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### **UNDERSTANDING THE DETERMINANTS OF RESIDENT SUPPORT FOR HALAL TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY IN POST-COVID-19**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This conceptual article focuses on Malaysia's halal tourism sector, which is vital to the country's economic growth. One of the most significant economic sectors where sustainability has gained importance is halal tourism. Without the active support of residents, halal tourism cannot be sustained; nevertheless, while local support for other forms of tourism sustainability has been extensively researched, local support for halal tourism sustainability has received far less attention. Furthermore, it is critically necessary to look into the suppositions that can affect residents' support for sustainable halal tourism. Unfortunately, the quick spread of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2019 resulted in significant losses for the halal tourism industry, both locally and globally, due to the cancellation of majority travel and tour-related activities, including lodging. More research is needed to determine how the pandemic has affected halal tourism in terms of residents' support for halal tourism and its long-term sustainability. Thus, this conceptual study seeks to understand the residents' attitude and behaviour as well as how residents perceive sustainable halal tourism in their destination. A structured literature review was conducted in this study, with the aim to develop a conceptual framework of residents' support based on review of literature for sustainable halal tourism development. Importantly, this conceptual work will act as the foundation for future, more focused research in this field.

**Keywords:** Residents' support, halal tourism sustainability, covid-19, power, lack of trust, economic dependence.

## INTRODUCTION

A country's social and economic development is seen to be facilitated by tourism due to the many benefits it may provide (Zainol & Seladorai, 2016). Tourism is one of the industries with the fastest growth rates worldwide. It is also a significant sector that generates income, creates plenty of job opportunities, promotes wealth distribution, attracts investments, and builds infrastructure (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2021). In the twenty-first century, one aspect of tourism that is getting a lot of attention is the halal industry (Kamin, 2019). It is among the tourism industry's fastest-growing sectors (Karim, Haque, Anis & Ulfy, 2020; Vargas-Sanchez & Moral-Moral, 2020). Halal tourism is a relatively new product in the tourism industry that is especially important to Muslim families who adhere to Islamic law during travelling (Gabdrakhmanov, Biktimirov, Rozhko, and Mardanshina, 2016) while offering distinctive travelling potential (Battour, Salaheldeen, Mady & Elsetouhy, 2021). The major factor that led to the rapid growth of the halal tourism industry is due to the growing number of Muslim populations worldwide (Battour & Ismail, 2016). As the number of Muslims grow, so does the need for halal products and services (Peristiwo, 2020).

The concept of 'halal tourism' has been around for decades (Yan et al., 2017), since the introduction of the Hajj pilgrimage (Jafari & Scott, 2014). In referring to halal tourism, Ahmed and Akbaba (2020) suggested that Muslim tourists now have additional demands aside from spiritual ones, particularly if the tourists consume halal products and services while on the trip and abide to Islamic teachings. Given that Malaysia is presently focusing on halal tourism development with the hopes to attract higher numbers of tourist in the coming years, there is a clear and pressing need for long-term halal tourism sustainability. Hence, in order to maintain its position and reputation as the top destination for halal tourism, Malaysia must prioritise halal tourism sustainability. Making sure that the community and its environment receive sustainable economic, social, and cultural benefits is typically the cornerstone of sustainable tourism development. The continued/improved social, cultural, and economic well-being of human communities is an intrinsic component of environmental renewal. Thus, tourism development cannot be expected to be sustainable without community sustainability.

Residents form the community. In this context, residents are people who participate in halal tourism activities. In addition to the pressing issue of sustainability, residents' perceptions of halal tourism as sustainable in their community are critical. Thus, studies seeking to understand the residents' attitude and behaviour as well as how residents perceive sustainable halal tourism in their destination should be explored further. This is due to the tourism investments which lead to tourism sustainability which cannot be successful without considering the attitudes and perceptions of residents (Ap, 1992; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). The good or negative effects perceived by residents is one of the most important factors influencing residents' support for tourism product development (Krishnaswamy et al., 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges, and many industries are still adjusting to resume normal operations. There is a research gap worth to be examined in order to establish a suggested framework of residents' support for halal tourism sustainability post-COVID-19 pandemic because very limited studies have addressed this in a crisis. This paper aims to explore the sustainability of halal tourism by examining residents' support and the factors influencing it, as outlined in the literature review.

