Article

Perceived Inconveniences and Muslim Travelers' Loyalty to Non-Muslim Destinations

Heesup Han ¹ , Amr Al-Ansi ¹ and Hyeon-Cheol Kim ^{2,*}¹ College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Sejong University, 98 Gunja-Dong, Gwangjin-Gu, Seoul 143–747, Korea² School of Business Administration, Chung-Ang University, 84 HeukSeok-Ro, DongJak-Gu, Seoul 06974, Korea

* Correspondence: hckim@cau.ac.kr

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Abstract: Muslim travelers' growth is an emerging sector of the global tourism industry. Yet, little has been discovered about their behaviors and perceived inconveniences in a non-Muslim destination. The present research was an attempt to identify international Muslim travelers' loyalty generation process for the non-Muslim destination by considering the effect of inconveniences that they possibly perceive while traveling to the non-Muslim destination. An empirical approach comprising a field survey method was used to collect the Muslim travelers' views in a non-Muslim destination (Korea). Our result revealed that halal-friendly image, emotional experiences, and desire played a significant role in building Muslim travelers' loyalty. In addition, a moderator test result of Muslim travelers' perceived inconveniences at the non-Muslim destination significantly weakened the effect of desire and halal-friendly image on loyalty. The comparative importance of emotional experiences at a destination was identified. Our findings help non-Muslim destination marketers to develop effective attraction and retention strategies for international Muslim travelers.

Keywords: Muslim tourism; perceived inconveniences; halal-friendly image; emotional experiences; loyalty; non-Muslim destination

1. Introduction

Global tourism growth has proven the large-scale development of its exclusive services and products to cover a wide range of global markets during the past decade [1]. An emerging Muslim market that outstrips the present advancement of halal tourism in certain global destinations substantiated its high profitability and accessibility to several sub-Muslim markets (i.e., South East Asian, Middle Eastern) [2]. Halal tourism or Islamic hospitality notions established the basis of this niche market for previous scholars [1,2]. Several studies have deeply described such principles of Islam to be practiced by Muslims as their daily guides and instructions extracted from Islamic sources (i.e., Holy Qur'an), classified in two main terms: halal (permitted) and haram (prohibited). For example, Islamic teachings prohibiting the consumption of haram foods (e.g., pork), gambling activities, drinking or selling alcoholic beverages, having any physical contact (i.e., shaking hands) with individuals of the opposite sex, dressing inadequately, sharing lodgings and private rooms by unmarried couples, showing affection in public, adultery, and breaking fast during the holy month of Ramadan daylight (Sharia principles) are recognized to evaluate the value of hospitality and tourism products/services for international Muslim tourists [1–4]. In a similar vein, Islamic teachings instruct consuming only halal meals, which include a wide range of foods and beverages (i.e., fruits, vegetables, seafood, grains, beans, etc.) or meats/poultry strictly slaughtered according to Islamic principles [1,2]. These practices strongly explain the important interests and needs of Muslim markets globally, which are required to be considered by tourism destination developers and policy makers. Since Muslim travelers' decisions

and behaviors are based on these principles (Sharia principles) [3], providing tourism environments by minimizing the Muslim unfriendly aspects of any tourism product is fundamental to boost their favorable experiences in any destination [2,5].

According to many recent studies, Muslim travelers strongly prefer to choose a tourism destination where Islamic attributes are highly available, which allow for tourism activities that fall within their religious norms and practices comprising facilities for prayer and worship, no liquor, Halal foods, and Islamic dress codes [6–8]. The availability of these Islamic attributes is part of Muslim tourists' strong traveling needs, which directly and indirectly attract their attention to visiting such developed destinations [2,5]. Hence, Islamic attributes are regarded to be major motivators of Muslim tourists' selection of a tourist destination [3]. If such Islamic attributes are not available, Muslim travelers often experience and perceive inconveniences while traveling to the tourist destination [8,9].

A fast increase in the Muslim global population, such as Southeast Asian and Middle-Eastern, is evident, and the total population is expected to grow even more [2,5,10]. Despite this rapid growth, the diverse inconveniences that international Muslim travelers are likely to experience and perceive when traveling to non-Muslim destinations known as non-OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) (e.g., foods, transportation, lodging accommodations, social environment) have been rarely examined and uncovered. The possible negative influence of Muslim travelers' perceived inconveniences while traveling on their loyalty formation for non-OIC tourist destinations has also hardly been researched. In addition, while the importance of cognitive, emotional, and motivational processes in explicating traveler post-purchase behaviors has long been identified [11–14], how the halal-friendly image of the non-Muslim (OIC) destination, emotional experiences, and desire toward a destination contribute to generating Muslim travelers' loyalty has not been unearthed.

