The chain effects of service innovation components on the building blocks of tourism destination loyalty: the moderating role of religiosity

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Abstract

Purpose – Having Middle Eastern tourism industry as the context, this study aims to examine the impact of the four main dimensions within service innovation (i.e. product, process, organizational and marketing innovations) on tourist satisfaction; subsequently, towards the development of destination loyalty. Realized that religiosity prevails as an important social force that shapes individual behaviours, this study, hence, placed further assessment upon its moderating role, specifically in the relationships between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Design/methodology/approach – With adopting the approach of self-structured questionnaire, 214 usable responses had been collected for this study. Obtained data was then analyzed by conducting exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and multiple linear regression analysis through the usage of structural equation modelling.

Findings – Analysis of obtained data has revealed all the investigated dimensions within service innovation as active predictors to tourist satisfaction, with the exception of product innovation, while having marketing innovation being of highest significance. In turn, tourist satisfaction is found to greatly influence the formation of destination loyalty. Findings then provide notable indication on religiosity as a moderating factor to the proposed relationships within the investigated framework, between service innovation and tourist satisfaction, as well as tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Originality/value – This study, thus, revealed the level of religiosity, particularly from the standpoint of Islamic perspectives, in playing a critical role towards predicting capability of service innovation on tourist satisfaction, and further, destination loyalty. Contributions hereby lie on theoretical and pragmatic insights concerning aspects of service and Islamic marketing within today's tourism front.

Keywords Service innovation, Tourist satisfaction, Religiosity, Destination loyalty

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Primarily, the World Tourism Organization, UNWTO (2020), had proposed a positive growth of 3%–4% upon the tourism industry for the year 2020, succeeding its extrapolation

from the previous year; where, nearly half of participated nations predicted annual outperformance has illustrated a positive outlook in the universal scale. Capitalizing on the globalized trend, Malaysia has attained a staggering 13.3% in national GDP as of the year 2018, in spite of high degree of fluctuations across its ten years' performance (Knoema, 2020). Among others, inbound visitors consisted multiple originated nationalities, where Hirschmann (2020) reported the majority to be of ASEAN residencies (23.6 million), followed by China (2.9 million), South Korea (616.8 thousand) and India (600.3 thousand), respectively. The country has indeed emerged as a paradise for tourism purposes, as seen through motivation for foreign visitors being mainly fallen within the reason of holiday and leisure, constituting 53.4% of all visits (Hirschmann, 2019). Nonetheless, the nation managed to achieve 16.9% in growth during the first quarter of the following year, holding a revenue of RM21.4bn over that of RM18.3bn for the same interval of the previous year (Tourism Malaysia, 2019). Therefore, it has reached to a total arrival of 26.1 million in international visits (approximate increase of 270 thousand visitors) as of the year 2019, accumulating receipts of up to RM86.1bn (an increase of RM2bn) (Tourism Malaysia, 2020). The positive bandwagon was further reassured through a number of "Visit Malaysia" campaigns throughout its 30 years span aside other endeavours such as the "Malaysia Truly Asia" slogan and Malaysia Year of Festivals (MyFEST) 2015, with the latest being planned for the year 2020 (Tourism Malaysia, 2018).

However, constructed optimism declined following the Covid19 outbreak as of earlier 2020, with Tourism Economics foresees a passive recovery within the tourism industry where international demand for travelling would not regain its regular drive pending the year 2023 (The Japan Times, 2020). Industry's development was, thus, severely impacted by the pandemic, through an estimation by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) at 5% cutback on international airline revenues (TravelDailyNews International, 2020). With heightened dependency on situational volatility, the World Travel and Tourism Council further reckoned a total of $2.1tn in deficit earnings across tourism firms worldwide, contributing up to 75 million in related unemployment, shall the pandemic fail to subside by the first quarter of 2020 (i.e. 36,000 employees were prorogued by British Airway as per report on the 2nd April, 2020) (Becker, 2020). Specifically, Malaysia, being part of Southeast Asia countries that predicted a total revenue of $21.5bn, from approximately 30 million inbound visitors for the year 2020, is expecting a 60% loss in tourism businesses within the same year, accounting for 35% of domestic hotels being temporarily closed to avoid further pandemic outburst; in which, 15% of the owners expressed pessimistic resorts upon recovered operational continuity (Deutsche Welle, 2020). Further articulated by Klasko, Gleason and Hoad (2020), hotels and resorts, being inspired by practices across hospitals and health institutions, are consulted on precautionary measures regarding administrations, emphasizing staffs' welfare as the priority, using a systematic communication hierarchy through effective human resource allocations, comprehensive training concerning current phenomenon, well-established hygiene protocols, technological commitments, coupled with robust communications between both internal and external stakeholders regarding latest reports and updates.

In the hindsight, the Middle East would usually prevail as an exceptional travelling destination during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan (WIT, 2016), whereas, Malaysia, as a country that embraces its Muslim heritage, has responded for aspiring a tourism destination among Middle Eastern travellers because of cultural proximity; (i.e. Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait) (Puvaneswary, 2018). More so, revelation was acknowledged by EyeforTravel Ltd. (2018) where Middle Eastern travellers, constituting those of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, would contribute an

increased travelling spending of up to \$140bn as of the year 2025, from a humble \$64bn in 2015. Noted that Malaysia was recognized as the top Muslim travelling destination by the Mastercard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index for the ninth time (Arab News, 2019), the country holds immerse potential in growing its tourism businesses through such perspective. Yet, global crisis as occurred recently has undeniably entailed chained deteriorations on this lucrative segment (i.e. large-scale movement control that forbids leisure travelling reduced oil price that hinders disposable income in the Middle East).

With forthcoming direction emphasized on recovery over expansion, the proposition by Sundbo and Gallouj (2000), Van Riel *et al.* (2004) and Kim *et al.* (2015), who underlined innovation at the entrepreneurial level as the key to business success, is hereby highlighted. While Adams *et al.* (2006) and Vence and Trigo (2009) have ascertained considerable disagreement in appraising the magnitude of successful innovation between both servicing and manufacturing sectors, solid footing is discovered in light of new technological introduction not being a necessary expedient within execution of service innovation. Heterogeneity nature of the service sector has presented difficulties towards generalizing performed innovations (Sundbo and Gallouj, 2000); service innovation would prevail as a form of competitive advantage to an organization if comprehensive learning was well established among internal participants (Rao *et al.*, 2018). Beyond customer-oriented initiatives, hospitality-based innovation consisted combined operations via networked culture and participation towards value-creation that induces satisfied travelling experiences (Mutuku and Wambua, 2019) . As reflected by Narges *et al.* (2013), the idea of customer satisfaction involves mechanical feasibility, introduction of new services and advancements upon service delivery procedure, besides mere interpersonal interactions. Such is more evident crossing national borders, when enhanced business performance by innovative hospitality practitioners contributes a nation's GDP gain (Chivandi *et al.*, 2019). Circumstance then placed heightened dependency over cultural upbringing at the consumers' side (Farmaki *et al.*, 2020); particularly, increased emphasis on Islamic consumers within recent years as a well-defined segment (Boulanouar and Wood, 2018). Implication is hereby established with the Islamic dollar being increasingly recognized (metaphorically) as a strong and fast-growing currency, in spite of its globally dispersed disposition (Sandikci, 2011; Temporal, 2011). The norm, in turn, empowered opportunities for entrepreneurs to design, manufacture and market appealing products within said segment (Sandikci and Ger, 2002). More so in recent years, multiple researchers have extended their professionalism to understand the travelling impressions of this demographic as culturally embedded tourists, in view of brand equity, cultural transparency, religious proximity in marketed offerings and level of cultural-related proficiencies (Abulibdeh and Zaidan, 2017; Alserhan *et al.*, 2018; Battour and Ismail, 2016; Eid and El-Gohary, 2015; Mannaa, 2019; Nurdiansyah, 2018; Shafaei, 2017). Patronized on religious guidance, the importance of "Halal" certifications, as well as Quran symbolic, has not been overlooked towards influencing the intentions, further behaviours and loyalty within this segment (Mohd Suki and Abang Salleh, 2018; Abang Salleh and Mohd Suki, 2019; Floren *et al.*, 2019). Yet, while other external factors, with the like of risk perceptions and marketed channels remained crucial determinants towards destination selections among Muslim travellers (Rahmafitria and Misran, 2018; Setiawan, Trisdyani, Adnyana, Adnyana, Wiweka and Wulandani, 2018); understanding the difference between Muslim and non-Muslim

travellers has not been well explored (Sandikci, 2011), as to its regulatory potential above the landscape of service innovation.

Herewith, religiosity is being established to possess strong potential impact on businesses in terms of price, brand loyalty, attitudes to risk and probability of purchasing on credit, *inter alia* (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015; Nawi *et al.*, 2019). Whereas, its relation to service innovation has been rather neglected; in spite of being a common variable across tourism-related research (Sørensen and Jensen, 2019; Smith, Ferrari and Puczkó, 2016). This study, therefore, intended towards exploring the gap of religiosity within service innovation dimensions, with gauging tourist satisfaction and loyalty among tourists of Muslim and non-Muslim heritages. Acknowledged that Muslim and Middle Eastern entrepreneurs, given impetus by the rise of middle-class Muslim consumers, are looking to expand their horizons along Islamic marketplaces (Osella and Osella, 2009); research prospects stirred to enhance both hospitality marketing theories and service marketing strategies within the tourism industry.

Literature review

Service innovation

Looking through commercial lens, "innovation" had first been introduced by Schumpeter (1934) to refer the four new merging elements of markets, products, processes as well as sources of raw materials. Such then inspired the understanding from Toivonen and Tuominen (2009) with service innovation as an original service offering or the rejuvenation of current services introduced to business stakeholders (internal and external alike) that enabled mutual customer-organizational benefits, in view of value-added resolutions. Reflected by Hjalager (2010), the endeavour would encompass renewal and enlargement of product and service ranges provided by a business within the marketplace. Being described by Hu *et al.* (2009) as an essential to a firm's success, the construct transpires actions via introduction of new approaches in production, supply chain, logistic management, organization management system, workforce skills/knowledge and improved working environment/condition, towards succeeding effective service marketing.