This conceptual paper will also contribute to the growing discourse on sustainable halal tourism by focusing on the role of residents' support post-COVID-19. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives: First, to examine residents' overall support for the development and sustainability of halal tourism in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, to analyse how

residents perceived power in tourism decision-making influences their support for halal tourism development. Finally, to investigate the effects of trust in tourism governance and economic dependence on residents' willingness to support halal tourism sustainability.

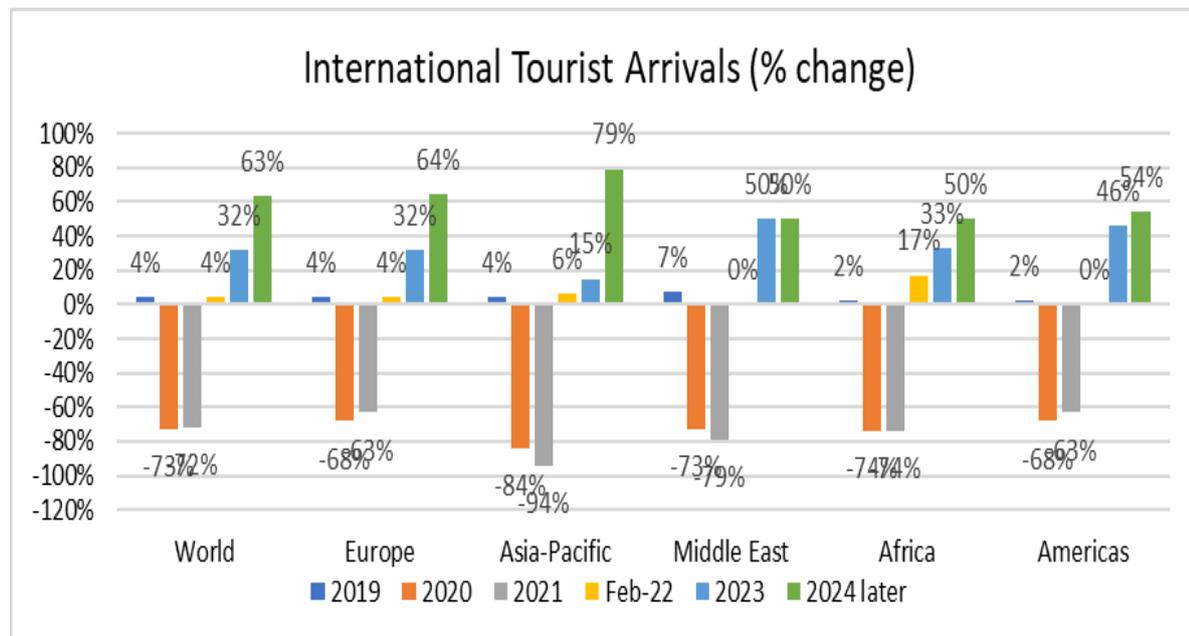
## LITERATURE REVIEW

### COVID-19 and Its Impacts

COVID-19 pandemic has not only had a devastating impact on human health and well-being, but also on the global economy (El-Gohary, 2020). The pandemic has turned into a global public health emergency and economic crisis, affecting the world economy up to \$90 trillion, which is unprecedented in over a century (CRS, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the tourism industry, as tourism is heavily reliant on tourist mobility. The tourism industry suffered the most from travel prohibitions and border closures. Unfortunately, the year 2020 was the worst year for tourism to date, with international arrivals falling by 73 percent. Figure 1 depicts international tourist arrivals in percentage from 2019 to 2024.