The present research was designed to fill these gaps. In particular, the objectives of this study were:

- (1) To uncover international Muslim travelers' loyalty formation for non-Muslim (OIC) destinations by taking the impact of their perceived inconveniences at diverse tourist places of a destination (e.g., restaurants, hotels, hospitals, resorts, shopping places, cultural sites) into account;
- (2) To examine the role of halal-friendly image of non-Muslim destinations, emotional destination experiences, and desire to travel to a destination in building loyalty;
- (3) To unearth the relative cruciality of these indicators in predicting loyalty;
- (4) To test the mediating effect role of study constructs.

The research conducted a thorough review of the previous related literature, which is presented in the following section. The research methodology procedures and outcomes are then provided. Finally, a discussion of the findings is conducted, and the implications of the research are addressed.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Image of a Destination and Its Role

The image of a place/product/brand is undoubtedly a key variable in explaining travelers' post-purchase decision formation and behaviors [14,15]. In tourism and destination studies, overall image is often described as the sum of tourists' belief/impression about a destination and its attributes [8,16]. This description of the overall image is in line with Kotler's [17] definition that image is the total set of patrons' thoughts/ideas toward a particular product/brand. In line with these studies, in the current research, image refers to international Muslim tourists' overall perceptions/impressions toward a specific non-Muslim destination and its halal-friendly attributes/performances. A limited number of previous scholars have discussed the role of a halal-friendly destination image on Muslim tourist's decision making. In this sense, A study by Al-Ansi and Han [1] identified how Muslim travelers' behaviors and loyalty were affected by such a concept pertaining to their necessary interests and beliefs. They also provided empirical evidence on halal-friendly destination image functionality in drawing more Muslim tourists toward non-Muslim destinations. Muslim customers, they found,

would perceive high emotional experiences while visiting such destinations if it was possible for halal tourism practices to be properly performed in all the necessary dimensions [8]. For successful customer retention management, a company (i.e., hotel, travel services, restaurant) must create and keep a favorable image of its brand/product [15,18]. Likewise, to be competitive, it is undeniable that tourism practitioners should generate a positive image of a destination and its attributes [11,16].

As the impact of image on customer behaviors is considerable, image has long been an essential agenda in the extant tourism and marketing literature [11,18,19]. Specifically, in the tourism sector, the favorable image generation for a company/destination is broadly considered to be a vital driver of tourists/travelers' decision-making process and post-purchase behaviors [11,14,16]. For instance, Lee et al. [19] found that image is a critical trigger of travelers' emotional experiences and intentions to be loyal to a tourism product. In their investigation of the destination loyalty generation process, Kim et al. [11] uncovered that image played a significant role in generating travelers' attachment to the festival destination and loyalty to a destination. In the casino tourism sector, Hwang and Park [14] examined travelers' evaluation process and consumption behaviors. Their empirical finding indicated that casino travelers' overall image about the firm exerts a critical impact on affective experiences and loyalty intentions. In their research, travelers' willingness/intentions to revisit and recommend were critical constituents of loyalty. The evidence of these studies supported the notion that positive destination image enhances tourists' emotional experiences with a destination and loyalty to it. Hence, we constructed the following research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. *A halal-friendly image has a significant impact on emotional destination experiences.*

Hypothesis 2. *A halal-friendly image has a significant impact on loyalty.*

2.2. Emotional Destination Experiences and Its Role

Consumers' emotional experiences, which are not often processed in a conscious manner, are associated with affective responses/reactions to a place/product/service and its attributes [18,20]. Emotional experiences in consumer behavior and marketing are therefore distinct from cognitive experiences. In tourism, travelers' emotional experiences comprise applying their affective feelings when appraising their perceptions of a destination and its diverse attributes [8,21,22]. Due to its criticality, the use of this concept in explicating the formation of travelers' destination loyalty and post-purchase decision is prevalent in tourism and hospitality studies [1,10]. Oliver [18] and Perugini and Bagozzi [23] indicated that the emotional dimension of customers' decision-making process is likely to increase desire toward a certain behavior and behavioral intention for the behavior. Similarly, Jani and Han [21] demonstrated that patrons' emotional experiences trigger overall satisfaction, desire, and loyalty in the hospitality context. In tourism, Chiu et al. [24] consistently verified that travelers' emotion is a significant and important contributor to eliciting post-purchase behaviors that are positive for a destination. Recently, Han et al. [8] explored the role of emotional experiences for Muslim travelers while visiting tourist attractions in South Korea. The study highly indicated the significant role between Muslim travelers' behaviors and emotional experiences in constructing their future desires and loyalty. Based on this evidence discussed above, in this research, it can be assumed that Muslim visitors' emotional experiences at non-Muslim destinations significantly influence their desire to travel to a destination and loyalty to a destination.

