



The impact of self-and functional congruity of Indonesian Halal tourism destinations on the behavioral intentions of Muslim tourists

Nina Dwi Setyaningsih

Accounting Department, Faculty of Economics Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia 65145, Phone & Fax: +62-341-558881, e-mail: shirlytania89@yahoo.com

Nur Asnawi

Management Department, Faculty of Economics Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia 65145, Phone & Fax: +62-341-558881, e-mail: asnawi@manajemen.uin-malang.ac.id

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Abstract

Halal tourism is currently an important issue in the travel and tourism literature because more and more Muslim tourists prefer to visit tourist destinations that match their personality. This study investigates the impact of image congruence (self and functional congruity) on attitudes and behavioral intentions in Halal tourism destinations. The survey sample is 308 customers who visit 8 priority tourism destinations and resorts in the city of Malang. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the validity of the conceptual model. The results show that self-congruity and functional congruity are antecedents of customer attitudes and behavioral intentions of Muslim tourists. Halal tourism marketers in Indonesia are advised to design brand positioning strategies and marketing segmentation from a new perspective. Further studies can be carried out among Muslim tourists in different geographical areas, including other cities in Indonesia.

Keywords

Self-congruity, functional congruity, Muslim tourist behavior, Halal tourism destination

1. Research background

The travel and tourism industry is proven to make a difference to the lives of millions of people through real contributions to economic growth, creating jobs, reducing poverty, promoting development and promoting the spirit of tolerance. The travel and tourism sector for eight consecutive years has been able to grow

beyond the global economy, reaching 3.9% and contributing directly to GDP of USD 2,849.2 billion in 2019 and is projected to grow by 3.6% per year to USD 4,065.0 billion by 2029 (WTTC, 2019). This sector also accounts for 10.4% of global Gross domestic product (GDP) and employs 319 million employees or 10% of total employment (WTTC, 2019). The government makes this sector an instrument to generate prosperity while creating jobs around the world. Including Halal tourism which is currently a segment that is developing very rapidly.

Global Muslim consumer spending is estimated at US\$2.1 trillion and the allocation for travel is US\$177 billion and is expected to grow to US\$274 billion by 2023 (Thomson Reuters, 2018). This fact shows that Muslim tourists are a large segment and really expect the availability of fulfilling the needs of Islamic-themed destinations such as entertainment, health care, shopping and tourism accommodation. This encourages the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to create Muslim-friendly tourism which focuses primarily on providing hotels and resorts that are friendly to Muslim families. So it is not surprising that halal tourism is one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism market (El-Gohary, 2016; Valencia, 2020).

With the growing growth of the Muslim travel market, more and more businesses and tourist destinations are now entering a new industry that is catering to the needs of Muslim tourists by adapting products and services to their needs. Islamic teachings often color tourism activities, especially the behavior of consumers (tourists) and suppliers (hosts) and the relationship between them (Poria et al., 2003). Halal tourism terminology is a concern today because Muslim tourists want the concept of tourism management activities in accordance with Islamic teachings. This is in line with Battour and Ismail (2016) who stated that halal tourism refers to specific values that are in accordance with the principles of Islamic teachings. In other words, halal tourism products and activities must follow all the provisions of Allah SWT and the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Battour and Ismail, 2016; Vergara, 2020).

Halal tourism is deeply rooted in Islamic Shari'ah because every Muslim is required to travel directly related to Islamic Shari'ah (e.g. Hajj and Umrah) as well as travel for the purpose of education, medical treatment, conferences, travel and expanding knowledge (El-Gohary, 2016). The clear relationship between tourism and religion has been discussed in the literature on tourism from different perspectives (e.g. Battour et al., 2010; Eid and El-Gohary, 2015; Jafari and Scott, 2014; Vo & Ngo, 2021).