**Figure 1**

*Number of International Tourist Arrivals Worldwide from 2019 to 2024*



Source. UNWTO (2022a)

Based on Figure 1, it is shown that there is a higher number of international tourist arrivals in the year 2019 compared to the years 2020 and 2021. In the years 2020 and 2021, there was a drastic drop in international tourist arrivals worldwide due to soaring cases of COVID-19 with the drop amounting -73 percent. The year 2021 is also known as an exceptionally challenging one because arrivals were -72% lower than pre-pandemic levels.

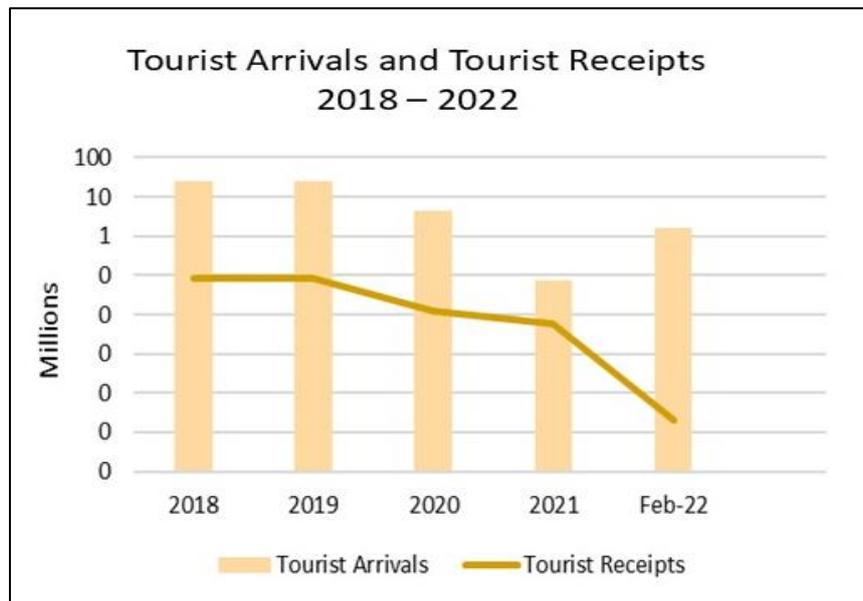
Muslim tourists are increasing in number as a result of the growing popularity of halal tourism around the world (Yusof et al., 2019). However, the number of international Muslim tourists dropped 42 million in 2020 (GMTI, 2021). Coming off the worst year in the history of international tourist arrivals, many

anticipated that the shattered tourism sector would only get better in 2021 (Richter et al., 2021). However, the situation seems to have worsened for international Muslim tourist arrivals at the end of 2021. Only 26 million international Muslim arrivals compared to 46 million in 2019 were recorded. Although the Muslim travel industry is improving at the current state, but headwinds remain, such as the impact of the lockdown, travel restrictions, and the fourth-quarter discovery of the Omicron variant (Jivraj, 2022).

The presence of the concept of 'halal' tourism, combined with the growing number of Muslim tourists, suggests that halal tourism has a good chance of growing and developing (Ahmad, Hermintoyo & Maghfiroh, 2021). However, Anwar, Yusoff, Abdullah, Nordin and Salikin, (2021) addressed that the tourism industry's resiliency, especially halal tourism, was put to test by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which severely impaired the industry the following year. Tourist arrivals and tourist receipts in Malaysia during pre-pandemic and during the pandemic from 2018 to February 2022 are highlighted in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Tourist Arrivals to Malaysia and Tourist Receipts from 2018 until February 2022*



Source. Trading Economics, 2022.