The concept of service innovation was first discussed and developed in the early 1990s (Fagerberg, 2005); and yet, it has not been extensively researched within the service sector (Ferraz and Nathália de Melo, 2016). However, its confirmed status above business premises has not been underestimated, as seen through escalated number of related publications and significance from dissimilar research pursuits, alongside rising emphasis within academic attempts allocated to appraise such construct (Carlborg, Kindström and Kowalkowski, 2014; Dotzel, Shankar and Berry, 2013; Ordanini and Parasuraman, 2010). It, thus, prevailed as a form of novelty within the procedures and the organization, in accordance to the existing services (Gadrey *et al.*, 1995). Further explained by Selen and Agarwal (2005), service innovation is a system that uses the capabilities and roles of diverse stakeholders to develop core values towards assisting healthy transformations and exploitation of new market opportunities, as well as establishment of admirable competitive advantage. With primary contour being set on identifying, further formulating contemporary services instruments with extended robustness to strive for and surpass customers' requirements and desires across multitude of business disciplines, service innovation is essential in fulfilling customer expectations; which, works towards the fulfilment of customers' requests (Simon and Yaya, 2012).

On this note, expectation theory, more precisely, expectancy-disconfirmation theory, has been brought in light of explaining the investigated phenomena. As according to Oliver (1996), the concept characterized customers' perceptions upon three main criterion, namely, zero disconfirmation when expectation is successfully met, negative disconfirmation when actual results fall short of expected outcomes and positive disconfirmation when expectation is being outperformed by actual performances. The concept, under different circumstances, has also been widely applied in the context of tourism to interpret both satisfaction and loyalty among travellers (Agyeiwaah, Adongo, Dimache and Wondirad, 2016; Hasan *et al.*, 2019; Pizam and Milman, 1993; Weber, 1997). From the standpoint of services, customer orientation innovation as executed by employees is proven an inevitable cornerstone (Hertog, 2000), whilst development being highly dependent over the framework of ongoing organizational procedures and services (Gadrey *et al.*, 1995). Being customer-centric, a variety of inputs from different stakeholders are required for successful service innovation, following its parallel degree of creativity towards actual planning and strategizing (Kim and Mauborgne, 2004). It hereby covers new thoughts, actions, processes or products (Rogerson, 1983), with the horizon being based upon an organization's capabilities and core values (Selen and Agarwal, 2005). With the proposed paradigm in tag, diverse approaches that deviate conventionalism would be required in seek of improvements that introduce new ideas to existing products and services (Kim and Mauborgne, 2004). Specifically, positive value through undertaken innovations would ensure generation of satisfaction among experienced customers (Heim and Sinha, 2001; Carlson *et al.*, 2018).

Beyond the singularity of service innovation, tourism embraced religion as a major role in shaping tourist behaviour (among Muslims, Hindus and Catholics) as per their destination selections, favoured tourism products as well as religion-related opportunity and facility selections (Essoo and Dibb, 2004; Weidenfeld and Ron, 2008). While Mahmoud, Hinson and Anim (2018), Simon and Yaya (2012) and Yeh, Chen and Chen (2019) suggested positive relationship between improving customer satisfaction and innovation within areas of process, organizational and marketing, tourism-based service innovation would require relatively clear and defined objectives to identify new (and more) effective ways of creating added value for tourists of diverse religious backgrounds. Coombs and Miles (2000) divided service innovation into three main outlooks, consisting:

(1) assimilation that emphasizes technological and technical adoption and adaptation (Evangelista, 2000; Ko and Lu, 2010; Miozzo and Soete, 2001; Tether, 2005);

(2) demarcation that embraces service characteristics, customers' involvements and organizational culture and proficiencies to develop unique offerings (Droege *et al.*, 2009; Hipp and Grupp, 2005); and

(3) synthesis that upholds cumulated innovation from both areas of services and manufacturing (Drejer, 2004; Flikkema *et al.*, 2007; Gallouj and Savona, 2008).

The current study, thus, holds proximity to the synthesis perspective, with investigating the components as proposed by Sundbo and Gallouj (2000) and Amin *et al.* (2013) (i.e. product innovation, process innovation, organizational innovation and market innovation) on satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Product innovation

The Measurement of Scientific and Technological Activities (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) is a manual with specific guidelines to collect and interpret data related to technological innovation (Mortensen and Bloch, 2005). According to the manual, product innovation is about the introduction of goods or services that are new and/or considerably improved (from the existing ones) to the consumers. In view of that, product innovation can be viewed as an "opening" of goods or services; and it requires continuous attention for long-term business growth. Based on the descriptions by Chesbrough, Lettl and Ritter (2018) and Manders, de Vries and Blind (2016), product innovation further signifies the procedure undertaken by a firm that initiates contemporary products and services towards actual marketplace status ensuing recognizable functional advancements. With monetary gain in mind, such operations would ensure new-found profitability and sales growth as associated to the constructive outcomes of marketed offerings (Artz, Norman, Hatfield and Cardinal, 2010; Cho and Pucik, 2005). The revelation, therefore, defined product innovation from both territories of product improvements and unexplored market segments, and, in turn, attained differentiated positions to that of competitors (Weiermair, 2006). Expanded by Romero and Tejada (2020), technological adaptation in the expense of autonomy among subsequent service providers would ensure advancements in tourism-related product innovation, which placed the assimilation perspective in the commercial limelight.

More often than not, product development is known to be highly important to gain product uniqueness, as such goods and services should always be adequately innovative and special to attract customer's purchase intention (Weiermair, 2006). Koellinger (2008) then stated that profitability plays a crucial role in the case of product innovation, and it is also an important incentive for a longer term product development. (Ginting and Sembiring, 2017). With having customer-centric hospitality offerings as the groundwork, value-creation with heightened tourist co-creation would, nonetheless, yield outcomes that comply expectations (Mathis, Kim, Uysal, Sirgy and Prebensen, 2016; Prebensen and Xie, 2017). Further communicated by Al-Rousan, Mustafa, Almasri and Bala'awi (2019), service specifications from imperative dimensions of accommodations, tourism conveniences and operational effectiveness of a destination would directly predict visitors' satisfactions. In spite of tourists perceive dissimilar magnitude of essentiality in hospitality dimensions upon travelling favourability (Guo, Barnes and Jia, 2017); product innovation, more so with account for customer participations, has fallen within the pinnacle of experiential excellence. Exemplified through components of different tourism concepts, such as eco-tourism, shopping tourism, religious tourism, professional tours, voluntary tourism and associate attractive loyalty programmes, product innovation has not taken the backseat in developing all-inclusive customer attractions following particular travelling destinations.

In essence, product innovation in services includes the introduction of a new product (goods or service) in terms of its features and/or intended usages (Cheng, 2015), and concurrently, significant improvements through aspects of additional functions, service efficiency and speed. From the perspective of tourism, product innovation should include new tourist attractions and services that aim to raise the perception of destination satisfaction among tourists. As mentioned earlier, tourist satisfaction provides a great competitive advantage to DMOs (e.g. tourist boards, destination management entities and individual enterprises) at the global level. Essentially, a review by Marasco, De Martino, Magnotti and Morvillo (2018) exposed diverging angles used within earlier studies on travel

and tourism, such as cross-company association, customer participation, internal collaboration, information sharing as well as innovation protocol and strategy. Herewith, research on the level of satisfaction among tourists is likely to furnish DMOs with useful information on service attributes that are deemed important by tourist, their decision-making process and, to some extent, service performances that meet underlying tourist expectations among the tourists (Hjalager, 2010). Taking into account tourists' perspectives, the first hypothesis is postulated:

H1. Product innovation has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction.

Process innovation
Process innovation, as defined by Tether (2005), is the introduction of totally new or significantly improved goods and services in terms of the distribution process or support activities. The variable constitutes realization of manufacturing processes, trading channels and related subsidiary procedures within an organization that are either originally developed or considerably improved (Greenberg, Hill, and Newburger, 2019; Khazanchi, Lewis, and Boyer, 2007). Accounting for its contribution to the supply chain, process innovation represents momentous modifications objectified in attaining financial efficiency, whilst maximizing production volumes (Greenberg *et al.*, 2019). Reinganum (1981) indicated that process innovation is an essential factor in enhancing productivity, especially when there is an outward shift from a current supply function corresponding to achieve a more cost-effective operation. However, Chenavaz (2012) placed argument from the perspective of price dynamism, having process innovation as an application that advances productiveness across stages of the product lifecycle. Process innovation could further enhance the production of current goods and services, thus, benefiting the innovators with sustainable business growth above the premise of intensified market competitions (Stanković and Đukić, 2009). In many cases, investigations on process innovation have been done with relations to technological adoption towards far-reaching organizational performances (Ali and Frew, 2014; Choi, Park and Park, 2012; Luo, Tian and Koh, 2017). Process innovation is typically referred to as backstage initiatives to improve productivity, escalate efficiency and hinder smooth flow of process execution. With regard to services marketing, it is vital to identify the influential elements of process innovation. Process innovation in a service organization can be described as significant changes in various service aspects including its techniques, equipment, software and skills aimed at achieving two main objectives:

(1) to decrease production and deliver costs; and
(2) to increase service quality, so that customer satisfaction can be achieved (Hjalager, 2010).