Although religion is more focused on things that are meaningful and spiritual in the realm of individual consciousness, religion can also become a collective consciousness that motivates to learn and study a religion through in-depth meaning and empirical evidence. The motivation to learn through evidence is what brings awareness to the activity of traveling to historical Islamic places, making pilgrimages to the tombs of Islamic figures and also conducting scientific studies in other countries. This directly creates a demand for tourism because of the availability of offers of "availability" of Islamic historical places as a means of learning Islam itself.

In the perspective of self-congruity theory, the suitability between the personality of the tourist and the destination is closely related to the visitor's self-concept (Sirgy and Su, 2000; Kang et al., 2012). Aaker (1995) states that self-congruity is the encouragement of consumers to choose brands with personalities that match their own personalities. Applying the basic understanding of self-congruity theory in the context of Halal tourism destinations emphasizes the greater the match between the personality of the destination and the visitor's self-concept, the more likely it is that visitors will have a positive attitude towards that destination (Sirgy and Su, 2000). This positive attitude can have implications for repeat visits or word of mouth promotion. Therefore, understanding the congruence between the personality of Muslim tourists and Halal tourist destinations in the perspective of the visitor's self-concept is an important study to gain insight into the complex nature of Muslim tourist behavior.

Many researchers have used self-congruity theory (Sirgy and Su, 2000) as a baseline for empirical studies in the context of traveling and tourism, such as the study conducted by Luna-Cortés et al., (2019) to examine the behavior of generation Y tourists in Spain in using social networks. Virtual, brand personality in tourist destinations in Las Vegas (Usakli and Baloglu, 2011), cruise tourists (Hung and Petrick, 2011; Hosany and Martin, 2012), but in the context of special tourism segments such as consumer behavior in Halal tourism, the use of self-congruity theory as an established theory has never been found.

Based on this research gap, this study is the first study that seeks to apply the theory of image congruity to understand trends in Muslim tourist behavior in tourism destinations in Muslim-majority countries which are famous for their collectivistic culture such as Indonesia. This study also has significant implications for the Halal tourism industry sector in Indonesia. Self congruity provides a new approach for marketers to position tourist destinations and segment the market for Muslim customers who want destinations that are in accordance with their teachings. Functional congruity suggests strategies to increase the value of benefits (utilitarian) to meet customer expectations when visiting tourism destinations. This study establishes and tests a theoretical model by examining the relationship between image conformity (self congruity, functional congruity), Muslim tourists' attitudes and their intentions to behave in the context of Indonesian Halal destinations. The motivation of this study specifically to answer research questions: (1) Do self congruity and functional congruity affect the attitude of Muslim tourists to Halal tourism destinations; (2) Does the customer's attitude affect their intention to behave in a Halal tourism destination?.

2. Literature review

2.1. Halal tourism.

The relationship between Islam and tourism has attracted increasing interest. The term "Halal tourism" is very new in the academic literature. Scopus revealed that the earliest published papers were published in 2010 (Battour et al., 2010). Khan and Callanan (2017) argue that the term halal tourism is often used

in Western countries. However, in reality "Islamic tourism" seems to refer to travel undertaken for religious purposes and pilgrimages, which are associated with religious acts related to the Islamic religion such as the pilgrimage to Mecca (El-Gohary, 2016). On the other hand, "Halal tourism" refers to travel undertaken for recreational and social purposes. Muslims also want to see the world and explore different histories and cultures that are consistent with their beliefs as it is believed such a journey allows them to better appreciate the wonders created by God.

A recent study by Bogan and Sarıısık (2019) adopted the argument of Battour and Ismail (2016) defining "Halal tourism" as any tourist object or act permitted according to Islamic teachings that involves Muslims in the industry. Therefore, Battour and Ismail (2016) suggest "it is better to use the term "Halal" than "Islamic" for related products and services in the tourism industry and this is also agreed by El-Gohary (2016).