Figure 2 shows that the number of tourist arrivals increased from 25,832,354 million in 2018 to 26,100,784 million in 2019. There were 84135.2 billion Ringgit Malaysia in tourist receipts in 2018, and that the number has risen to 86143.5 billion Ringgit Malaysia in 2019. These data were recorded before the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a drastic decrease in tourist arrivals and tourist receipts in the years 2020 and 2021. In the year 2020, only 4,332,722 million tourist arrivals have been recorded as well as 12688.2 billion Ringgit Malaysia of tourist receipts. It is a -83.4 percent decrease in tourist arrivals and a -85.3 percent decrease in tourist receipts when compared to 2019 (Tourism Malaysia, 2022). In 2021, the data showed 73,309 million in tourist arrivals. This is due to Malaysia closing its borders to international visitors and allowing only restricted access for non-residents in 2020 (Hirschmann, 2019).

Halal tourism destinations including Malaysia, suffered direct and indirect losses as a result of the suspension of inbound and outgoing flights. These losses posed a significant detrimental impact on tourism industry including halal tourism (El-Gohary 2020). There is a decrease in number of international tourists to Malaysia causing the closure of many hotels. Soliano (2021) reported that due to COVID-19 outbreak, 120 hotels in Malaysia have either temporarily or permanently shut down. According to the Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH), the industry lost 9 billion Ringgit Malaysia between January and September 2021, compared to 6 billion Ringgit Malaysia in losses for the entire year of 2020 (Ganesan, 2022). Many hotels, resorts, catering services, and airlines have been forced to close as a result of this pandemic. The pandemic in Malaysia resulted in the layoffs of hotel employees, the request for unpaid leave, and the wage reductions of employees (The Star Malaysia, 2020). Consequently, all these unstipulated conditions influence the level of support provided by the residents.

### **Residents' Support**

Residents' support for halal tourism sustainability is critical post-COVID-19 pandemic as the pandemic's struggles have not yet come to an end (Puvana, 2024). There are negative consequences if halal tourism is not effectively and sustainably managed because it is a key source of wealth, employment opportunities, and income (Viera, Rodrigues, Fernandes & Pires, 2016). Therefore, a research gap is timely and evident to be explored in order to understand the plethora of residents' support towards halal tourism sustainability post-COVID-19 pandemic as limited study has addressed this in a crisis situation. In addressing how halal tourism can be sustained by obtaining residents' support, the involvement of a few presumed elements that will be considered in relation to residents' support should be forwarded.

Based on thorough literature review, four presumed elements can be considered in relation to residents' support towards halal tourism sustainability post-COVID-19 pandemic. The presumed elements are identified as residents' level of power, residents' level of economic dependence on tourism, residents' trust in the government, and residents' perception of perceived impact towards halal tourism sustainability. These elements are elaborated in the following sections.

### **Level of Power as an Element of Residents' Support for Halal Tourism Sustainability**

It is reasonable to propose that residents' level of power influences the formation of support for halal tourism sustainability. Residents with more power in the tourism development process have a more favourable attitude towards tourism and are more willing to support tourism development (Kayat, 2002; Nunkoo, 2015; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012) as well as encouraging the tourism sustainability. Furthermore, power inspires residents to support and reap the benefits of tourism growth, which in turn will lead to a more sustainable future.

According to Bowen, Zubair and Altinay (2016), the concept of power has yet to be defined. A discussion on definitions can always be tweaked to fit the context in which they appear. Wrong (1979) defines power as the ability of one person to influence another person's behaviour. According to Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2012), a tourism destination's hosts and guests' interactions are examples of power connection. In addition, Kayat (2002) purported that residents' level of power allows residents to take advantage of the opportunities offered by tourism development to improve their quality of life.

Determining the level of power of residents is quite complex because power is intangible and difficult to measure (Ramely, 2020). Therefore, scholars need to identify some indicators that will aid in the measurement of power (Ramely, 2020). The examples of resources include money, property, competence,

knowledge, experience, and skills owned by a person that can be used or applied in fulfilling or satisfying their requirements (Wolfe, 1959). Aside from land ownership and access to capital (such as money and property), Kayat (2002) also described resources as the individual's level of competence, age, and social status.