The condition of service processes plays a significant role in influencing their level of satisfaction, as tourists become more well-travelled and sophisticated. As determined by Trantopoulos, von Krogh, Wallin and Woerter (2017), employment of external insights as obtained through networking technology have been inevitable assets towards process alterations within an organization to achieve economic security. It is evident that DOMs need to pay more attention to process innovation if they wish to maintain their competitiveness levels, and at the same time enjoy the benefits of increased tourist satisfaction in a continuous manner (Kotler *et al.*, 2006; Hjalager, 2010). Stanković and Đukić (2009) indicated that tourists' destination perceptions can be affected by their past experience, recommendation, word-of-mouth (WOM) and tourism strategies implemented

by marketers. In sum, these process components influence the choices (and preferences), as well as the levels of satisfaction of new and returning tourists. On the contrary, Zach (2013) has allocated priority on sizes of tourism companies, with organizational process being the stepping stone to innovation in larger firms as contradicted to that of smaller firms which flourished through internal communications and networking. Within the context of hospitality, Hilman and Kaliappen (2014) proposed process innovation as a separation to service offerings, with the former being of greater influence on firms' performances, particularly among larger organizations. Yet, the effectiveness of process innovation is recognized to succeed fundamental technological foundation of an organization, which further predicts primary innovation pursued within a firm, in spite of having technical standardization as an acknowledged hindrance (Brem, Nylund and Schuster, 2016). Strengthened through the findings by Damanpour, Walker and Avellaneda (2009), process innovation from both an organization's managerial and technical aspects holds identification to service improvements, with exploitation placed on competitive differentiations upon actual executions, and avoidance of marketplace's status quo and repetitive consistency, in turn, highlighting the trace for uniqueness in firm's strategic pursues. While technological adoption remains essential towards innovative endeavour, firm's process innovation upon operational enhancements has been centralized on business-to-customer servicing excellence (Guo *et al.*, 2020).

Walker, Damanpour and Devece (2011) then associated firms' achievements to administrative improvements, provided governance of actual performances has been effectively undertaken. Further highlighted by del Vecchio, Secundo and Passiante (2018), modularity (i.e. segregations of specifications upon particular functionality), among others, has prevailed as a noteworthy approach in providing cumulated offerings through both product and services within the tourism front. Recognized that several school of thoughts have emerged in adoption of process innovation within the service landscape, this study intents to explore the variable from the consumers' perspective in influencing satisfaction, with the following hypothesis proposed:

H2. Process innovation has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction.

Organizational innovation
Researchers defined organizational innovation in various ways. Sundbo and Gallouj (1999) described this form of innovation as an improved or new approach to the management of an organization. Tether (2005) viewed organizational innovation as "the implementation of a new organizational method in the firm's business practices, workplace organization, or external relations". Collectively, organizational innovation can be referred as the creation and adoption of new ideas or behaviours by an organization leading to improvements in its business and managerial practices, and the emergence of new organizational forms (Bharadwaj and Menon, 2000).

According to Gallego *et al.* (2013), in spite of the fact that organizational innovation often remains unobvious or invisible, its direct and indirect influences on the organization is often reflected by four main substantial enhancements, namely, management/operating costs, quality of products, speed of delivery and level of flexibility. As such, organizational innovation plays a vital role in predicting an organization's expected performance and its market strategic positioning to fulfil customer expectations. Many studies have testified the positive influence of organizational innovation on business performance and sales growth (Armbruster *et al.*, 2008; Gallego *et al.*, 2013). Forwarded stance then placed the impact of cross-organizational collaborations in yielding increased diversity towards innovation

among tourism institutions, which has proven critical for maintaining the credibility of particular destinations (Martínez-Pérez, *et al.*, 2019). Such is also proven cardinal from a contradicted scene, where employees' reactivity and experienced security and comfort, appropriating customers' feedback in generating the effect of co-creation, would ensure favourable perceptions, satisfaction and long-term clienteles (Tung, Chen and Schuckert, 2017). The occurrence can possibly be attributed to enhanced work quality and efficiency, information transparency as well as up-to-date proficiencies among staff members following new skills, knowledge and technologies, achieved via the implementation of organizational innovation (Armbruster *et al.*, 2008). This being said, internal alterations and innovatory practices among industry players have not fall short of capabilities in accepting and using tourists' feedback, with outcomes reflecting societal standards (Pekovic, Rolland and Gatignon, 2016). Facing the competitive environment of tourism industry, DMOs should improve their managerial innovations including ongoing management of effective controls with resources, internal collaborations and empowerment of staff members (Hjalager, 2010). More so for service institutions such as hotels and resorts, marketplace vulnerability has placed them in the spot of standardized planning, without foregoing aspects of personalization to induce experiential uniqueness (Yfantidou, Spyridopoulou, Chatzigeorgiou and Malliou, 2019). Thus, from the view of tourism, organizational innovation in a country's tourism industry is expected to help create a favourable perception among tourists, and lead to a higher level of satisfaction. In general, findings from previous research has testified the positive relationship between service innovation and customer satisfaction (Simon and Yaya, 2012). Precision is also extended upon the impact of organizational culture, via aspects of operational intentions, staffs' proficiencies, institutional attributes, information distribution and actual execution, towards defining performance through visitors' satisfaction (Yusof, Jamil, Said and Ali, 2012). However, the variable has been mainly investigated from the approach of internal efficacy (i.e. employees satisfaction and performance) (Al-edenat, 2018; Wikhamn, 2019; Wipulanusat, Panuwatwanich and Stewart, 2018; Yadav and Gupta, 2017); and only a limited number of studies (Cheng, 2015) have provided evidence to support the direct influence of organizational innovation on customer's level of satisfaction in the tourism industry. In pursue of the latter's clarification, hypothesis is, thus, stipulated:

H3. Organizational innovation has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction.

Marketing innovation

According to Sundbo and Gallouj (1999), marketing innovation refers to the incorporations of new market-oriented behaviours among organizations. For instance, this may encompass how an organization identifies a new market segment, or enters another industry. Furthermore, marketing innovation could also be a totally new or a substantially changed in the marketing strategies of an organization to develop and expand its sales market. In the Oslo Manual, marketing innovation is described as "the implementation of a new marketing method involving significant changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion, or pricing" (Mortensen and Bloch, 2005). Marketing innovations are aimed at better addressing customer needs, opening up new markets or newly positioning a firm's product on the market, with the objective of increasing the firm's sales.

As understood from Dileep and Mathew (2017), marketing innovation surpasses that of mere procedural and technical mechanism, to include aggregate capacity of the marketing mix. Service quality being an antecedent to tourists' patronages at one end of the spectrum, executions across the marketing mix have, thus, surfaced as the influencer of satisfaction

and loyalty (Azhar *et al.*, 2019). While tourists have become more sophisticated and demanding, comprehensive package in tourism should include a complete range of services including accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, entertainment and other related activities that could facilitate and enhance their travelling experiences that have often been expected among potential travelers (Énalan and Soteriades, 2012; Hanna, Font, Scarles, Weeden, and Harrison, 2018). In view of that, DMOs should further enhance their collaborations and networking to ensure such comprehensive packages (or all-in programmes) are designed based on tourists' travelling needs and behaviour in mind.

Collectively, marketing innovation in the context of tourism industry involves the implementation of a series of new and/or improved marketing approaches to strengthen the design and packaging of the current tourism attractions and services that could meet or surpass tourist expectations (Hu *et al.*, 2009). More so from the perspective of locational marketing in general, perceptions formed pending and after visitations are predictors of satisfactions; consequently, tendency of future revisits (Abderrahim and Mustapha, 2018; Albaity and Melhem, 2017). Travelling motives being of centrality, destination-based marketing has fallen on targeted characteristics and offerings that reflect visitors' purposes (Sato, Kim, Buning and Harada, 2018). Fundamental objective of marketing innovation in the tourism industry is hereby to achieve tourist satisfaction, and subsequently attract more tourists to the destination (Azhar, 2019). Being result-oriented, factors that succeed satisfactions have often been accounted for marketing plans and executions, so as ensuring apparent fulfilments of tourists' expectations (Tham, Azam and Sarwar, 2018). In view of that, DMOs should improve their marketing innovation by better accommodating tourist requirements, identifying new market segments to enter and enhancing their positioning accuracy.

Realized that user-generated contents prevail as direct determinant to tourists' expectations towards particular destinations, further aid in generation of perceptions through actual experience (Chen, Chekalina and Fuchs, 2017; Kaosiri, Fiol, Tena, Artola and García, 2017; Wang, Tran and Tran, 2017), marketing undertakings within the area of travel has not deviate from experiential-based assessments. Ultimately, the various forms in cooperative marketing have their distinctive roles to determine the efficiency, effectiveness and success of destination marketing (Énalan and Soteriades, 2012). Because of customer's ever-changing demands, and stiff competitions in the tourism industry, tourism marketers would have to invest more resources to strengthen innovation, specifically, with promoting destination attributes that meet and outweigh that of tourists' travelling motivations (R and Goel, 2017). Realized that collaborative marketing has gained compelling recognitions within current servicing front, the aspect of "innovation" remains explorable, which, developed the following hypothesis:

H4. Marketing innovation has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction.

Tourist satisfaction. Satisfaction has been a common variable used within the literature of services marketing, with regard to measuring means in which a product (goods or service) offered by an organization meets or surpasses customer expectations (Oliver, 2014; Rajeswari *et al.*, 2017). Adopted to the context of tourism, customer or tourist satisfaction is being referred to favourable experiences among tourists generated from a specific destination. Having the expectancy disconfirmation theory as a footwork, the phenomena can be measured by level of positivity when a tourist compares his/her level of sensation to their initial expectations (i.e. performance of tourism practitioners in the visited destination matched against expectations constructed following available information through various mediums) (Yüksel and Yüksel, 2002; Prayag, 2008; Azhar *et al.*, 2018a, 2018b). Satisfaction is

hereby achieved when tourists perceived a higher level of service performance to that of expectations. Conversely, dissatisfaction is the direct results of failure of actual outcomes in meeting underlying expectations (Coban, 2012). Efforts including promotional activities and subsequent WOM are shown to precede improved positive evaluation on service quality, which generates increased purchase intentions among travellers (Chiu, Liu and Tu, 2016).

Additionally, studies by Cheng (2015) and Kanwal and Yousaf (2019) have determined that tourist satisfaction can be created through service innovation. Expanded upon the revelation falls on the consequential impact of service innovation on maximizing customers' value towards matching and exceeding expectations (Mahmoud, Hinson and Anim, 2018; Sukwadi, 2017). Complementing the effect of experiential-based marketing in communicating sentimental and physical anticipations, satisfaction is, therefore, constructed through customer-oriented service design and development (Yeh, Chen and Chen, 2019). It was also revealed that there possesses significant inter-relationships among factors composing tourist satisfaction, perceived destination image and destination loyalty from the standpoint of statistical outlook (Chi and Qu, 2008). Subsequently, investigations undertaken on the determinants of customer loyalty within the tourism industry further placed level of satisfaction among tourists to be one of the most important factors of destination loyalty (Kuo *et al.*, 2016). As articulated by Backman and Crompton (1991), yielded destination loyalty is then reflected by committed behaviour among tourists with the tendency to engage and participate in available recreational services; not to mention, greater acceptance to service failures resulted from reasons beyond organizational control.