The term "Halal tourism" is preferred as the main and only term for the brand and describes tourism products and or activities that fully comply with the rules and guidelines of the concept of Halal and Islamic Sharia. In short, Halal tourism is a type of tourism that adheres to Islamic values, considering that religion affects the daily activities of Muslims, both at home and on trips, and thus shapes the choice of destination for policy purposes and what is done at the destination (Jafari and Scott, 2014). It refers to "any tourism object or act which is permissible according to Islamic teachings to be used or involved by Muslims as part of the tourism industry" (Battour and Ismail, 2016). The definition considers Islamic law (Sharia) as the basis for delivering tourism products and services to target customers who are mostly Muslim, such as halal hotels (Sharia compliant), resorts, restaurants, travel.

Consistently, from the author's point of view, Halal tourism can be understood as offering tour packages and destinations specifically designed to meet the needs of Muslim tourists who are directly affected by the observance of their religious obligations which include components of transportation, accommodation, food and types of tourism support services.

2.2. Self- and Functional Congruity Theory

The tourism literature consensus argues that tourists' choice of a destination is influenced by psychological (e.g. attitudes, motivation, and self-concept) and functional (utilitarian) variables (Sirakaya et al., 2001). Sirgy and Su (2000) argue that self-congruity and functional congruity are very important for understanding destination image and tourist decision-making. Self congruity refers to the match / mismatch between the perceived image of a destination and the tourist's self-image. Functional congruity refers to the match / mismatch between the perceptions of the performance of the functional attributes of the destination and the ideal performance of tourists on the functional attributes of the destination. Chon and Olsen (1991) show that functional congruity affects tourists' post-consumption evaluations (e.g. satisfaction and destination loyalty). Sirgy and Su

(2000) suggested that self-congruity and functional congruity affect travel behavior. While recent studies have investigated tourist behavior in a variety of settings, research on self-congruity and functional congruity remains limited (Oh, Fiore and Jeoung, 2007).

Self-congruity plays an important role in predicting various aspects of consumer behavior such as advertising effectiveness, product attitude, brand choice, brand preference, brand loyalty and satisfaction (Bjerke and Polegato, 2006; He and Mukherjee, 2007).

Marketing experts agree that customers evaluate products from two perspectives, namely product user image and product attributes (Johar and Sirgy, 1991). User-product image is a function of value-expressive or symbolic features, which reflect the user's impression of the product as described by various adjectives, such as friendly, modern, classy, young, and so on (MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989). Product attributes focus on certain utilitarian features of the product, such as quality, price, merchandising and so on (Kressmann et al., 2006; Smith and Colgate, 2007). Consistent with the product evaluation process from these two perspectives, customers make their purchasing decisions through two distinct psychological routes: self-congruence and functional suitability (Sirgy et al., 1991; Sirgy and Samli, 1985). Self congruity and functional congruity are two components of image congruence theory that describe the degree of match or mismatch between the store's image and the customer's self-concept (Sirgy et al., 2000).

Self congruity is defined as a comparison between the product user's image and the consumer's self-concept. Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of "self" in relation to a number of characteristics, such as social class, gender roles, academic achievement, and so on (Sirgy, 1982). Customers look for a match between product users' images and their own self-concept (Sirgy and Samli, 1985). For example, customers who see themselves living in luxury, high status, and prosperity tend to choose luxury restaurants for special occasions or when they want to showcase their luxurious lifestyle (Kwun and Oh, 2006).

Functional congruity refers to the match or discrepancy between customer perceptions of product attributes before purchase and their actual evaluation after purchase (Sirgy et al., 2000). Previous studies in the hospitality context have emphasized the role of functional attributes in determining the future behavior of customers (Ryu et al., 2008). Eliwa (2006) found that restaurant attributes are a key factor for customers in determining whether they patronize the restaurant. Ryu et al. (2008) suggested that customers show positive attitudes when restaurant services meet their expectations in attributes such as food quality, employee performance, environment, and so on. This finding emphasizes the need to investigate the degree of functional suitability that influences customer attitudes and future behavior in the context of halal tourism destinations. Customers who have had a satisfying experience are more likely to revisit a preferred destination (Sirgy et al., 2000). The higher the functional congruity, the more customers perceive a positive image of the tourism destination that is their preference (Hung and Petrick, 2011).