Blau (1967) and Blosser (2009) agreed that an actors' level of power is determined by the types of resources owned by the actor. Ramely (2020), in her study mentioned that some actors have more resources than others, and those with more resources have a better probability of having better exchange outputs than those with fewer resources. Other researchers, such as Kayat (2002), Blau (1967) and Blosser (2009) also measured power as the actor's resources. Property, money, competence, knowledge, and skills owned by a person, which allow a person to satisfy his personal wants, are examples of resources that could be used to measure the level of power (Wolfe, 1959). Resources in the form of power, as observed by Nunkoo (2016), have led residents to reap the utmost benefits from the growth of tourism.

Thus, based on the definitions given above, a resident with power and resources will have a better chance of supporting and benefiting from tourism product development. As a result, they may be willing to support the progress of tourism product development in which their support can lead to tourism sustainability. Ideally, residents should participate in the exchange process to improve their quality of life and reap the benefits of the growth of the tourism industry. For the sake of a better quality of life, residents are compelled to participate in the exchange process. Residents, for example, can be said to be involved in social exchanges with tourists in the context of tourism development, such as by accepting guests. The reason being is that they feel that by participating in the exchange, they will be able to enhance their lives and meet their needs by increasing their incomes through business and employment opportunities (Ap, 1992).

However, the level of power may fluctuate throughout the pandemic. Many people have lost their jobs or become unemployed as a result of the pandemic, resulting in a decrease in their perceived income (Parker, Minkin & Bennett, 2020). This current situation will be a barrier for residents to gain advantage or obtain benefits from the development of tourism products. This is because residents with less or without resources will be known as powerless or as residents with the least power (Kayat, 2000), as their ability and capability to gain advantages or benefits is lesser in comparison to residents with power. Residents who own a certain level of power on the other hand will have a higher ability and capability to gain advantages or benefits from tourism products and services (Kayat, 2002).

### **Residents' Level of Economic Dependence on Tourism to Support Halal Tourism Sustainability**

Economic dependence on tourism is regarded as an important element in measuring the power of residents. Economic dependence means that the income of residents depends on tourism-related businesses' (Chen & Chen, 2010). Residents' support for a tourism-based economy has been extensively demonstrated in academic publications (Ramely, 2020). McCarthy and In (2016) mentioned that residents are more likely to be supportive of tourism growth if residents rely on tourism-based employment. Kim, Kang, Park and Kang (2021) argued that, when residents are reliant on the positive benefits of tourism development, they are naturally supportive of tourism development. The level of economic reliance is used to determine whether the residents are participating in tourism (Chen & Chen, 2010) and whether or not their income/employment is dependent on the tourism industry (Viera et al., 2016).

A few empirical investigations have been carried out in places where economic activity is slow and tourism development is limited (Ramely, 2020). According to McCartney and In (2016), residents who work in

the tourism sector and casino industries were compared with those who do not work in these industries. Residents who worked in the tourism and casino sectors are classified as highly dependent, hence supported tourism development (McCartney & In, 2016). However, those who were not active in the tourism industry tend to have an unfavourable attitude towards tourism development (Ramely, 2020).

Similarly, Chuang (2010) found that residents in areas with minimal economic activities supported tourism development because they expected better profits when alternative economic activities are limited. Residents in these areas have high aspirations and expectations for the benefits that come with tourism (Chuang, 2010; Sinclair-Maragh & Gursoy, 2015; Sharples, 2014). Residents in specific tourism destinations tend to underestimate the cost and exaggerate the economic benefits in some circumstances, due to high economic dependency on tourism. Boonsiritomachai and Phonthanakitithaworn (2019) stated that the main benefit of tourism growth is economic gain, which is seen as vital by residents in most tourism destinations (Stylidis et al., 2014). All these economic benefits form the basis for supporting tourism development which encourage tourism sustainability. Therefore, it is clear that the economic gain from tourism product growth rationalises residents' support for tourism development.