Hypothesis 3. *Emotional destination experiences have a significant impact on desire.*

Hypothesis 4. *Emotional destination experiences have a significant impact on loyalty.*

2.3. *Desire to Travel to a Destination and Its Role*

The term “desire toward the behavior” indicates the motivational status of an individual’s mind where a reason for the action is transformed into the motivation to practice it [23]. While intention is now-oriented in terms of time frame, desire toward the behavior is time-indefinite [25,26]. Hence, desire toward the behavior has a conceptual difference from behavioral intention [23,27]. In the present research, desire indicates Muslim tourists’ sturdy motivational state of mind in which their reason to travel to non-Muslims destination is converted into motivation to do so. Hunter [27] and Perugini and Bagozzi [23,26] asserted that individuals’ desire can be a motivational force of their decision/behavior, mediating the influence of its predictors on such a decision/behavior. That is, individuals’ desire apparently triggers their particular intention/action [26].

Due to the criticality of this concept, many empirical studies in different disciplines such as psychology, marketing, consumer behavior, and tourism have examined the role of desire and supported the positive desire–intention/loyalty relationship [12,27,28]. For instance, in the shopping context, Hunter [27] identified that desire, which is a positive function of shopping mall image, significantly increased patrons’ loyalty intention. Perugini and Bagozzi’s [23,26] robust findings in the sociopsychology field consistently demonstrated that one’s desire toward the behavior is the most proximal trigger of their intention for the particular behavior, and this relationship is significant and positive. In hospitality studies, Han and Yoon [12] also empirically addressed that desire toward the behavior leads to customers’ increased intention to repurchase the product, which is a significant loyalty constituent. However, Muslim tourists’ future intention was discussed in some earlier literatures, while their desire to visit non-Muslim destination has still not widely been discovered [1–3]. Given this evidence, it can be posited that Muslim travelers’ strong desire to travel to a destination is likely to result in loyalty enhancement for a destination.

Hypothesis 5. *Desire has a significant impact on loyalty.*

2.4. *Loyalty to non-Muslim (OIC) Destinations*

Increasing international travelers’ level of loyalty is of utmost criticality for every destination researcher and practitioner [11,29–31]. Due to its substantial positive impact, traveler loyalty to a specific destination is regarded to be one of the most crucial constructs in destination studies [32,33]. According to Oliver [20], loyalty is a strong level of commitment to repeatedly patronize/consume the particular product that a patron prefers, regardless of situational effects and marketing efforts of rival competitors. This definition of loyalty is in widespread use in various contexts (e.g., destination research, consumer behavior study, and marketing research). According to Wu [33] and Olya and Al-Ansi [2], along with repeat patronage, travelers’ willingness to visit a destination, recommend it, choose it over alternatives, and engage in positive word-of-mouth behaviors is all important in composing destination loyalty. Similarly, Sirakaya-Turk et al. [34] utilized destination repatronage intention and word-of-mouth intention to evaluate shopping travelers’ loyalty to a destination. Accordingly, loyalty in the present study encompasses international Muslim tourists’ deeply held commitment to revisit a non-Muslim destination willingly and to engage in word-of-mouth behaviors consistently as its constituents.

2.5. *Muslim Travelers’ Perceived Inconveniences at Non-Muslim (OIC) Destinations and Their Role*

Although it has not sufficiently and completely been discussed in the extant research and literature, individuals’ perceived inconveniences when using a particular tourism/hospitality product are important in their decision-making process and their post-purchase behaviors [25]. Perception of inconveniences is regarded to be a cognitive process in consumer behavior [18]. In tourism, travelers’ perceived inconveniences can be described as individuals’ cognitive assessment about the harshness of the possible difficulties that have arisen while traveling to a particular destination or when consuming a specific tourism product [25]. In the tourism sector, Han and Hwang [35] indicated that international travelers possibly experience diverse benefits from the tourism product and its

features, and in turn, they also experience many types of difficulties when consuming the product, which deteriorate their pleasant tourism experiences. Such difficulties are the main aspect of travelers' perceived inconveniences [25].