2.3. Self-concept and Halal tourism

Self congruity refers to the degree of match or mismatch between individuals' perceptions of a brand or product and the perceptions they have of themselves (Sirgy, 1984). Self congruity theory postulates that the higher the preference for a brand, the more its symbolic characteristics strengthen and validate individual perceptions (Swann et al., 1992). Chon (1992) initially applied self-congruity theory to the tourism industry. Based on his study of 225 people who visited Norfolk, Virginia showed a positive relationship between self-congruity and satisfaction. This means that tourists who perceive themselves to be very similar to regular visitors to Norfolk, they feel they have greater satisfaction with the destination of the trip.

Sirgy and Su (2000) proposed an integrative model to explain the effect of self-congruity on travel behavior. Their theoretical model postulates that travel behavior is not only influenced by self-congruity but that other factors are also important in explaining travel behavior, particularly functional congruity or the fit between the utilitarian features of a destination and the degree to which they match visitor expectations.

Consumption of the same product and brand is also related to the direction of the influence of self-concept on one's behavior. Negative self-congruity, or bad feelings about oneself, means that the behavior that elicited such a reaction will not be repeated. On the other hand, positive feelings about yourself will reinforce the relevant behavior and lead to repetition. So, for all marketers who want a repeat tourism business triumph, it is in the best interest to understand the tourist self-concept and try to get them to see themselves as as positive a value in the tourist role as possible.

In the context of Halal tourism, Battour and Ismail (2016) state that halal tourism refers to certain values based on Islam. Meanwhile, Al Qaradawi (2013) states that Halal is something that is permissible as long as Muslims allow it to use it. Therefore, according to Carboni and Janati (2016), Halal tourism refers to tourism carried out by Muslims who travel according to their religious rules. In addition, Zamani-Farahani and Musa (2012) noted that Halal tourism is related to activities carried out by Muslim tourists. In short, Halal tourism is any tourism activity carried out by Muslims based on Islamic law. Thus, tourism destinations that are in accordance with Muslim personalities are tourism destinations whose infrastructure and activities are in accordance with Islamic teachings and Muslim personalities.

Facilities that characterize Halal tourism destinations according to Muslim personalities are shown by several main attributes of Halal tourism such as worship facilities, Halal food, no prostitution, and no alcohol and gambling (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015; El-Gohary, 2016). Battour and Ismail (2014) propose four main attributes of Halal tourism, including worship facilities, halalness, general Islamic morality, and freedom from alcoholic beverages and gambling. Furthermore, worship facilities such as mosques, Qibla direction facilities and ablution are important elements for Muslim tourists when they are on vacation (Battour and Ismail, 2014). Halal refers to Halal

facilities, such as kitchens, cutlery, and Halal food. Islamic morality generally refers to general rules in Islam such as dress code, prohibition of prostitution, and censorship of sex scenes on TV. The last attribute is the regulation regarding alcoholic beverages and free from gambling. Battour and Ismail (2014) also argue that Islamic values and government regulations are important factors for deciding no alcohol and gambling at resorts. People who are interested in Halal tourism will consider these key attributes when they decide where to visit. In addition, experts (e.g. Eid and El-Gohary, 2015; Iniesta-Bonillo et al., 2016) explain that tourists' perceptions of Halal tourism have a direct relationship with tourists satisfaction and their motivation to do word of mouth (WOM).