Furthermore, Brida et al. (2011), also found that residents' support for the tourism industry was directly linked to their economic dependency on tourism. The citizens of Folgaria, an Italian town economically dependent on tourism, also believe that the industry is vital to them since it drives economic investment and expenditure, resulting in benefits being greater than costs (Ramely, 2020). There has been research showing that people who depend on the tourism sector for their livelihood have a more positive view of tourism than those who do not (Stylidis et al., 2014). This is in line with Jepson, Clarke, and Ragsdell (2013), who classified residents who rely heavily on tourism as powerless in comparison to those who are less reliant. Residents also believe that their quality of life was improved by tourism growth, whereby they felt quality of life is more important than their financial gain. On the contrary, the lack of impact of economic dependence on tourism on residents' support could be attributed to a perception that tourism's negative impacts outweigh its economic contribution (Ramely, 2020).

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the residents' level of economic dependency on tourism varied because residents who are heavily reliant on the tourism industry would perceive unfavourable consequences. On the other hand, during the COVID-19 pandemic, residents who are employed in tourism-related occupations and those who are highly dependent on tourism because they do not have any other source of income (Ramely, 2020), will be considered as powerless. Consequently, it is reasonable to consider economic dependence on tourism as a predictor of resident support (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011) during the COVID-19 pandemic, whether residents support or oppose halal tourism. Due to how severely the pandemic has affected the tourism industry, this will also cause vulnerable residents to be reluctant to obtain jobs in the industry. It is unknown to what extent economic dependence on tourism influences the level of residents' support as residents' support is necessary for the successful development of tourism (Kim et al., 2021) which will help to sustain halal tourism in the long run.

### **Level of Trust in Government as an Element of Residents' Support for Halal Tourism Sustainability**

Taking into account the amount of trust that residents have in the government is crucial for both effective and democratic governance and the long-term viability of the tourism industry (Nunkoo, 2016). However, the degree of trust in the government has not gotten much attention in previous studies, despite its importance (Nunkoo, 2016). Trust is essential for good governance, the sustainability of political systems, and the consolidation of democracies because it enables a government to maintain effective legitimacy and

authority in decision-making (Christensen & Lgreid, 2005). Trust is critical in social exchange because the exchange of benefits is neither contractual nor on a quid pro quo basis, but voluntary (Nunkoo & So, 2015). Collaborations between the government and stakeholders are required, according to Assante, Wen, and Lottig (2012a, 2012b), in order to come to an agreement on how to handle upcoming tourist developments. The authors argued that if locals think tourism is successfully managed by public administration authorities, they will feel more optimistic about the sustainability of tourism development (Viera et al., 2016). On the other hand, locals who believe that the government did not successfully manage tourism development were more likely to have unfavourable opinions about tourism sustainability (Assante et al., 2012). Trust, according to Nunkoo (2017), also enables locals to shape actors' behaviours and attitudes in the advancement of sustainable tourism. This is consistent with government development plans that aim to maximise benefits while minimising expenses to foster high levels of citizen trust in the government and support for sustainable tourism.

Political trust enhances the power of exchange by instilling confidence in residents, who subsequently support the development of tourism products (Silva & Junior, 2016). Indeed, this trust is vital since it can boost motivation to carry out trades and strengthen social ties between exchange partners (Ramely, 2020). The presence of trust in social exchange also reduces worries and greed among exchange partners (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). Relatively, Gursoy et al. (2016) showed that high levels of trust towards the government led to support, as individuals believe that the government will do all they can to maximise benefits and minimise expenses. A thorough search of the database for current research studying the relationship between trust in the government and residents' support for tourism development revealed a paucity of local studies (Ramely, 2020). A study conducted by Mohamed (2017) for example, examined the relationship between trust in the government and residents' support. This study was conducted in the context of sustainable tourism development in a World Heritage Site in Lenggong, Perak (Mohamed, 2017). From the study, it was found that most of the residents in Lenggong have very high confidence in government institutions, which makes them supportive of and favourable to the growth of tourism in their region (Ramely, 2020).