Indeed, it can be easily acknowledged that contemporary tourists are more sophisticated, widely travelled and are expecting to have a truly unique travelling experience. As per the tourism context from an Islamic perspective, evaluation of satisfaction among Muslims may have different requirements because of adherence to the *Shari'ah* (Islamic law), which would affect the participation of Muslims in tourism activities that include acceptable goods, services and environments (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015). Jafari (2014) then argued that Muslim tourists are influenced directly by their religious beliefs with regard to their choice of tourist attractions and other related factors such as travel motivation, attitudes and patterns. In spite of existing difficulties to properly ascertain such criteria in view of complexity and intangible natures of tourism-based offerings (Smith, 1994), the concept of customer satisfaction (or tourist satisfaction) is particularly relevant (Kuo *et al.*, 2016). This, coupled with the notion that measuring Islamic tourist satisfaction, includes both functional and affective dimensions contained within the *Shari'ah* attributes (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015). Discerned to the tourist-focused practices in general, lasting patronages as generated from positive perceptions formed on service excellence would account for both human (e.g. culture and language) and environmental elements (e.g. infrastructures and recreational activities) (Guzman-Parra *et al.*, 2016).

However, it is also worth noting that a satisfied customer may not always ultimately become a loyal customer, in view of the influential capabilities of other external variables (e.g. destination's heritage and cultural proximity) and complexity of the business environment (Hultman *et al.*, 2015; Olsen, 2002). Cronin *et al.* (2000) has, thus, particularly doubted the sufficiency of the current value perceptions among Muslims, albeit anticipating these values to assist in building loyalty and retention and hence profitability. Regardless, assessments made towards determining the extent of customer satisfaction have fallen on loyalty as a deciding variable commencing the last decade, as it has been considered by fellow researchers to be an excellent predictor to realistic customer behaviours (Al-Ansi and Han, 2019). While tourists' personalities are not generalized, satisfaction formed on individual evaluations of experienced hospitality would predict their decision-making

process on destinations for future travels (Dwyer *el al.*, 2009). Reinforced by Kim *et al.* (2015), customer satisfaction is one of the best indicators to gauge customer's future purchase intentions, whereas, Oliver (2014) further proposed customer satisfaction as a key differentiator among marketers within business environment of heightened competitiveness in attaining long-term sustainability and growth.

Both supportive and opposing schools being presented in previous studies, results, therefore, seem utmost circumstantial in association between satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, significance of the relationship remains rather ambiguous, specifically on the influence of tourist satisfaction (among Malaysian Muslims) on destination loyalty (towards Middle Eastern countries). The following hypothesis is hereby postulated:

H5. Tourist satisfaction has a positive influence on destination loyalty.

Destination loyalty

Customer loyalty is the likelihood of previous customers to continue to support a specific organization, and making that organization a preferred choice (Ou *et al.*, 2017). As described by Kotler *et al.* (2006) and Lovelock (2011), loyalty, placed beside customer satisfaction, is among the main elements focused and struggled by service organizations in promoting lasting customer relationship, following the objective of long-term business growth. In this case, destination loyalty emphasizes committed behaviours with the tendency to engage and participate in any existing recreational services (Backman and Crompton, 1991). More often than not, destination loyalty focuses mainly on the longitudinal perspective over cross-sectional perspective, which looks at the all-time visitations amongst tourists: today's trip might not necessarily be related to previous visits. Clarification is, nonetheless, offered by Antón *et al.* (2017), where tourists are highly probable in overlooking aspects of time and monetary investments in building destination loyalty, provided underlying motivations are of self-origins rather than destination attractions. The stand holds upon the study by Sangpikul (2018), which discovered the importance of other factors (i.e. human interactions) besides environmental attractions of the destination in cultivating tourist retention. A comparison between hedonism (feelings) and Eudaimonia (purposes), separate routes are well-established where the former has undisputedly prevailed as an indirect antecedent to loyalty, through satisfied experiences among tourists, as compared to the latter (Tsai, 2020). While a fine line between both quadrants remains fairly unclear within a trip, the current study placed investigation as per the findings, with assessments made on tourists' perceptions over visiting purposes.

According to Hernández Maestro *et al.* (2007), loyalty in the tourism industry can be categorized into two different factors, namely, tourists' attitude towards repeat purchase, and the feelings they have towards a destination. Stylos and Bellou (2018) classified destination loyalty into two main components, namely, locational-based commitment and potential recommendations, which identified the variable's distinctiveness to that of "previous visits" and "revisiting intentions". While elements of "tourist attitude" and "tourist feelings" should not be neglected in appraising the development of loyalty, relevance of the variable within today's business front is not distant to that of customer retentions. The claim has been supported by Backman and Crompton (1991), where loyal customers possess disposition for greater acceptance on shortcomings, in terms of failed or errored situations uncontrollable to fellow DMOs, and, in turn, succeeding the shortcomings with minimal negative influence on locational patronages. However, disclosure is showcased by Su, Hsu and Swanson (2014) within the area of service quality and impartiality, where destination loyalty is a definite consequent to service-focused satisfaction, which surpassed

the probable influence of security among service providers. Even when brand image was investigated as the predictor of destination loyalty, it was not without the significance of service quality, coupled with surrounding factors and interpersonal attributes (Akroush, Jraisat, Kurdieh, AL-Faouri and Qatu, 2016). Accounted for both spectrums, observation is made where satisfaction entails loyalty under a longitudinal layout; whilst, service failure, to certain extent, can be negligible shall loyalty is founded; yet, continuous service innovation remains crucial in meeting continuous expectations towards retaining existing customers (satisfaction → loyalty → tolerance → maintenance).

In the hindsight, tourism remains an experiential-intensive industry, where perceptions that yield loyalty, such as perceived standards, benefits and satisfaction, are formed through sensational encounters (Lv, Li and McCabe, 2020). Service being the essential focus, tourists' perceptions formed on experiential quality would outweigh that of perceived value towards allegiances and revisits (Hallak, Assaker and El-Haddad, 2017). Previous research findings generally demonstrated positive and linear relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Alrawadieh, Prayag, Alrawadieh and Alsalameen, 2019); yet, some researchers suggested the contrary, as the relationship between them is neither linear nor simple (Olsen, 2002; Hultman *et al.*, 2015). In particular, Cronin *et al.* (2000) doubted the sufficiency of the current value perceptions among Muslims, albeit anticipating these values to assist in building loyalty and retention and hence profitability. Jafari (2014) then argued that Muslim tourists are influenced directly by their religious beliefs with regard to their choice of tourist attractions and other related factors such as travel motivation, attitudes and patterns. Therefore, there exists a need to further investigate this relationship within the examined context.

Role of religiosity: from satisfaction to destination loyalty
Realized that religiosity does not hold an explicit definition (Singh and Wilkes, 1996), Emblen (1992) interprets religion as "a belief in spiritual being". Shyan Fam *et al.* (2004) identified religiosity as the way people think and believe they should live, and, in turn, reflects the values and attitudes of both societies and individuals. Value and attitude concerned, religion acts as a founding guidance in defining rituals and values; in turn, affects individual psychological and behavioural endeavours (Mathras *et al.*, 2016). As understood from Bergan and McConatha (2001), the concept of religiosity is based upon an array of multidimensional measurements in producing comprehensive results; yet, the fundamental remains arguable. Such is exemplified through studies by Wilkes *et al.* (1986) who investigated religiosity via practice (i.e. attendance at a house of worship), religious values (belief in and confidence in) and, finally, self-perceived religiousness; as well as Marks and Dollahite (2001) in two-dimensional approach to religious belief (i.e. personal, internal beliefs, framings, meanings and perspectives of religion). However, significance has not deviates from the Christianity nature of participated respondents. In the interest of this study, two dimensions have hereby been conceptualized to appraise religiosity within the context of Muslim consumers.

Religion holds a significant place in impacting undertakings among tourists, and, thus, would be a considerable factor for achieving market competitiveness (Weidenfeld and Ron, 2008). From one end, inclusion of assertive religious characteristics is undeniably the driving force for visits among international tourists with heightened religious affiliation (Weidenfeld, 2006), and, therefore, carries similar influence to other tourism-based subgroups. From another, recent revisits to the examined variable has also account for cultural diversity in bringing forward the repercussion of tourist satisfaction (Pizam, Shapoval and Ellis, 2016). Cultural-based interactions, thus, emerged as the fundamental

dimension that ensures enduring travelling experiences, pending the latter's effect on creating lasting patronages to particular locations (Chen *et al.*, 2017). Specifically, cultural norm prevails as both a direct antecedent on tourists' loyalty intention towards the destination, and the groundwork that connects perceived discrimination to loyalty intention (Jamaludin *et al.*, 2018). In this case, religion alongside attitude has presented consequential impact on consumption behaviours, particularly among Muslim consumers (Aziz *et al.*, 2019).