4. Hypothesis Development

4.1. Self-functional congruity

Image congruity refers to the degree of match/mismatch between the store's image and the customer's self-image (Sirgy et al., 2000). The image of a tourism destination is defined from two perspectives, namely the symbolic image and the functional image (attribute). Thus, self-congruity consists of self-congruence and functional congruity. In this study, destination image refers to the symbolic destination image. Customers tend to choose destinations that have a personality similar to them, the image of the destination can be taken from various traits that usually describe a stereotypical personal image such as traditional versus modern, classy versus simple, friendly versus formal, high status versus low status (Babin et al., 2006). The self-image of the customer is usually explained from a different perspective of the self. The customer's self-concept is diverse and diverse, including four distinct aspects; actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, and ideal social image (Sirgy et al., 2005). In relation to this self-concept, self-related motives explain the reasons for customer image congruity based on self-consistency and self-esteem (Kressmann et al., 2006). The self-consistency motive is the tendency for people to maintain their behavior consistent with their beliefs about how they see themselves.

Self-congruity has been shown to be an antecedent of customer attitudes towards products and a predictor of their shopping behavior (Lee and Hyman, 2008). According to functional attitude theory, one of the important motives for customers in their buying behavior is to reinforce and express the values that are important to them (Sirgy et al., 1991). When Muslim tourists identify that the image of a destination matches their self-image, they believe that the chosen destination can represent their identity and a positive attitude will be formed. This is in line with the results of a study by Kang et al (2012) who found that self-congruity is an antecedent of customer attitudes and repurchase intentions at branded coffee shops in Korea. Thus, the hypothesis proposed regarding the argument is,

H1. Self congruity in Halal tourism destinations has a positive effect on the attitudes of Muslim tourists.

The operational definition of functional congruity is the difference between customer perceptions of product attributes before purchase and their evaluation after purchase (Sirgy et al., 1997). In the retail industry, quality, price, ambience, and performance are measures of functional attributes (Sirgy et al., 2000). In the fast food industry, additional functional attributes found through the study of Prendergast and Ho (2002) include merchandising options, waiting time to complete orders and store location. Sirgy et al. (1991) found a causal relationship between self-congruity, functional congruity and customer behavior. Self-congruity as a form of affective response appears before the customer visits the store or during the consumption process (Sirgy et al., 2005; Kressmann et al., 2006). On the other hand, it seems that self-congruity and functional congruity have important benefits for customer attitudes and consequently influence buying behavior. Customers' perceptions of restaurant attributes have a significant impact on their attitudes towards restaurants, restaurant choices and further purchasing behavior (Eliwa, 2006; Ryu et al., 2008). Consumer attitudes emerge when customers begin to evaluate the functional attributes of a restaurant after purchase (Prendergast and Ho, 2002; Ryu et al., 2008). In Halal tourism destinations, Muslim consumers will be positive when the destinations visited are in accordance with their personal and functional personality. Likewise, the functionality of Halal tourism destinations will have positive implications when Halal tourism destinations match the personality of Muslim tourists. Based on these arguments, the proposed hypothesis is,

- H2. Self congruity of Halal tourism destinations has a positive effect on the functional congruity of Muslim tourists.*
- H3. Functional congruity of Halal tourism destinations has a positive effect on Muslim tourists' attitudes towards destinations.*

4.2. Attitude and behavioral intention Muslim tourist

Attitude is an evaluation of one's feelings and tendencies towards objects or ideas that are liked or disliked (Chang and Liu, 2009). According to Dabholkar and Bagozzi (2002), attitude is an evaluation of the customer's experience of a product or shopping place that reflects their feelings, such as pleasant or unpleasant and good or bad. While repeat visit intention refers to the customer's willingness to maintain a relationship with the goods or brand and repurchase the product in the future (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Ajzen and Fishbein (2005) found that this attitude component supports the formation of certain behavioral intentions. Many previous marketing studies have proven that attitude is an antecedent to the formation of intention to make repeat visits (Lu et al., 2003; Bobbitt and Dabholkar, 2001). Based on the discussion, the positive attitude of Muslim tourists towards Halal tourism destinations will encourage their intention to make return visits. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is,

- H4. The attitude of Muslim tourists has a positive effect on their intention to revisit to Halal tourism destinations.*