The importance of travelers' perceived level of inconveniences and its significant impact on their decision formation are evident in tourism [2,35]. The degree of the inconveniences that Muslim travelers possibly experience, particularly in non-Muslim countries, is even greater than that of other types of traveler groups [9,36]. Mostly, a non-Islamic country/destination is not well prepared for international Muslim tourists [1,9]. It is therefore likely that Muslim tourists' perceived level of inconveniences while traveling to diverse places in a non-Muslim destination (e.g., restaurants, hotels, shopping places, tourist sites) is severe, negatively influencing their overall tourist experiences in a destination [2].

According to Jung et al. [37] and Oliver [18], customers' cognitive evaluation regarding the conveniences/inconveniences of a specific product/service use affects their post-purchase decision-making process for the product/service. That is, customers' post-purchase decision formation is under the significant influence of cognitive perception of conveniences/inconveniences. In the medical tourism context, Han and Hwang [35] examined international tourists' loyalty intention formation process. Their results demonstrated that the relationships among international travelers' attitude toward behavior, desire, and loyalty intentions are significantly affected by their perceived inconveniences. Consistently, Jung et al. [37] developed the push–pull–mooring framework in the tourism sector. Their findings revealed that perceived inconveniences as a component of a mooring characteristic moderates the push/pull factor associations with behavioral intentions. Olya and Al-Ansi [2] investigated Muslim travelers' risks and consumption behaviors. Their result showed that the inconveniences that Muslim travelers possibly perceive while consuming a product is a critical facet of tourism risk, which affects the travelers' recommendation and repurchase intention formation. The evidence described above indicated the important role of perceived inconveniences as a moderator. Given this, in the present research, it was assumed that international Muslim travelers' perceived inconveniences exert a significant impact on the associations among study variables.

Hypothesis 6a. *Perceived inconveniences significantly moderate the effect of image on loyalty.*

Hypothesis 6b. *Perceived inconveniences significantly moderate the effect of emotional destination experiences on loyalty.*

Hypothesis 6c. *Perceived inconveniences significantly moderate the effect of desire on loyalty.*

3. Research Methods

3.1. Qualitative Process for Uncovering the Measurement Items of Perceived Inconveniences

Numerous qualitative interviews with Muslim travelers managed to uncover the measurement items for Muslim travelers' perceived inconveniences at non-Muslim destinations. The interviewees were Muslim visitors traveling to Korea for diverse purposes (e.g., cultural/Hallyu tourism, education tourism, medical tourism, convention/event tourism). In addition, we also conducted a relevant literature search [2,8,9,36]. This process contributed to identifying seven major items of possible inconveniences that Muslim tourists are likely to experience when traveling to non-Muslim countries (i.e., (a) halal foods, (b) halal-friendly accommodations, (c) halal facilities, (d) halal services/information, (e) halal-friendly attire, (f) halal-friendly locals and social environment, and (g) halal-friendly staff). These items were used to measure Muslim travelers' perceived inconveniences at non-Muslim destinations (e.g., "My overall experiences with halal foods offered in tourist places are uncomfortable").

3.2. Measures for Other Study Constructs

The measurement items for the image of a destination, emotional destination experiences, desire, and loyalty to a destination were drawn from previous research in the extant tourism and destination literature [18,19,23,38,39]. Specifically, the halal-friendly image of a non-Muslim destination was measured with three items (e.g., “My overall image of Korea as a halal-friendly tourist destination is positive”). Emotional destination experiences were evaluated with three items (e.g., “My overall experiences while traveling to Korea are enjoyable”). Desire to travel to a destination was measured with three items (e.g., “My desire for traveling to Korea in the future is high”). In addition, loyalty to a non-Muslim destination was evaluated with three items (e.g., “I will make an effort to travel to Korea again in the future”). Multiple items and a seven-point scale for the assessment of all research constructs were used.

3.3. Survey Questionnaire Development and Data Collection

The survey questionnaire included the measures described above, introductory letter, and questions for Muslim respondents’ sociodemographic background. The initial survey questionnaire version was pretested with academics whose major is international tourism. A minor improvement of the questionnaire items’ concepts and terms was made based on their feedback. A visitor’s survey was conducted. Well-trained surveyors (i.e., graduate students) were educated to conduct proper data collection with random Muslim travelers. The trained surveyors distributed the developed survey questionnaires to Muslim travelers while visiting various tourist places in metropolitan cities in Korea. The surveyors approached Muslim tourists and inquired about their willingness to participate and answer the survey questionnaire. A brief explanation of the survey objectives and its purpose was given to those who agreed to survey participation. The respondents were then invited to fully read and answer the questions. The filled questionnaire was returned to the surveyors onsite. Through this process, we collected 305 usable responses. These responses were then used for the process of data analysis.