As being highlighted by Cakmak and Dilek (2019), Muslim tourists, in spite of holding a minority for contributions towards tourism income in totality, has proven to be a conspicuous segment upon belief-based consumptions. Significance has fallen above premise of Islamic tourism, where religiosity plays regulatory role towards the influence of destinations' offerings on customers' preferences (Mohamed, 2018; Putra *et al.*, 2016). As explained by Nurafiqah (2017), values upheld by Muslim travellers act as a prominent directory upon purchasing decisions made on tourism packages, with religiosity performing as the moderator in assessing tourist-destination value proximity. Transcending aspects of organizational image and expenditure, cultural components, with the like of Halal cognizance and societal trends, further surfaced as the motivators that affect choices among Islamic customers on religion-based hospitalities (Patwary, 2018). A more in-depth outlook by Bazazo *et al.* (2017) further demonstrated both Islamic characteristics of a location, being an independent variable to satisfaction, as a direct predictor to tourists' patronages within the area of Islamic tourism. As such, incorporation of Halal procedure among tourism practitioners is an irreplaceable tool that aids in fulfilling customers' expectations, alongside the independent influence of superior interpersonal engagements, provided served customers possess heightened devotion to their Islamic heritage (Abror *et al.*, 2019). Herewith, importance of religion has been highlighted in the context of accommodations; nonetheless, *Shari'ah*-compliant hotels which uphold the "Halal" image are significant considerations in fulfilment of Muslim travellers (Haque *et al.*, 2019). This is further supported by Mohezar *et al.* (2016) where loyalty formed by Muslim consumers towards specified brand can be directly associated with "Halal" as its dominant brand image.

On the contrary, Elaziz and Kurt (2017) has presented a contrasted view, where religious tourists uphold the disposition of cultures within the host destinations during their vacations, without underpinning their religious heritages, and, thus, toppling the influence of religiosity on their decision-making process. Fatima *et al.* (2016) have then proposed aspects of security, clarified directories and affordability as utmost concerns among visitors, when the factor of religion has been realized. Yet, proposition by Eid and El-Gohary (2015) has demonstrated perceptions formed on specifications of both tangible and intangible Islamic qualities to exert substantial influence on tourists satisfactions, in spite of elements of quality, price, cognitions and societal aspects arose as critical values concerned above the landscape of service and hospitality; however, relationships formed are highly dependent over the religiosity among Islamic consumers. Such was then reinforced by Battour *et al.* (2011) and Battour *et al.* (2017) where religious, particularly Islamic, characteristics possessed by the host destinations have established as significant pull factors that provoked visits and satisfactions among Muslim tourists. With religiosity holding tendency towards customer-created marketing contents, urgency is highlighted by Abror *et al.* (2020) regarding the importance of the independent variable on both constructive interactions and satisfaction, prior creation of buzzes. While loyalty among tourists is derived succeeding social responsibilities through the development of both organizational-based security and satisfaction, religiosity remains an accounted factor in defining generated loyalty within the field of service and hospitality (Alrowais, 2020). Bazazo *et al.* (2017) further placed the

Islamic characteristics of the host destinations as direct antecedents to tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

Additionally, various writers have confirmed religiosity as significant predictor to consumer behaviour (Cleveland *et al.*, 2013), satisfaction (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015), advertising (Shyan Fam *et al.*, 2004) and store patronage behaviour (Cleveland *et al.*, 2013). Religiosity undeniably plays such essential role in the tourism industry, with majority studies directed towards diverse impacts on tourist satisfaction (Abror *et al.*, 2019; Fatemah *et al.*, 2017; Hakimi *et al.*, 2018; Rashid and Ahmad, 2015; Sobari, Kurniati and Usman, 2019), whilst revealing possible insignificance within that of other industries (e.g. a study on the banking industry by Rahayu, Setiawan, Irawanto and Rahayu, 2020). Yet, certain arguments have acknowledged the variable's regulatory potential upon satisfaction on revisit intentions, positive WOM and long-term loyalty (Alrowais, 2020; Bazazo *et al.*, 2017; Eid and El-Gohary, 2015). Note that the moderating role of religiosity has been extensively investigated on causal impacts on satisfaction, and there remains unexplored territory towards formation of consumers' loyalty, particularly, destination loyalty in this regard (Muhamad *et al.*, 2019). The matter is, therefore, emphasized in this study, with the following hypothesis proposed:

H6. Religiosity moderates the influence of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty.

Following the discussions on reviewed literature, hypothesized relationships hereby developed the theoretical framework as illustrated in Figure 1.

Methodology and instrument development
Data collection and sampling
The conceptual model shown above was applied to the tourism industry. A quantitative research approach was taken with seven variables, comprising four dimensions of service innovation, tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty and religiosity, which have been adapted from the past literature.

The finding of the current study relies on the representativeness of the respondents. Consequently, for the present study, a representative selection of Muslim tourists was made from a database of Muslim tourists. Numerous international tourism organizations located in the Malaysia were requested to give us access to their database. All international tourist organizations were reassured only the research team members are eligible to access the provided data and the obtained questionnaire from the respondents would not be available
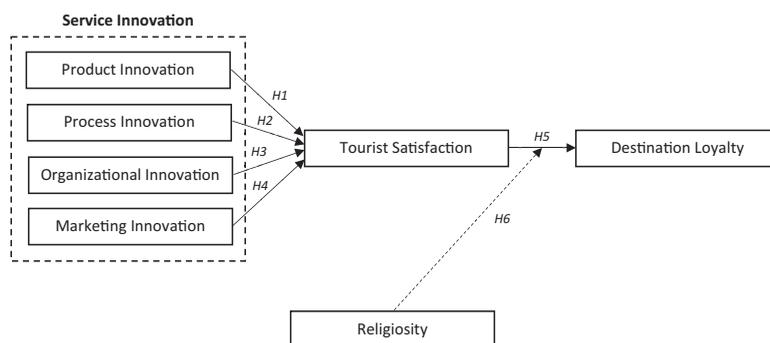

Figure 1.
Theoretical framework

to anyone except the research team. A database of Muslim tourists was then made for data collection purposes. The criteria for choosing tourists to participate in this study were straightforward. First, tourists should be Muslim. Second, tourists should have bought a tourism package to travel to any Middle Eastern countries within the past five years. Hence, the online questionnaire was administered and send via email to those target respondents who have met the above-mentioned criteria. Further, the process of data collection started with an explanation of the terms of service innovation, religiosity, satisfaction and destination loyalty in the Middle Eastern context, followed by the objectives of the study on the cover page of the questionnaire.

Thereafter, respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire. A total of 220 questionnaires were collected during the process, which is equal to a 98% response rate. Because of missing data and incomplete responses, six questionnaires were deleted. As a result, data from 214 completed questionnaires were compiled in the data pool for further analyses. Sample sizes between 30 and 500 can be considered as effective (Sekaran, 2006; Hair *et al.*, 2011; Hair *et al.*, 2016; Malhotra *et al.* (2007) assumed that the consideration of the sample size must be guided by resource constraints. Nevertheless, the determination of a sample size can also be based on the number of components developed in a particular research (Malhotra *et al.*, 2007). With reference to Green (1991), a formulated "rule of thumb $n \geq 50 + 8$(m) for multiple correlation and $n \geq 104 + m$ for the partial correlation" can be used. Furthermore, he anticipated that n (i.e. minimum sample size) $= 50 + 8$ (m); in this formula, m represents the number of both endogenous and exogenous variables. Accordingly, the formula suggests that an appropriate sample size for this study is between 106 and 160 (50 + 8 (7) − 104 + 8 (7). Therefore, because the proposed sample size of the present study falls within the aforesaid justifications, the requirement of the sample size is met.

Measurement
To measure the constructs of the conceptual framework, seven-point Likert scale questions were designed (1= strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) to collect relevant data. Likert scale questions are used in this study for two main reasons. First, they are able to capture the level of intensity and perception among the respondents. Hence, it is commonly used to better understand consumer behaviour in marketing and tourism research. Second, Likert scale questions are able to evaluate ideas and opinions held by the respondents, as well as facilitating the process of data coding. More importantly, adequate adjustments can be made for statistical analyses (Hair *et al.*, 2008; Nikhashemi *et al.*, 2017). In this study, the research framework consists of seven main factors. To enhance the content validity, each of the variable is evaluated with specific items gathered from related literature (Hair *et al.*, 2006; Churchill and Iacobucci, 2009).

Service innovation is composed of four dimensions: product innovation (four items), organizational innovation (four items), marketing innovation (four items) and process innovation (five items), which all are adopted from Cheng (2015) and Sundbo and Gallouj (1999); tourist satisfaction is measured using five items adopted from Eid and El-Gohary (2015); destination loyalty is measured by seven items adopted from Chi and Qu (2008) and, finally, religiosity which basically relies on the Islamic physical attributes value (e.g. the availability of prayer facilities, availability of Halal food, etc.) and the Islamic non-physical attributes value (e.g. availability of segregated services, availability of *Shari'ah*-compatible television, etc.) by seven items adopted from Emblen (1992) and Eid and El-Gohary (2015) (Table 1).

Common variance method

The common variance method (CMV) is applied to ensure there is no systematic bias influencing our data collection. The CMV method is very commonly used in data collection method using a self-administered survey approach (Hair *et al.*, 2010). To avoid the existence of CMV, the present study has used Harman's (1976) approach. Harman (1976) suggested applying one-factor test when the use of the SPSS software is required. Based on this approach, the extraction method of the principle component of one fix factor with non-rotation is used in factor analysis. The outcome reveals that only one factor has been extracted and it accounts for less than 50% of the variance (37.538%). Therefore, there is no CMV issue in the current study's collected primary data.

Findings

Sample profile

The demographic analysis unveiled that 52% of the respondents were male, whereas 48% were female. With regard to age, 27% of the respondents were between 26 and 39 years old, followed by 26% in the age group of 40–49, whereas 23% of respondents were between 50 and 64, and 7.5% were 19-year olds. In terms of ethnic group, the majority of the respondents (53%) were Malay Muslims, followed by 44% international Muslims who were in Malaysia as tourists, with the final 2.5% of the respondents being Indian Muslims. As we went through the sample profile, we established that half of the respondents had visited the Middle East two or three times within the past five years and 44% had visited four to six times, which shows that most of our target samples have a clear picture regarding the Middle East as a tourism destination and that they could contribute significantly to this study. The descriptive analysis reveals that two-thirds of the respondents have spent three to five days in their destination country in the Middle East, whilst the rest have spent slightly longer period, i.e. 4–7 days.

Reliability

The current study followed the guidelines provided by Hair *et al.* (2006) to ensure and assess the quality of measurement model; hence, the reliability, unidimensionality, discriminant validity as well as convergent validity are examined. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of all constructs used in this study are satisfactory and have met the cut-off point of 0.70, which demonstrates good internal consistency (Zikmund *et al.*, 2012) (see Table 2).