5. Research methodology

This research was conducted in Indonesia, precisely in Malang City which is one of Indonesia's priority Halal tourism destinations (Aminudin, 2022). This is the main reason for choosing Malang as the research location. The population of this research is all Muslim tourists in Malang, Indonesia. A sample of 204 out of 308 met the requirements based on Byrne's (2010) opinion "the number of samples should not be less than 200 cases". All samples were taken from 8 priority tourism destinations and resorts. The data collection was based on the recommendations of Hair et al., (2010) which ranged from 5–20 times the number of variables and came from 3 areas that have famous tourism resort destinations, namely Batu City, Malang City and Malang Regency. The trial for 30 respondents was conducted to test the validity and reliability. The field survey was conducted in the period September - December 2019 (three months). The main study distributed questionnaires to 308 respondents in several tourism locations in 3 cities/districts. The study used convenience sampling and we used 10 enumerators to collect data from 3 cities. Table 1 shows the number of samples taken in 3 cities/districts. This study uses four variables, namely self-congruity, functional congruity, attitude and behavioral intention, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Demographics of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	125	61,3
Female	79	38,7
<i>Age (years)</i>		
18-23	131	64,2
24-29	50	24,5
30-35	13	6,4
>35	10	4,9
<i>Education</i>		
Bachelor	107	52,45
Postgraduate	97	47,55
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	188	92,2
Married	16	7,8

Table 2. Research construct

Construct (abbreviation)	Indicator	Reference
Self-congruity (SC)	4 item	Sirgy et al., (1997); Kang et al., (2015); Luna-Cortés et al., (2019)
Functional congruity (FC)	7 item	Sirgy et al (1991); Kang et al., (2012)
Tourist Attitude (TA)	3 item	Palau-Saumell et al., (2013)
Behavioral intentions (BI)	5 item	Pool et al., (2018)

6. Results

6.1. Assessment of measurements model

The internal consistency of the items was evaluated using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (α). In table 3, the composite reliability value and Cronbach's alpha value exceed the minimum expected level of more than .70 (Hair et al., 2006). These values represent a fairly adequate level of internal consistency reliability. All measurement items for construction have a significant loading factor value. Table 3 shows the loading factors for all items exceeding the recommended level of 0.6 (Chin, 1998). Convergent validity based on average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2006) reflects the total amount of variance in the variables recorded by the latent construct exceeding the recommended value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2006). Furthermore, cross loading is used to check the validity of discrimination because the magnitude of the loading value under the expected dimension must be higher than the value that appears under the other respective factors (Henseler et al., 2009). The results of cross-loading (bold value) prove the discriminant validity between all constructs based on the cross loadings criteria in Table 4.

Table 3. Convergent validity test

Construct	Item	Loading Factor	α Cronbach	AVE	CR
Self congruity (SC)	SC1	0.796	0.798	0.622	0.868
	SC2	0.807			
	SC3	0.804			
	SC4	0.748			
Functional congruity (FC)	FC1	0.680	0.837	0.506	0.877
	FC2	0.632			
	FC3	0.699			
	FC4	0.770			
	FC5	0.759			
	FC6	0.726			
	FC7	0.705			
Attitude toward destination (AT)	AT1	0.850	0.818	0.733	0.892
	AT2	0.884			
	AT3	0.833			
Behavioral intention (BI)	BI1	0.844	0.882	0.679	0.913
	BI2	0.833			
	BI3	0.783			
	BI4	0.847			
	BI5	0.810			

Note: Average variance extracted (AVE); composite reliability (CR)