3.4. Sample Characteristics

Of 305 respondents, 53.4% ($n = 163$) were female Muslim travelers, and 46.6% ($n = 142$) were male Muslim travelers. The participants’ average age was 31.7 years old. Regarding the purpose of travel, about 70.2% reported pleasure, followed by education (25.6%), business (1.0%), and other (3.3%). When the participants’ education level was asked, about 39.1% reported that they had a 4-year college degree, followed by graduate degree holders (30.1%), high-school graduates or less (25.4%), and 2-year college graduates (5.4%). Regarding the visit frequency, the majority of the participants reported that it was their first time visiting Korea (78.4%), followed by 2–3 times (15.1%), 4–5 times (3.0%), 10 times or more (2.3%), and 6–9 times (1.3%).

4. Results

4.1. Assessment of Measurement Quality (Reliability and Validity)

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using Amos 22. As reported in Table 1, the model included a satisfactory level of goodness-of-fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 366.171$, $df = 140$, $\chi^2/df = 2.616$, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.073, CFI = 0.955, IFI = 0.955, TLI = 0.945). All observed items were significantly loaded to their relevant latent factors ($p < 0.01$). The results of the composite reliability calculation revealed that all values (halal-friendly image of a non-Muslim destination = 0.938, emotional destination experience = 0.948, desire to travel to a destination = 0.951, Muslim travelers’ perceived inconveniences = 0.903, and loyalty to a non-Muslim destination = 0.857) were greater than the cutoff of 0.70 suggested by Hair et al. [40]. In addition, our assessment of AVE values revealed that all values were greater than Hair et al.’s [40] recommend threshold of 0.50 (halal-friendly image of a non-Muslim destination = 0.834, emotional destination experience = 0.859, desire to travel to a destination = 0.867, Muslim travelers’ perceived inconveniences = 0.571, and loyalty to a non-Muslim destination = 0.670).

As shown in Table 1, these AVE values were also greater than the between-construct correlations (squared). Hence, convergent and discriminant validity of the construct measures were evident.

Table 1. Measurement model assessment results.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	Mean	SD	CR
(1) Halal-friendly image of a non-Muslim destination	1.000					4.292	1.425	0.938
(2) Emotional destination experiences	0.302 ^a (0.308) ^b	1.000				5.425	1.179	0.948
(3) Desire to travel to a destination	0.320 (0.102)	0.606 (0.367)	1.000			5.379	1.293	0.951
(4) Muslim travelers' perceived inconveniences	0.012 (0.001)	−0.270 (0.073)	−0.291 (0.085)	1.000		3.619	1.256	0.903
(5) Loyalty to a non-Muslim destination	0.448 (0.201)	0.632 (0.399)	0.717 (0.514)	−0.128 (0.016)	1.000	1.256	1.217	0.857
AVE	0.834	0.859	0.867	0.571	0.670			

Note: Goodness-of-fit statistics for the measurement model: $\chi^2 = 366.171$, $df = 140$, $\chi^2/df = 2.616$, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.073, CFI = 0.955, IFI = 0.955, TLI = 0.945. ^a Correlations between variables. ^b Squared correlations.

4.2. Assessment of the Proposed Theoretical Framework

In order to test the proposed developed theoretical framework, structural equation modeling (SEM) was estimated. Amos 22 was utilized as an analysis tool. SEM is an effective analytical approach widely used in business and management studies to predict multivariate and complex models. Our result showed that the model contained an adequate level of goodness-of-fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 144.016$, $df = 48$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 3.000$, RMSEA = 0.080, CFI = 0.974, IFI = 0.974, TLI = 0.964). Overall, the model included a sufficient level of demonstrating power for loyalty in that it justified about 72.8% of loyalty total variance in the non-Muslim destination. The model also explained about 41.1% of the total variance in desire to travel to a destination, and 10.9% of the variance in emotional destination experiences. The details regarding the structural equation modeling results are exhibited in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Figure 1. Results of the structural equation modeling ($n = 305$).