Construct validity (exploratory factor analysis)

Both factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis are applied as tools to evaluate the performance of the measurement model of all constructs. With the support of SPSS 21, exploratory factor analysis is conducted in this study to ensure that the questionnaire measures that which is intended. In this study, factor analysis is used on all statements to

Constructs	No. of items	Adopted
Service innovation	17 questions	(Sundbo and Gallouj, 1999)
Tourist satisfaction	5 questions	(Eid and El-Gohary, 2015)
Destination loyalty	7 questions	(Chi and Qu, 2008)
Religiosity	7 questions	(Batson *et al.*, 1993; Eid and El-Gohary, 2015)

Source: Adopted by authors

Table 1.
Measurement model constructs

evaluate the possible dimensions, and at the same time, ensuring the proposed factors are measured adequately by the questionnaires. The minimum factor loading is needed to examine an item in its particular variable. In this case, if the loading is equal or above 0.30, it can be regarded as factor loading at a minimum level (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Besides, factor loadings with values greater than 0.50 are deemed to be most significant, whereas 0.40 is deemed to be important (Hair *et al.*, 2006; Zikmund *et al.*, 2012). To meet the general requirement, this study accepted items with factor loading values above 0.50. All the items in this study are loaded perfectly (above 0.60) and there was no cross-loading amongst the items.

Convergent validity (average variance extracted)

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to measure the overall model fit of all the constructs. The constructs were validated through convergent validity [average variance extracted (AVE)] by taking into consideration the minimum cut-off point at 0.5. At the same time, the discriminant validity can be achieved in the case where correlation between the exogenous variables is lower than the cut-off value set at 0.85 (Byrne, 2009; Awang, 2012). The confirmatory factor analysis of each construct demonstrates that all constructs have satisfactory model fit (refer to Table 3). However, as suggested by the literature (Awang, 2012; Zikmund *et al.*, 2012; Byrne, 2013), items should be eliminated from the construct, if the loadings are lower than 0.60, and R^2 not more than 0.40. However, based on certain valid reasons, researchers may keep the items for further analysis (Byrne, 2009).

Outcomes of the structural model

A structural model was designed based on the six proposed hypotheses. Figure 2 and Table 5 illustrate the hypothesized relationships among the endogenous and exogenous variables proposed . Different approaches of fit statistics were applied to examine the goodness-of-fit indices. The goodness-of-fit indexes for each latent construct is displayed separately in Table 3. In addition, model fit indexes of the entire structure model is shown in Table 4. The measure of model fit in this study consists of CFI (comparative fit index >0.90), TLI (Tucker–Lewis index >0.90), IFI (incremental fit index), RMSEA (root mean square of error approximation <0.08) and (square/degree of freedom <5.0); these indexes are within the recommended level (Marsh and Hocevar, 1985; Baumgartner and Homburg, 1996; Byrne, 2009).

Table 5 demonstrates the relationship among the constructs of process innovation; organizational innovation; marketing innovation; tourist satisfaction and destination

Constructs	Standard deviation (SD)	Mean	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Product innovation	0.901	5.39	0.904
Process innovation	1.27	5.11	0.886
Organizational innovation	0.922	5.47	0.857
Marketing innovation	1.006	5.47	0.864
Tourism satisfaction	0.824	5.21	0.819
Destination loyalty	1.071	5.03	0.878
Religiosity	0.969	5.18	0.896
Source: Adopted by authors			

Table 2.
Reliability test

Scale items	Component Product innovation	Process innovation	Organizational innovation	Marketing innovation	Tourist satisfaction	Religiosity	Destination loyalty
PIN1	0.68						
PIN2	0.95						
PIN3	0.68						
PIN4	0.95						

Goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2 = 114.361$ ($p < 0.05$, df = 41), $\chi^2/df = 2.222$, TLI = 0.924, NFI = 0.872, CFI = 0.952, RMSEA = 0.07, AVE = 0.815

PRIN1		0.76					
PRIN2		0.83					
PRIN3		0.77					
PRIN4		0.75					
PRIN5		0.80					

Goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2 = 23.427$ ($p < 0.05$, df = 41), $\chi^2/df = 4.685$, TLI = 0.934, IFI = 0.967, NFI = 0.959, CFI = 0.911, RMSEA = 0.07, AVE = 0.782

ORIN1			0.70				
ORIN2			0.79				
ORIN3			0.83				
ORIN4			0.71				

Goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2 = 7.4602$ ($p < 0.05$, df = 41), $\chi^2/df = 3.730$, TLI = 0.957, IFI = 0.986, NFI=981 CFI = 0.986, RMSEA = 0.07, AVE = 0.757

MINO1				0.81			
MINO2				0.85			
MINO3				0.72			
MINO4				0.75			

Goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2 = 164.7$ ($p < 0.05$, df = 41), $\chi^2/df = 1.371$, TLI = 0.996, IFI = 1.002, CFI = 0.952, RMSEA = 0.07, AVE = 0.782

TS1					0.62		
TS2					0.62		
TS3					0.71		
TS4					0.85		
TS5					0.68		

Goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2 = 15.358$ ($p < 0.05$, df = 51), $\chi^2/df = 3.072$, TL = 0.943, IFI = 0.972, NFI = 0.959, CFI = 971, RMSEA = 0.06, AVE = 0.696

REL1						0.73	
REL2						0.74	
REL3						0.77	
REL4						0.73	
REL5						0.86	
REL6						0.73	
REL7						0.66	

Table 3.
Factor loading and
CFA

Scale items	Component						
	Product innovation	Process innovation	Organizational innovation	Marketing innovation	Tourist satisfaction	Religiosity	Destination loyalty

Goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2 = 72.862$ (*p* < 0.05, df = 21), $\chi^2/df = 4.402$, *TLI* = 0.890, *NFI* = 0.911, *IFI* = 0.921, *CFI* = 0.926, *RMSEA* = 0.07/*AVE* = 0.07, *AVE* = 0.745

DL1							0.69
DL2							0.80
DL3							0.76
DL4							0.65
DL5							0.58
DL6							0.71
DL6							0.76

Goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2 > = 46.100$ (p < 0.05, df = 14), $\chi^2/df = 3.546$, *TLI* = 0.924, *IFI* = 0.954, *NFI* = 0.937, *CFI* = 0.953, *RMSEA* = 0.08, *AVE* = 0.698

Table 3.

Source: Adopted by authors

loyalty; and religiosity, therefore providing an empirical support for the aforesaid variables relationship except the product innovation with tourist satisfaction which is rejected.

The structural model indicates the following relationships amongst the variables:

- Product innovation has no positive relationship with tourist satisfaction in the Middle Eastern context.
- Process innovation has a positive relationship with tourist satisfaction.
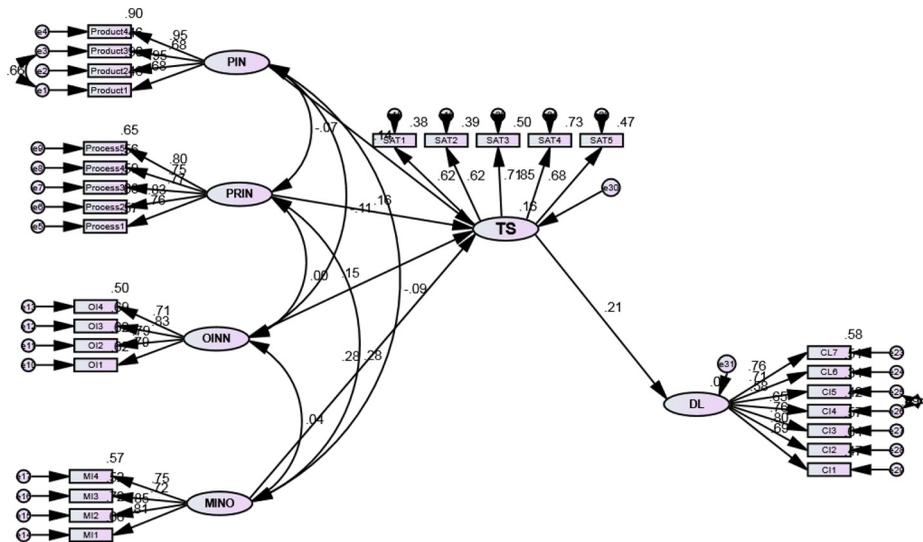- Organizational innovation has a positive relationship with tourist satisfaction.

Figure 2.
Outcome of structural model

- Marketing innovation has a positive relationship with tourist satisfaction.
- Tourist satisfaction has a positive relationship with destination loyalty.
- Religiosity moderates the relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Moderating role of religiosity
To test the moderating effect of religiosity on the relationship between tourism satisfaction and destination loyalty (*H6*), interaction analyses were performed in SEM using Amos. Before conducting the analysis, the variables of interest (tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty and religiosity) were saved as standardized factors and interaction effects were created (Byrne, 2009). The moderating effect of religiosity in relation with tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty shows a satisfactory model fit: Chi-square $1.726 < 5$, GFI = 995, AGFI = $968 > 090$, CFI= $937 > 090$, IFI = $0.946 > 0.90$, RMSEA < 0.08. Table 6 illustrates the effect of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty by incorporating religiosity as a moderator. As shown in Table 6, there is significant interaction between religiosity and tourist satisfaction in relation with destination loyalty ($\beta = 0.163$, CR = $2.753 > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$) and therefore *H6* is supported.