Table 4. Cross loading discriminant validity test

Constructs/Indicators	Behavioral intention (BI)	Functional congruity (FC)	Self congruity (SC)	Tourist attitude (TA)
BI1	0.844	0.273	0.366	0.588
BI2	0.833	0.309	0.377	0.477
BI3	0.783	0.252	0.309	0.596
BI4	0.847	0.318	0.450	0.559
BI5	0.810	0.316	0.394	0.493
FC1	0.195	0.680	0.330	0.267
FC2	0.187	0.632	0.304	0.182
FC3	0.216	0.699	0.311	0.276
FC4	0.342	0.770	0.347	0.363
FC5	0.302	0.759	0.326	0.335
FC6	0.252	0.726	0.280	0.222
FC7	0.244	0.705	0.322	0.241
SC1	0.280	0.342	0.796	0.351
SC2	0.264	0.401	0.807	0.381
SC3	0.485	0.355	0.804	0.403
SC4	0.428	0.306	0.748	0.330
TA1	0.538	0.254	0.414	0.850
TA2	0.528	0.316	0.404	0.884
TA3	0.629	0.410	0.379	0.833

6.2. Hypothesis testing

The results of the structural model test are used to evaluate the effect of self-congruity, functional congruity, attitude and intention to make return visits to Halal tourism destinations. The results of hypothesis testing for each endogenous variable are shown in Figure 1. The results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 5. Based on the SEM results, self-congruity contributes significantly to the attitudes of Muslim tourists to Halal tourism destinations ($\beta = 0.482$, $t = 6.947$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported. Likewise, self congruity has a significant and positive effect on functional congruity ($\beta = 0.477$, $t = 5.012$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported. Likewise, functional congruity has a significant impact on the attitudes of Muslim tourists ($\beta = 0.223$, $t = 1.989$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported. The influence of Muslim tourists' attitudes significantly affects their intention to make repeat visits to Halal tourism destinations ($\beta = 0.668$, $t = 11.776$) and these results support the fourth hypothesis.

Table 5. Hypothesis testing of direct effects between constructs

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	β	T Statistics	Decision
1	SC → TA	0.466	0.482	6.947	Accepted
2	FC → TA	0.223	0.223	1.989	Accepted
3	SC → FC	0.447	0.477	5.012	Accepted
4	TA → BI	0.664	0.668	11.776	Accepted

Note: Significant if $t_{\text{statistic}}$ is more than t_{table} (1.980)

Self congruity (SC); Functional congruity (FC); Tourist attitude (TA); Behavioral intention (BI)