The hypothesized effect of a halal-friendly image on emotional destination experiences and loyalty was tested. Our result showed that the halal-friendly image of a non-Muslim destination exerted a significant influence on emotional destination experiences ($\beta = 0.330$, $p < 0.01$) and loyalty to the non-Muslim destination ($\beta = 0.139$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported. The proposed impact of emotional destination experiences on its outcome variables was assessed. Our findings indicated that emotional destination experiences had a significant influence on desire to travel to a destination ($\beta = 0.641$, $p < 0.01$) and loyalty to the non-Muslim destination ($\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported. The hypothesized effect of desire on loyalty was tested. Our result indicated that desire to travel to a destination included a significant influence on loyalty to the non-Muslim destination ($\beta = 0.582$, $p < 0.01$). Hence, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Subsequently, the assessment of the indirect effect of the research variables showed that a halal-friendly image included a significant indirect influence on desire (β image – emotional experiences – desire = 0.212, $p < 0.01$) and loyalty (image – emotional experiences – desire – loyalty = 0.221, $p < 0.01$). In addition, emotional destination experiences contained a significant indirect effect on loyalty (β emotional destination experiences – desire – loyalty = 0.373, $p < 0.01$). This result indicated that desire along with emotional destination experiences played a significant mediating role within the developed theoretical framework. The total effect of research factors was estimated. Our result showed that emotional destination experiences had the greatest total effect on loyalty ($\beta = 0.669$, $p < 0.01$), followed by desire ($\beta = 0.582$, $p < 0.01$), and a halal-friendly image ($\beta = 0.360$, $p < 0.01$). The details about the indirect and total impact assessment results are exhibited in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Total and indirect effect ($n = 305$).

4.3. Assessment of the Baseline Model and Test for Metric Invariance

In order to test the moderating influence of Muslim travelers' perceived inconveniences at a non-Muslim destination, a comprehensive evaluation for metric invariance was utilized. All completed responses were categorized into high and low groups of perceived inconveniences. The high group included total of 134 valid responses, and the low group included total of 171 valid responses. A baseline model comprising these two groups (high and low) was generated. All loadings were constrained to be equivalent across groups within this model. As shown in Table 3 and Figure 1, our results showed that the model included an adequate level of goodness-of-fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 262.669$, $df = 104$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.526$, RMSEA = 0.071, CFI = 0.958, IFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.946). The model was then completely compared with nested models. In every nested model, one specific path is equally restricted.

Table 2. Structural equation modeling results ($n = 305$).

Proposed Paths				Coefficients	t-Values
H1	Halal-friendly image of a non-Muslim destination	→	Emotional destination experiences	0.330	5.642 **
H2	Halal-friendly image of a non-Muslim destination	→	Loyalty to a non-Muslim destination	0.139	2.842 **
H3	Emotional destination experiences	→	Desire to travel to a destination	0.641	12.203 **
H4	Emotional destination experiences	→	Loyalty to a non-Muslim destination	0.296	5.189 **
H5	Desire to travel to a destination	→	Loyalty to a non-Muslim destination	0.582	8.747 **
Total variance explained:			Total impact on loyalty:		
R ² for loyalty to a non-Muslim destination = 0.728			β Halal-friendly image of a non-Muslim destination = 0.360**		
R ² for desire to travel to a destination = 0.411			β emotional destination experiences = 0.669**		
R ² for emotional destination experiences = 0.109			β desire to travel to a destination = 0.582**		
Goodness-of-fit statistics for the structural model: χ ² = 144.016, df = 48, p < 0.001, χ ² /df = 3.000, RMSEA = 0.080, CFI = 0.974, IFI = 0.974, TLI = 0.964			Indirect impact:		
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01			β image – emotional experiences – desire – loyalty = 0.221 **		
			β image – emotional experiences – desire = 0.212 **		
			β emotional destination experiences – desire – loyalty = 0.373 **		

Table 3. Structural invariance model results.

