service and amenities. For example, a Muslim traveller who is highly committed in religious terms is likely to develop a highly positive attitude towards halal hotels, as the aspect is in line with their religious beliefs. In turn, developing and holding a highly positive attitude can enhance the intention of the

individual of choosing a halal hotel as opposed to other accommodation alternatives for their stay.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

The study also develops four main hypotheses in line with the theoretical framework to examine how religious commitment, attitude and directive effect on behavioural intention towards halal hotels.

H1: There is a direct effect of religious commitment on customer's attitudes.

H2: There is direct effect of attitude on the behavioural intention to choose a halal hotel.

H3: There is a direct effect of religious commitment on the behavioural intention to choose a halal hotel.

H4: Attitude mediates the direct effect of religious commitment on the behavioural intention to choose a halal hotel.

### **Methodology**

In this study, based on quantitative research approach in terms of methodology Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) has been used to investigate the relationship between religious commitment and behavioural intention through attitude towards choosing halal hotels especially among Malay Muslims travel in Malaysia. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 492 travellers at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). Using a convenience sampling method, travellers who were available and willing to participate in the survey during their time at the airport were selected. The survey contained established scales to assess religious commitment, attitude towards halal hotels and behavioural intention with items taken from previous studies. Analysis of the data was done using Structural Equation Model (SEM) to assess direct and indirect effects especially mediating role of attitude in relationship between religious commitment behavioural intention.

### **Results**

The use of SEM to analyse the data collected from 492 respondents allowed gaining significant insights into the relationships between religious commitment, attitude, and behavioural intention to choose halal hotels market among Malay Muslims in Malaysia. Importantly, the results supported all four hypotheses, and all relationships were strong.

#### ***H1. There is a direct effect of religious commitment on customers' attitudes.***

The table 1 shows that the path from religious commitment (RC) to attitude (Att) is significant (Estimate = 0.220, S.E. = 0.111, C.R. = 1.992,  $p = 0.046$ ). This indicates that religious



commitment has a significant positive effect on attitude towards halal hotels, confirming that individuals with higher religious commitment tend to develop more favourable attitudes.

***H2: There is a direct effect of attitude on the behavioural intention to choose a halal hotel.***

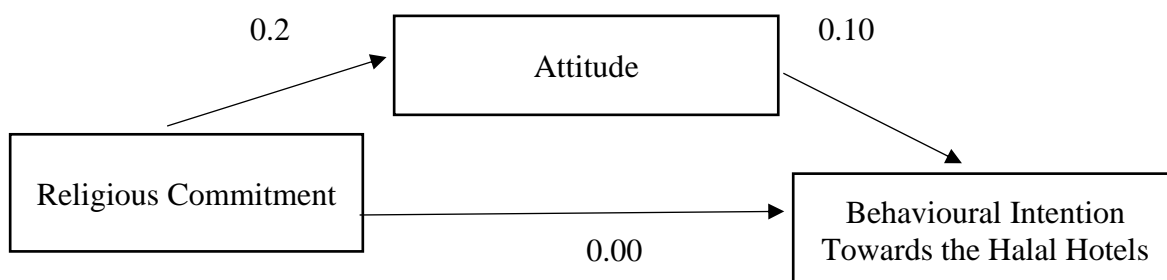
This hypothesis is indeed directly tested in the provided table. The results indicate that the path from attitude (Att) to behavioural intention (BI) is significant (Estimate = 0.103, S.E. = 0.052, C.R. = 1.985,  $p = 0.047$ ). This finding supports the hypothesis that there is a direct positive effect of attitude on the behavioural intention to choose a halal hotel. This supports the hypothesis that attitude has a direct positive affect on behavioural intention halal hotel choice. In other word, customer that exhibited a favourable attitude toward halal hotels were more likely to have the higher intention of choosing these type of hotels. This finding suggests attitude to be one of the determinants in predicting halal tourists' behavioural intention.

***H3: The direct effect of religious commitment on the behavioural intention to choose a halal hotel.***

The direct effect of religious commitment on the behavioural intention is not significant (Estimate = 0.005, S.E. = 0.105, C.R. = 0.045,  $p = 0.964$ ). The result of the analysis in clearing suggesting that religious commitment alone does not have direct effects on behavioural intention to choose halal hotels. In other words, religious commitment cannot be used to predict the intention of a person to engage in a certain behaviour. It is likely that other components of behavioural intentions, such as attitude or subjective norms, may serve as possible mediators, or moderators.

***H4: Attitude mediates the direct effect of religious commitment on the behavioural intention to choose a halal hotel.***

The mediation analysis suggests that the relationship between religious commitment and behavioural intention is partially mediated by the attitude to religious commitment. The path from attitude to behavioural intention is significant, Estimate = 0.103, S.E. = 0.052, C.R. = 1.985,  $p = 0.047$ , and the findings confirm that. The mediating role of attitude in this case is critical since religious commitment in this case cannot directly impact behavioural intention



**Figure 2: Procedure for Testing Mediation**

Based on Figure 2 and Table 1, the indirect effect will be first determined. In this case, the indirect effect is  $0.22 * 0.10 = 0.02$ . The comparison between the direct and indirect effect is then used to determine whether mediation is present or not. In this case, there is mediation because the indirect effect, 0.02, is greater than the direct effect, 0.00. The next step is then to determine the type of mediation. Finally, the type of mediation is determined by whether the

direct path is significant. If the direct path is not significant, the type of mediation is full mediation, and if it is significant, the type of mediation is partially mediated. In conclusion, attitude mediates the relationship between RC and behavioural intention to choose Halal hotel. According to Table 1, the type of mediation is full mediation since the direct path is not significant.