CFI	$0.956 > 0.90$
TLI	$0.951 > 0.90$
IFI	$0.957 > 0.90$
Chi-square	$1.390 < 5.0$
RMSEA	$0.043 > 0.08$

Source: Adopted by authors

Table 4.
Fit of hypothesized model

To		From	Pass estimate	CR	Result
TS	←	PIN	0.141	1.903	Rejected
TS	←	PRIN	0.163	2.054	Supported
TS	←	OINN	0.154	2.005	Supported
TS	←	MINO	0.284	3.384	Supported
DL	←	TS	0.208	2.573	Supported

Notes: Critical ratio >1.96; TS = tourist satisfaction, PIN = product innovation, PRIN = process innovation, OINN = organizational innovation, MINO = marketing

Table 5.
Overall structure model result

To		From	Pass estimate (β)	CR	p
ZDL	←	ZTS	0.163	2.753	0.006
ZDL	←	TS*RL	0.143	2.139	0.003

Notes: ZDL, standardized destination loyalty; ZTS, standardized tourist satisfaction; RL, religiosity

Table 6.
Moderating role of religiosity

Discussion

This study has identified that components which constituted service innovation as proposed by Sundbo and Gallouj (1999), including process innovation, organizational innovation and marketing innovation have demonstrated positive impacts on tourist satisfaction, with the exception of product innovation. While the findings are in consistent with that of Buonincontri *et al.* (2017), Hsu (2019) and State, Țală, Iorgulescu and Lupu (2019), insignificance of offering-based innovation has contradicted earlier results by Ginting and Sembiring (2017) and Teixeira, Ferreira, Almeida and Parra-Lopez (2019). Mentioned that tourism has been an experience-intensive industry, responses placed emphasis on organizational efforts towards collaborative over offered service revolutions. Understood through the definition by Schumpeter (1934) where innovation represents commercialized introductions, results obtained hereby highlighted the importance of technical, procedural and cultural factors, over mere products. Outcome as a separated quadrant, manners in which services are delivered, employee–customer interactions, staffs' proficiencies and operational procedures are, undeniably, core qualities in promoting satisfactions among the respondents. Yet, a study by Al-Rousan *et al.* (2019) which supports essentiality of service components has not neglected the fundamental need for product innovation. Its significance may be contextual in this regard, whilst engaged as a peripheral role within the circumstance of this research.

On this note, attention is brought to the exceptional influence of marketing innovation in generating satisfaction within the tourism industry. Striving for the payoff of satisfaction and retention, marketing, typically the marketing mix in totality, surfaced as an important strategizing tool besides actual service quality (Azhar *et al.*, 2018a, 2018b). Communicational effectiveness endorsed by an organization has, therefore, carried far-reaching influence in creating market awareness, pending the development of brand image and loyalty (Liu and Fang, 2016). Based off the expectancy disconfirmation theory, where expectations founded judgments of future experiences (Oliver, 1996); perceptions formed among respondents prior actual visitations have apparently carried the greatest weight in predicting their satisfactions, which overshadow the pulling effects of internal innovations across tourism practitioners. Communicative capability concerning a destination is hereby highlighted. However, Hultman, Skarmeas and Robson (2016) and Su, Swanson and Chen (2018) have suggested destination-based identification as key determinant towards establishing satisfactions and revisiting potentials among visitors, which rendered marketing efforts rather secondary to that of actual experience. Such can be true to certain degree considering perceptions formed through actual encounters; yet, marketing would prevail as the expectation-forming medium. This being said, online presences and buzz marketing as founded on findings by Rahi (2018), Su, Lin, Xie, Chen and Tang (2018), Vega-Vázquez, Castellanos-Verdugo and Oviedo-García (2017) and Wang, Tran and Tran (2017) would be of heightened reliability, which counterbalanced qualities of actual service experiences. Even so, service innovation, as per the findings by Hollebeek and Rather (2019), holds an irreplaceable importance within today's tourism front in promoting and building customer satisfaction.

With reference to the findings from other studies (Sundbo and Gallouj, 1999; Christensen *et al.*, 2011; Danjuma and Rasli, 2012), level of innovation adopted in the service sector would improve both satisfaction and service conveyance. In the context of the Middle Eastern tourism industry, the findings of this study show a positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and the respective dimensions of service innovation being examined in this study, namely, process innovation, organizational innovation and marketing innovation. Overall, the findings of this study support previous research in tourism service innovation

(Hjalager, 2010; Aldebert *et al.*, 2011). Production innovation or innovation, nonetheless, remains one of the key success factors in the tourism industry (Weiermair, 2004). With this, the variable's current insignificance could probably be because of the reason that Malaysian Muslims have a common preference in terms of the religious, cultural and heritage attractions in Middle Eastern countries, which resulted in lesser importance of tourism products on their level of satisfaction. It is, therefore, important that efforts be directed to assess and improve the understanding and utilization of service innovation to achieve tourist satisfaction whenever possible.

Sequentially, tourist satisfaction was found to precede destination loyalty. Antecedents to tourist satisfaction aside, this finding reflects the results obtained by Kuo *et al.* (2015), Tan, Chong and Ho (2018) and Teeroovengadum, Seetanah and Nunkoo (2018), which placed satisfaction as primary predictor to customers' long-term allegiances. Noted by Akroush *et al.* (2016), standards of experienced services should be appraised in-sync to elements of environmental attractions, interpersonal interactions and image towards gaining lasting customer loyalty. While this study investigated satisfaction as the bridge that connects hospitality encounters to long-term patronages, principal remains largely unchanged with having customer-oriented servicing as the stepping-stone that fulfils requests, which, in turn, retains tourists' underlying preferences. With regard to business sustainability, proven hypothesis has strengthened the need for innovation among service providers within the tourism industry. From the perspective of process and organizational innovation, relationship management, through having service quality and value-creations that drive satisfaction, has been brought about in ensuring tourists' loyalty (Mahbubeh, Meysam and Fatemeh, 2019). The spotlight has been never distant from the paragon of service outcomes in exceeding visitors' expectations.

With acknowledging potential of cultural background on consumption patterns, findings from the current study further demonstrated the regulatory influence of religiosity on the causal association between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. This revelation is in line with the results obtained by Patwary (2018), Rashid *et al.* (2018) and Yuliviona, Alias and Saludin (2018), where destination-tied components above the premise of religion and culture have acted as the motivator towards tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. According to Rashid *et al.* (2020), religious aspects, such as availability of Halal offerings, are similar to that of safety and societal characteristics in acting as direct predictor to satisfaction, in spite of the inconsequential impact of Islamic facilities, which further generates loyalty towards particular locations. Yet, such is the case where religious considerations have been direct predictors. The current study hereby extended the regulatory influence of religiosity on tourist satisfaction (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015; Abror, *et al.*, 2019; Putra *et al.*, 2016), in validating its chained impact on loyalty. Supported by Jamaludin *et al.* (2018), cultural foundation of a destination does exert considerable impact on visitors' partiality. Noted that the context of Islam is explored in the moderating position, countries pre-determined as the researched locations (Malaysia and Middle Eastern countries) would yield increased reliability to obtained findings, in view of cultural and religion proximity. Retracing previous discussions, satisfaction as yielded through service innovation would entail sustainable tourists' patronages, yet, with its magnitude dependent over one's religious beliefs and conceptions (i.e. tourists of greater cultural devotions would hold increased loyalty from satisfied service encounters, and vice versa). Considering surpassed expectations in generating satisfaction among customers, aspects of cultural preparations should not be overlooked. More so, cultural readiness of tourism practitioners is hereby proven to be an important criterion that translates satisfaction into retention, positive buzzes and future revisits.

The service industry has experienced a remarkable development, and this has pushed marketers to prioritize development in services for market place attractions (Kotler *et al.*, 2006). Obviously, service innovation is the key factor in any marketing effort to enhance the satisfaction level among customers in the marketplace, with inclusion of the tourism industry. Therefore, the findings of this study contribute valuable inputs to the tourism industry, especially on how to achieve higher levels of tourist satisfaction, retention and destination reputation. In considering current heightening market competition in the global tourism industry, followed by ever-changing demands among tourists in the marketplace, tourism marketers have no choice but to promote innovation in various dimensions to ensure sustainable growth. The findings of this study have identified and discussed some distinctive innovation areas for service enhancement and destination loyalty, and proved significant in maintaining competitive advantage in the tourism industry. Collectively, service innovation is proven to be a vital foundation, especially to gain a higher level of tourist satisfaction and long-term destination loyalty, as far as culture and religion are concerned. Tourism marketers should invest their resources on both external and internal innovations, as they are necessary to attain superior performance, which would lead to long-term competitive advantage.

Conclusion

While the findings of this study are yet to be fully supported by other related research in this area, innovation in services, specifically from the angles of process, organizational and marketing, remains an exploitable factor in gaining sustainable level of satisfaction among tourists. Noted by Ulwick (2002) that there exists a significant relationship between customers' personal perceptions and requirements, tourism operators should take these into consideration when planning their marketing strategies on specific destinations. While Tian and Yu (2013) and Williams *et al.* (2011) have recognized the importance of tourist satisfaction, the current study has provided reinforced justification to the studies by Kim and Park (2016), Kuo *et al.* (2016) and Liat *et al.* (2014), where tourist satisfaction can generate destination loyalty. Attention is, nonetheless, brought to the significance of religiosity as a moderating variable between instant gratifications (on-the-spot service excellence) and lasting advocacies (long-term endorsements). In fact, elements of culture and religiosity have never deviated from that of general servicing, in confronting increased personalization and customization above the face of hospitality. With the like of the Islamic culture as being currently investigated, or other backgrounds and religions, they are not ignorable aspects to tourism practitioners in gaining customers' admirations and supports, seeing every touchpoint can arise as a long-standing opportunity. By realizing the vital role of religiosity, alongside tourist satisfaction, in affecting future travelling intentions, DMOs should implement effective systems to monitor tourists' perceptions on various service innovation attributes in the Middle Eastern tourism industry. Surpassing expectations would be utmost essential; qualities of preparations, compassion and understanding on individuals' cultural and servicing needs would weigh heavier for translating such into destination loyalty.