Paths	High Group of Perceived Inconveniences ($n = 134$)		Low Group of Perceived Inconveniences ($n = 171$)		Baseline Model (Freely Estimated)	Nested Model (Equally Constrained)
	β	t-Values	β	t-Values		
Halal-friendly Image → Loyalty	0.108	1.847	0.144	1.970 *	$\chi^2 (104) = 262.669$	$\chi^2 (105) = 262.679^a$
Emotional destination experiences → Loyalty	0.337	4.251 **	0.303	4.054 **	$\chi^2 (104) = 262.669$	$\chi^2 (105) = 263.400^b$
Desire to travel to a destination → Loyalty	0.475	7.280 **	0.674	8.743 **	$\chi^2 (104) = 262.669$	$\chi^2 (105) = 266.982^c$
Chi-square difference test:					Goodness-of-fit statistics for the baseline model:	
^a $\Delta\chi^2 (1) = 0.001$, $p > 0.05$ (H6a—Not supported) [♦]					$\chi^2 = 262.669$, $df = 104$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.526$, RMSEA = 0.071, CFI = 0.958,	
^b $\Delta\chi^2 (1) = 0.731$, $p > 0.05$ (H6b—Not supported)					IFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.946	
^c $\Delta\chi^2 (1) = 4.313$, $p < 0.05$ (H6c—Supported)					* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$	

[♦] While the link for the low group of perceived inconvenience was significant, the path for the high group was not significant. Thus, although the chi-square difference across groups was not significant, the group difference on the linkage should be meaningfully interpreted.

Our empirical comparison revealed that the link from halal-friendly image to loyalty to the non-Muslim destination was totally insignificant difference between both groups (high and low) ($\Delta\chi^2 [1] = 0.001, p > 0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 6a was not supported. While the linkage for the low group was significant, the link for the high group was not significant. Our result also showed that the relationship between emotional destination experiences and loyalty to a non-Muslim destination was not significantly different ($\Delta\chi^2 [1] = 0.731, p > 0.05$). Thus, Hypothesis 6b was not supported. However, our findings indicated that the path from desire to loyalty to the non-Muslim destination was significantly different between high and low groups. Accordingly, Hypothesis 6c was supported.

5. Discussion and Implications

This research provided the sturdy theorization related to international Muslim tourists' perceived inconveniences in elucidating their post-purchase decision-making process and behavior. To the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first to develop a research framework by involving Muslim travelers' perceived inconveniences as a key moderator variable and considering its roles in the formation of their loyalty to a non-Muslim destination. In addition, the conceptual framework comprising a halal-friendly destination image, emotional experiences, and desire to travel to a destination was wholly supported as it satisfactorily accounted for the total variance in Muslim traveler loyalty to a non-Muslim destination. Overall, our results will contribute to moving one further step toward (1) comprehending the role of inconvenience factors regarding how badly such inconveniences weaken Muslim tourists' loyalty formation better, (2) understanding the role of a halal-friendly destination image in driving emotional experiences, desire, and loyalty, and (3) recognizing the role of emotional experiences and desire in maximizing the influence of a halal-friendly destination image on loyalty. These results are significant in that such findings help non-Muslim destination practitioners (e.g., destination marketers, hospitality/tourism operators, tourism policy makers) to reduce Muslim visitors' difficulties while traveling as well as develop ways to increase their emotional experiences, desire, and loyalty/attachment to a non-Muslim tourism destination.

The present study illustrated the comparative importance of emotional destination experiences in boosting international Muslim travelers' destination loyalty. Results of the Fisher Z-test clarified that the total effect of this variable on loyalty was significant and higher than other study variables ($p < 0.01$). Our finding supported tourism (or consumer behavior) researchers' previous assertion regarding the salient role of patrons' emotional/affective experiences in their post-purchase decision-making process [18,21,22]. In addition, the findings of this study inform researchers that the concept of emotional experiences should be included in building any theoretical framework explicating Muslim travelers' destination loyalty generation process and tourism behaviors at a destination in an active manner. Our findings also inform destination practitioners that efficiently managing and enhancing international Muslim travelers' emotional experiences is the key constituent of eliciting their positive post-purchase behaviors for a destination. Han et al. [8] have reported similar findings on how emotional experiences (i.e., affective) play a significant role in building Muslim travelers' intentions and loyalty in a non-Muslim destination. To do so, as our result indicated, increasing the overall halal-friendly image of a non-Muslim destination is of utmost importance. Making a destination's image and social environment friendly for Muslim travelers would help their tourist experiences to be pleasant, enjoyable, and interesting, which eventually leads to increased loyalty to a destination.