Construct		Construct	Standardized Estimate	p-value	Result
Attitude	<-----	RC	.22	.046	Significant
BI	<-----	Attitude	.10	.047	Significant
BI	<-----	RC	.00	.964	Not significant

**Table 1: Standardized Regression Weights and Its Significance for Each Path**

### Discussion

The depth of religious commitment can be significantly influencing a customer's attitude as it illustrates the values, beliefs and priorities in life that are often intertwined with their religion practice and teachings. Highly religious people often make decisions and judgments based simply on the principles that have been set out from their particular moral background (Sobari et al., 2019). A person who is religiously committed will, in choosing products or services for example, probably prefer such options that reflect their values. For halal hotels, people of this group would form a good impression relating to such accommodation because they consider that as in line with their doctrines, which include catering for the needs of people who have to comply with Islamic law by serving only halal food, providing prayer spaces located within its premises and being patronized free from all kinds of haram activities like drinking alcoholic drinks (Ithnan & Arifin, 2020).

Such alignment between an individuals' personal religious values and the offerings of halal hotels could form a positive perception as these are perceived not only meeting their practical needs but also supporting his/her spiritual and ethical standards (Shariff et al., 2021). This means that when customers make their choices with religious commitment, the degree to which they apply religion deepens attitude and ultimately urge them to prefer those products and services in observing agreement with faith. Based in a person belief and emotions from life experiences, attitudes play an import role in behaviour developed based on how individuals respond to different situations or choice. For instance, in consumer behaviour, the attitude toward a product or brand is one of key determining factors regarding whether an individual will choose it/ use the service or avoid it (Ithnan & Arifin, 2020).

A strong theme in forming such attitudes is a religious commitment, because this set of beliefs and values will colour all aspects of life according to how the person views what they have heard preached as truth. For a example a Muslim with high religiosity; he will likely view halal hotels positively — they conform to the principles and values he holds, such as serving only halal food or providing space for prayer. They view choosing a halal hotel as supporting their religious identity and allowing them to practice even while traveling. Attitude therefore forms the link between religious commitment and behaviour, intermediating how deeply held religious values affect preference for specific products or services that comply with these values (e.g. halal hotels). This is exactly proven empirically by this research where there is direct effect of religious commitment on attitude of the customers (Ithnan & Arifin, 2020).

The attitude can be considered a mediating variable in the relationship between religious commitment and behaviour because it is the construct through which religious values and beliefs translate into behaviours. Thus, when an individual has a high commitment to religion, religious values and beliefs profoundly influence the person's perceptions about specific alternatives that he or she encounters regularly in the course of daily living (Nordin & Khalid, 2022). It is noted that even though religious values are absorbed over time, they do not control behaviours, but generate attitudes about a specific alternative or behaviour (Mainardes et al., 2021).

In the case of a person with a strong religious commitment who chooses a halal hotel, it is their overall attitude or positive evaluation that leads to their intentions. Specifically, their overall attitude toward halal hotels is determined by whether they positively evaluate these values and how close their intention to choose Halal Hotel is to this attitude. A person who is highly religious, for example, might not choose a halal hotel in the end. This is so because the religious value has not been turned into strong believe, which could be turned into attitude positively evaluating selecting halal hotel as their main choice.

### Conclusion

The research findings indicate that religious value acts as a significant factor in influencing the attitude of Muslim consumers towards halal hotels. In other words, religious commitment is an indirect antecedent of halal hotels selection, which serves as a mediator and leads to higher intention in selecting these hotels.

In terms of practical implications for hoteliers and marketers of halal tourism, our results are very important. In order to successfully capture the Muslim market, and more importantly those who are deeply religious, halal hotels need to ensure that their services comply with values intrinsic within Islam. Such alignment would reinforce the favourable customer sentiment and might further encourage potential customers to select these hotels over others. E.g.: availability of halal certified food, prayer room and the adherence to other Islamic principles are some attributes that can make a perception about religious harmony in customers mind which will result with customer satisfaction & loyalty.

Second, the study underlines that future work should take a more holistic view of factors influencing hotel choice. The role of price, location, amenities and service quality is just as much significant in the consumption of services (other than being a religious commitment) It would be useful to examine how these variables affect the phenomenon of integration within religious values, which can help deepen our understanding on consumer behaviours when it comes to Halal Tourism.

Furthermore, the research paper implies that it might add validity to results if future investigations encompass a variety of Muslim communities from other cultural and regional settings. This not only gives the study a better range, beyond representing Malay Muslims specifically in Malaysia but it also serves to embody some aspects of participation behaviour more universally. In doing so, it would not only advance consumer behaviour theory in Islamic contexts from a more general viewpoint but also offer practical information to marketers interested in tapping into the worldwide Muslim market.



The findings highlight the relevance of religious values in relation to halal hotels, while offering some basic rules intended for marketers and hoteliers on how they can capitalize such values in attracting as well as maintaining Muslim consumers. It also suggests the need to further identify hotel choice determinants by future research, and it encourages more comprehensive studies across different Muslim subcultures or countries for a better generalization of its results.

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