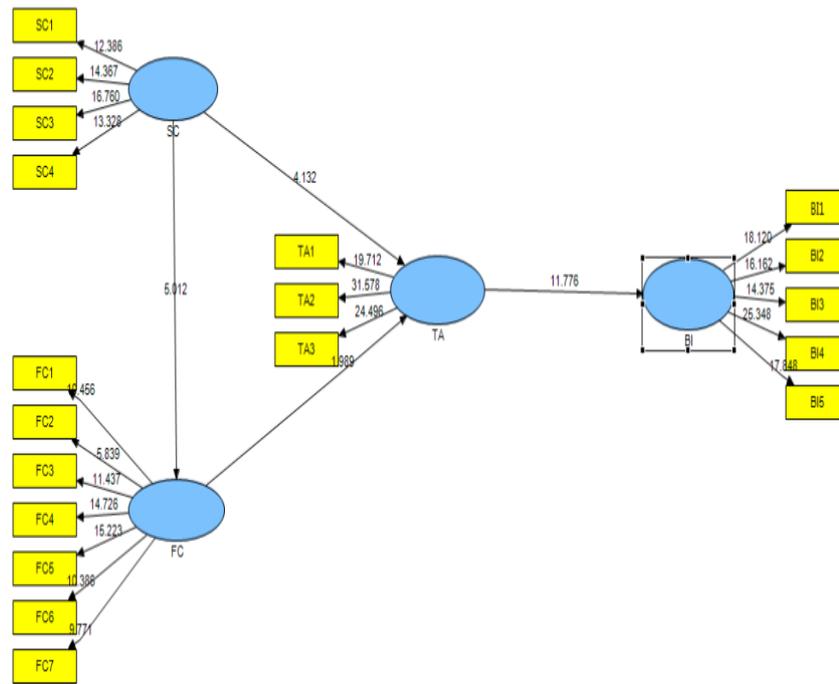


Figure 1. Results of structural equations based on PLS-SEM

7. Discussion and implications

This study shows that self-congruity and functional congruity have a significant impact on Muslim tourists' attitudes towards Halal tourism destinations, which in turn affects their intention to revisit. Self congruity was also found to affect functional congruity. As a theoretical framework, image congruence theory has been applied to understand individual attitudes and behavior in various fields, such as psychology (Sung and Choi, 2010; Nolan and Harold, 2010), marketing research (O'Cass and Grace, 2008; Quester et al., 2000). This research is the first to apply the theory of image alignment in the context of Halal tourism destinations. This study contributes to the construction of knowledge about image congruity and further verifies the validity of the theoretical framework. This study is motivated by the collectivistic culture of Indonesian Muslims to explain the selection behavior of Muslim tourists in Halal tourism destinations, as well as provide a basis for future research that will investigate the behavior of Muslim tourists related to the collective culture of Asian Muslims.

Overall, the symbolic image of Halal tourism destinations is a determinant of the attitudes and behavior of Muslim tourists. Tourist destination marketers are advised to evaluate the extent to which their target customers desire to express or enhance their self-image based on their experiences while visiting Halal tourism destinations. It is hoped that an increase in positive tourist attitudes will increase future return visits through efforts to match the customer's self-image with the image of the destination (Puccinelli et al., 2007). Since individuals in collectivistic cultures view themselves as group members or as entities dependent on others (conformity), customer decision-making tends to be determined by reference groups or social contexts (Sung and Choi, 2010).

Marketers are further advised to identify the main social groups that are their target customers and design a tourism destination image based on the values pursued by Muslim consumer groups. If necessary, marketers can also give different symbolic images to customers belonging to different social groups (Park et al., 2008). Functional congruity has been found to be an antecedent of customer attitudes and future buying behavior (Eliwa, 2006). The current study identifies the main functional attributes of a Halal tourism destination (i.e. quality of premises, employee services, worship facilities, price, food etc.). Marketers are advised to investigate customer expectations for these useful features and provide the experience customers want in Halal tourism destinations. The match between expectations and experience will help customers form positive attitudes towards Halal tourism destinations and make decisions for future visits. Given that visiting Halal tourism destinations is a unique behavior among conventional tourists in general, facilities that support the functional and characteristics of Halal tourism are expected to be a differentiation and competitive advantage in the growing tourism industry.

8. Limitations and future research

First, the survey in this study was conducted in the area of Malang City, Indonesia. Future research should be directed at a diverse sample, particularly customers in a wider geographic area. Since people in different geographic areas may exhibit different attitudes towards symbolic attributes and functional attributes, the results may differ. Second, the random sample investigated in this study was the majority of students. The authors suggest that future research could further expand the sample to other age groups, especially older customers (over 35 years). Third, the self-congruity measure used in this study combines conformity in four self-concepts, including actual self-congruence, social self-congruence, ideal self-congruence, and ideal social self-congruence. Future studies are suggested to investigate the four perspectives of self-alignment respectively. This will help researchers to understand the impact of self-alignment on customer attitudes more comprehensively. Finally, this study did not investigate the involvement of more demographic (e.g. age, income, etc.) and psychological (e.g. affection, emotion, cognition) moderators in the theoretical model so that future researchers are recommended to include these variables.

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Authors

1. Nur Asnawi, **Professor**, Management Department, Faculty of Economics Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia 65145, Phone & Fax: +62-341-558881, e-mail: asnawi@manajemen.uin-malang.ac.id
2. Nina Dwi Setyaningsih, **Lecturer**, Accounting Department, Faculty of Economics Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia 65145, Phone & Fax: +62-341-558881, e-mail: shirlytania89@yahoo.com

Corresponding author:

Nur Asnawi, **Professor**, Management Department, Faculty of Economics Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia 65145, Phone & Fax: +62-341-558881, e-mail: asnawi@manajemen.uin-malang.ac.id