

Perceptions of Muslim Travellers Toward *Halal* Lifestyle in South Korea

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the perception of Muslim travellers toward *Halal* lifestyle in South Korea. This study is significant due to a huge growth of Muslim tourists in South Korea over recent years. Statistics has shown an influx of Muslim tourists from Malaysia travelling to South Korea from year-to-year. Interviews were conducted to gain in-depth and comprehensive insights of Malaysian Muslims' perception on the *Halal* culture in South Korea. The questions were designed in the interview covers three issues, which include the pre-travel behaviour, extensivity of information search, and travel decision. According to the interviews, most of the travellers spent their time conducting research, explicitly on *Halal* dietary matters before heading to South Korea. They also stated that it was quite hard finding places that serve *Halal* food. Therefore, we concluded that the *Halal* principle adoption in Korea influences the travel decision by most Muslim travellers.

Keywords: Exploratory, *halal*, Muslim, South Korea, tourist perception

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been identified as one of the factors of economic growth in recent years. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), it is forecasted that Asia and Pacific would become the second most important tourist destination in the world by 2020. South Korea being one of Asia's largest economy and strategically located between China, Russia and Japan, is deemed to be an attractive tourist destination.

South Korea has competitiveness advantages in a few important areas such as arts, historic places and heritage. Credit to its growth in a large part of the export-focused strategy, South Korea has enjoyed rapid growth. From the year 2012, the visitor arrivals keep increasing from 11,140,028 (end of 2012) up to 17,241,823 visitors by the end of 2016 (South Korea Tourism Organization, 2017). South Korea is a tourist-friendly country since it is easy for the local and international tourists to get information from the information centres that are strategically located in airports, hotels and subway stations. This country is a well-developed country since they are advanced in several industries compared to other developing countries, for example, their sophisticated public transports, several world-renowned universities, entertainment and medical industry especially in the plastic surgical field. South Korea is not new to most people in the world. The Hallyu phenomenon has effectively made travellers especially K-pop fans to go to South Korea. In other words, the popularity of K-pop and K-drama have made the capital of South Korea a desirable holiday destination (Chin, 2017).

Halal is defined as lawful and permitted. It is an Arabic word which comes from the Holy Quran. These laws are practiced by Muslims all around the world. *Halal* from dietary standpoint, is any food and beverages free from components that prohibited for Muslims to consume, otherwise, commonly adopted as "pork-free" and "alcohol-free". Whilst the contrary to this principle is known as Haram.

Halal can also mean meat that came from allowed animals are to be slaughtered before consuming them. The slaughtering procedure must fulfil a few requirements to make it valid. Growing demand for *Halal* phenomenon has dramatically increased in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries as the number of Muslims all around the world keep