Theoretical and practical implications

In general, this study has provided a solid standpoint on having service innovation as direct and indirect antecedents of instant gratifications and lasting patronages. In other words, the components proposed by Sundbo and Galllouj (1999), while not on their entirety, have a transcending roles towards altering or enhancing tourists' service-based perceptions towards particular destinations. While the study has appointed cultural proximity as its

bottom-line setting (Islamic tourists and Islam-centric destinations), current findings, nonetheless, offered practical insights that outweigh such limited context. Primarily, expectations formed on service quality acts a prerequisite that yields consequents of failure, fulfilment or surpass, and, in turn, establishes the level of customer satisfaction and favoured actions (Wang, 2017). While tourism practitioners have not stopped striving for experiential perfections, especially within today's customized demands and requests, they might have dismissed the essential relevance of co-creation. Travel and hospitality are undeniably customer-focused fields; multiple studies have acted as foundations to such proposition with having customers' involvements via areas of organizational, mechanical and culture as fundamentals that improve customers' travelling welfare, which promotes loyalty (Tregua, D'Auria and Costin, 2020). Yet, customer-participated improvements would not be achievable shall committed efforts towards customer engagement are not well-founded within the organization's culture (So *et al.*, 2018). Service innovation, should not overlook individualistic requirements, thereby pending actual planning, strategizing and delivery.

Such implication has hereby reminisced the keenness of employee–customer communications in an effort to strengthen the level of their customer loyalty (Tian and Yu, 2013; Subramanian, 2018). Indeed, innovation in services should be geared towards uplifting both the level of customer satisfaction and their loyalty (Hjalager, 2010); yet, the focus should not be deviated from that of customer-oriented executions. Improved or contemporary service delivery has been of internal executions among tourism firms; significance is hereby allocated above premise of service delivery, organizational culture and marketing efforts over mere service quality. Process-wise, efficiency as proposed by Greenberg *et al.* (2019) can be targeted on both temporal and monetary aspects; as in procedural adoptions which enable convenience, while incorporating the possibilities of value-for-money. Such is reinforced by undertakings aimed on administrative operations, following proposal by Tung *et al.* (2017) where staffs' responsiveness and destination assurance would be utmost important in maintaining locational pertinence as a travelling destination. While both being of constitutional origin, actions with the like of reduced organizational hierarchy (to ensure swifter top-down responses), updated technological employment (to offer greater convenience) and continuous staff-training (to maintain standard of servicing staffs) would be imperative in this regard, where complementary effects can be generated on both cultural and procedural endeavours.

In spite of innovation towards actual offerings have shown inconsequential response within this study, various earlier studies have not foregone its importance (Divisekera and Nguyen, 2018), especially when comprehensive hospitality servicing is concerned. In the hindsight, process- and administrative-based innovations would seem fairly reflective of the term "product innovation", in upholding the intangibility nature of service. Implication of greater precision is hereby placed on aspects of extended offerings that outshined sole accommodations (e.g. timely and trustworthy freight services, entertainment and recreational setups, and culture- and religion-focused food dining), which might surface as additional pull factors to external destination attractions. On another note, introduction of successful and unique services would perform as groundwork for boosted selling points ensuing strategic marketing. Taken into account sustainable patronage, promotional impacts are aspired to transcend initial touchpoints to foster chain reactions; in this case, extensive marketplace awareness and interest. Based on the literature by Cam, Anh, Moslehpour and Thanh (2019) and Ong and Ito (2019), buzzes or customer-generated contents are essentially communicating tools that affect image and perception formed on a destination, as well as underlying visiting intentions. Tourism marketers, while capitalizing

short-term marketing impact of direct marketing (e.g. loyalty programmes, slogan-based advertising, attraction-based commercials), would have to expand their field to overtake the territories of virtual image (internet buzzes) and relationship management (customer as endorsers), considering their profound communicative capabilities. In totality, service innovation, accounted for investigated segments, has been the mean in reaching sustainable satisfaction among tourists, notwithstanding absorbing and exploiting customer-generated information, either within associations of customer–organization or customer–acquaintance relationships. Knowledge transfer between internal and external parties, which promotes outlooks for strategic alterations and improvements through generation of co-created value, would, therefore, be an irreplaceable component in the industry (Marasco, De Martino, Magnotti and Morvillo, 2018).

Backtracing to the moderating effect of religiosity, tourists, particularly the Islamic community as per examined within this study, has emerged as principle example of such phenomenon. McDaniel and Burnett, 1990; Eid and El-Gohary, 2015. Specifically, culture and religion proximity is proven to outweigh national borders, in terms of likeability and preferences. As reflected by Kim and Malek (2016) and Kim and Thapa (2018), cultural identification, alongside constructed destination image and perceived value, is the building block of satisfaction in the face of cultural tourism. The claim would be currently identified shall religiosity has been placed in forming the causal associations between components of service innovation on satisfaction. Yet, with religiosity being a determinant that evaluates the direct impact of exceeded satisfaction on sustainable business relationships, religion components, within the current context, would play a fundamental, rather than an optional role. In other words, in spite of existing need for service innovation, in general, towards retaining tourists' destination preferences, religion elements (i.e. Islamic facilities and Halal offerings) would be of necessity to Islamic travellers. Cultural identification, in this case, would be an overstatement, as countries that pursue other cultures as its groundwork can maintain their locational relevance, through understanding, further adapting Islam components upon customers' requests. Importance is highlighted on the insight's reciprocity – while non-Islamic destinations would likely flourish though comprehending lifestyles of Islamic travellers, Middle Eastern countries would potentially obtain similar results if local practitioners have apprehended behaviours among customers of other religions. It is not to say that Middle Eastern countries such as Dubai has immensely exemplified such norm from the perspective of massive indulgence; other destinations can embrace similar approach in attracting visitors of diverse cultural origins. Specifically, Malaysians, being investigated as potential visitors, do comprise more than Islam as its residential religions (e.g. Buddhism and Hinduism). The melting pot does not solely reflect a nation's community, but the world in entirety, which reflects a boundless opportunity in building long-lasting, fruitful tourist–destination relationships.

Theoretically, proven framework, upon central correlations, has exemplified the paradigm of expectancy disconfirmation through the stance of service innovation. Reinforcing the claims in earlier studies (Pizam and Milman, 1993; Weber, 1997), expectation-based fulfilments have progressed as key prospect in achieving market satisfaction. Partially reflected in the study by Serenko and Stach (2009), positive disconfirmations on business encounters would entail increased loyalty and favourable buzzes, in spite of the insignificance of negative disconfirmations towards reduced patronages. While the study has essentially demonstrated service innovation as strong predictor on both satisfaction and retention, its validity can be challenged on elements of contextual layout (the industry that has been studied) and the generalization of its impact (i.e. does customers' attitude sway in parallel to standard of experienced service?). Having

current findings acknowledging marketing innovation as the utmost prevalent component that affects tourist satisfaction can be rather misguiding, following realistic critic by Yüksel and Yüksel (2002) that disconfirmation should occur ensuing previously formed experiential expectations. Marketing and promotional efforts, either through direct organizational sources or subsequent recommendations, would possibly enhance destination image and conceptions; yet, vague expectations are generated because of the presence of insufficient related knowledge (i.e. to what extent is the meaning of "beautiful" when it is in the eye of the beholder; or in this case, eye of close acquaintances?). Realized that received responses have not overlooked the importance of cultural and procedural aspects, such would prevail more reliable in exemplifying actual expectations and outcome. Noted that social intervention can develop destination-based assumptions and anticipations (Lu, 2019), besides variables of service innovation, the former surfaced as a related area of study in view of business growth and sustainability.

On the other hand, attention is extended towards the idea of internalization; specifically, a contrast between both knowledge and cultural internalizations. Lou and Noels (2018) hereby placed the element of upbringing as foundation that develops future attitudes, knowledge and expressions. Following the investigation conducted by Zheng (2016), value-based internalization, which is generated through social recognition and identification, has proven to be a driving force that pinpoints tourism destinations to their visitors. However, Savira and Tasrin (2017) placed their focal point on domestic cultural heritage as target of value internalization, towards betterment of service innovation within the public sector. Undeniably, customer-oriented knowledge internalization in areas of service improvements, operations, technological adoption, corporate culture and marketing approaches, following current revelations, has shown strong relationship in striking servicing performance; yet, importance is instead allocated on intensity of cultural internalization, where religiosity is an active moderator. Middle Eastern destinations have, nonetheless, placed high regards on this aspect, through educating tourists on their Islamic heritage; whilst, Malaysian tourists of Islamic heritage have strongly embraced their religious origin. Accounting for the examined components in service innovation, firms' internalizations via areas of product, process, organizational and marketing are not distant from religious and cultural dimensions. Beyond the paradigm of expectancy-disconfirmation, current implication, thus, echoed religiosity as a regulatory variable.

Limitations and future research direction

Whilst there are many interesting and practical findings that have emerged from this study, several limitations have been identified. For instance, this study has yet to identify and examine other possible factors that could have equal or even stronger influences on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Certain external variables, such as geographical factors, demographic characteristics and unpredicted random events that might also influence the developed relationships could be considered in any future research in a similar setting. This would improve the accuracy and contribution of the measurements relative to tourist satisfaction and retention in the industry. Furthermore, a more comprehensive research base would act as a stronger foundation to better support and guide tourism marketers in their performance effectiveness. Further, this study considered the moderating role of religiosity in relationship with satisfaction and destination loyalty; therefore, it would be very interesting for future study to formulate the hypothesis to test the moderating effect of religiosity between innovation components and satisfaction.

Additionally, respondents involved in this research were limited to a specific sample size, with potentially less accurate and/or valid findings to be obtained. The time frame planned to conduct this study may also influence the findings in unanticipated ways. The study population was concentrated in the major cities in Malaysia. In other rural areas, attitudes to tourism and religion could be very different. Similarly, the seasonality of the tourism industry in the Middle Eastern countries was not taken into consideration. Thus, a more diverse sample size should be considered in the future research. Furthermore, the researchers did not distinguish the diversity among the respondents; hence, some bias may exist in terms of the expectations and perceptions of respondents. Future studies should be aimed at respondents of diverse demographic backgrounds to improve the robustness of the results.

A further limitation of this study is related to the questionnaire design. The utilization of closed, as opposed to open-ended questions, restricts the full understanding of cognition, affection and views generally relating to tourism, religiosity and loyalty. Thus, an open-ended questionnaire or possibly adopting qualitative research methodology may pay dividends for future research. Further, such research on this topic would add the "Colgate ring of confidence" to the findings of this study, which has high potential relevance for tourism marketers across the world.

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