Results from the test for the metric invariance demonstrated that the linkage from desire to loyalty was significantly moderated by Muslim travelers' perceived inconveniences at a non-Muslim destination. The strength of the relationship was significantly greater for the low group of perceived inconveniences ($\beta = 0.674, p < 0.01$) than the high group ($\beta = 0.475, p < 0.01$). This result implies that at a similar level of desire to travel to a destination, international Muslim tourists who perceive a low level of inconveniences while traveling build a more robust level of loyalty to a non-Muslim destination than those who perceive high inconveniences. From a theoretical perspective, our finding informs that the concept of desire to travel to a destination is more evocative in destination loyalty

formation for Muslim tourists who perceive low inconveniences at a destination. Thus, this finding is highly in line with earlier scholars' discussions who confirm that poor management of halal tourism infrastructure in non-Islamic destinations leads to a decrease in Muslim visitors' satisfaction and future intention to revisit a destination [1,36]. The utilization of the perceived inconveniences concept as a moderator seems to be crucial in explaining international Muslim travelers' post-purchase decision-making process.

From a practical point of view, the final outcomes of this study also provided useful insights. Despite a fast increase in the Muslim population in the world, which has reached around thirty percent [9], the proportion of Muslim travelers in many non-Muslim destinations, such as Korea, is relatively low. An increase in this proportion is highly in need for the enhancement of competitiveness in terms of inbound tourism of such destinations. Our findings provided important information that minimizing Muslim tourists' inconveniences is one of the strong approaches to making the desire and loyalty relationship stronger. This result notifies that destination practitioners need to make every endeavor in reducing any inconvenience/difficulty possibly experienced by international Muslim tourists in various places in a non-Muslim destination (e.g., restaurants, hotels, hospitals, resorts, shopping places, cultural sites, transportation (airplane, taxi, subway, KTX, and bus), museums, parks) for the maximum increase of loyalty.

In the present research, our proposition regarding the dissimilarity of the associations between the halal-friendly image of a non-Muslim destination and loyalty to a destination was not supported. Nonetheless, the finding from the metric invariance test revealed that the association was interestingly only significant in the low group of perceived inconveniences ($\beta = 0.144, p < 0.05$) but not in the high group ($\beta = 0.108, p > 0.05$). Thus, despite the insignificant chi-square difference, the dissimilarity on this linkage across groups can be interpreted meaningfully. Our findings offer destination practitioners and researchers critical knowledge that the halal-friendly image that international Muslim tourists have about a non-Muslim destination triggers their loyalty only when these tourists barely perceive inconveniences while traveling to a destination. This result partially supports an earlier study by Al-Ansi and Han [1], who emphasized the essential role of a halal-friendly destination image in generating loyalty in a non-Islamic destination, which required high concern by tourism developers to mitigate the poor and low halal-friendly service practices. In closing, future tourism planning is focused on sustainability to achieve a high level of economic growth and nature conservation, and thus, the global Muslim segment is a future market to be leveraged by tourism destinations and developers, which they should carefully consider. To do so, sustainable marketing strategies must be enforced based on deeply understanding Muslim behaviors and inconvenience experiences perceived while traveling abroad, as discussed in the present study.

6. Conclusions

Our study provided the underlying procedure of generating a halal-friendly image of a non-Muslim destination, emotional destination experiences, desire to travel to a destination, and destination loyalty. The findings of the present research demonstrated the vital mediating role of emotional experiences and desire within the hypothesized conceptual framework. This research theorized these constructs as a bridge mediating the relationship between a halal-friendly destination image and loyalty in a successful manner. Researchers in tourism and destination management need to recognize that the associations between Muslim traveler loyalty and its predictors are hardly significant when emotional experiences and desire are not involved. While emotional experiences and desire toward the behavior are regarded as crucial concepts in consumer behavior [41,42], the integrative role of these factors as vital mediators is rarely unearthed in destination management literature. Our finding, which offered a clear view concerning the obvious mediation function of emotional experiences and desire in the loyalty generation process, thus has a critical theoretical and practical meaning.

Despite its theoretically and practically meaningful implications, this study contained a few limitations. The first limitation is about the generalizability of the findings. The proposed framework was evaluated in the Muslim tourism setting. Hence, generalizing our results to other types of tourism/consumption contexts should be done cautiously. The applicability of the hypothesized framework in other sectors is recommended for future research. Additionally, this study was focused on general financial budgeting of Muslim travelers, which highly recommends that future scholars specify different aspects of Muslim travelers' financial segment, including luxury or low budget. The second limitation is related to high correlation. While the measures for research variables in the present study included an acceptable level of discriminant validity and internal consistency, some correlations (e.g., 0.717) were fairly high. The correlation did not exceed the problematic level of 0.800 [40]. Yet, our results are not totally free from the issue of multicollinearity. A stronger and more sufficient measurement design is highly recommended for future research.

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