Prior research has also found a strong correlation between residents' trust in government and their support for the tourism product development (Gursoy et al., 2016; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2015). However, none of this research has looked at how residents' support for tourism product development is affected by their level of trust in government in sustaining tourism, specifically the halal tourism activities that possibly produce different relationship. It is obvious that the effect of trust on residents' support for tourism product development is influenced by the type of tourism (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2016). The need for a study that can lead to a better understanding of the role of the local government in encouraging residents' support for long-term tourism development in a halal tourism setting is yet to be carried out (Viera et al., 2016). On a more positive note, the COVID-19 crisis should be seen as an opportunity to change the relationship between the government and residents in dealing with the pandemic at hand and establishing a more innovation-oriented, long-term business strategy (Islam, Jerin, Hafiz, Nimfa & Wahab, 2021). Moreover, the implications caused by the pandemic has been devastating and how residents perceived of its impact is unknown, especially since the pandemic is a novel pandemic.

### **Perception of Perceived Impact and Residents' Support for Halal Tourism Sustainability**

Several research have indicated that residents' support for tourism product development is not solely influenced by power, economic dependency on tourism, or trust. Several authors have found that residents' perceptions of the perceived impact of tourism products have also influenced the level of support for

tourism development among residents (Pappas, 2014). Residents' perception of perceived impact and residents' support for tourism development are critical to tourism's long-term sustainability (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). Tourism impact is described as *"the change in the status of something related with tourism through time"* (Hall and Lew, 2009, p. 41). Economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism can be described as either positive or negative (Koerte, 2013). According to Rasoolimanesh, Noor and Jaafar (2017) and Aziz et al. (2020), there are two types of tourism effects: economic and potential. Economic impacts can be classified as either unidimensional or multidimensional, and they are further subdivided into three categories: social, cultural and environmental impacts. Tourism impacts may have a positive or negative effect on the residents and can lead to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017 & Aziz et al., 2020).

Residents' perceived benefits are understood as a positive outcome of halal tourism activities. Empirical studies by Rasoolimanesh et al. (2015) and Chuang (2010) found that residents would support tourism development if the benefits they receive outweigh the costs. The creation of tourist attraction development has been proven in studies to generate significant economic benefits to residents (Wang et al., 2019) and offering economic gains for destinations (Boonsiritomachai & Phonthanakitithworn, 2019), leading to greater resident support for tourism development. In turn, such support encourages long-term tourism sustainability. As a result, residents' perceptions of a tourism development's economic contributions legitimise their support. A tourism destination that has effectively developed new forms of tourist attractions has been able to positively reinforce the destination's image, resulting in a higher number of visitors (Ramely, 2020). As a result, residents' living standards will improve (Al-Emadi et al., 2016), and new job opportunities will be available in the area (Li et al., 2015) particularly those that emphasise the Islamic lifestyle (Kamarudin & Ismail, 2013). Such efforts have also provided residents the opportunity to run small businesses during events near the event location (Zhou, 2010), which then becomes a source of income for residents (Hanafiah et al., 2013), therefore promoting and strengthening the economic status of residents at the event destination (Ramely, 2020).

Aside from economic contribution, researchers have found that residents at tourism destinations supported tourist attraction development as they perceive that the development produces social benefits (Li et al., 2015). Furthermore, according to Battour et al. (2021), preservation of Islamic rituals and traditions, preservation of Islamic identity, creation of job possibilities for Muslim youths, and the introduction of Islamic teachings to non-Muslims are the social benefits brought about by halal tourism. On the contrary, other scholars have widely studied the empirical relationship between perceived costs and residents' support (Nunkoo & So, 2015; Pappas, 2016; Wang et al., 2019). It is well known that perceived costs lead to rejection of tourism development or unwillingness to support the tourism development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015), especially when the negative impact is perceived to be greater than the positive impact (Sher et al., 2015). However, in some tourism destinations, residents continue to tolerate and support tourism development despite knowing that it would result in more costs than benefits (Hui & Tsai, 2017).

Economically, the true costs of tourism development are revealed when government expenses exceed the budget and tourism becomes overcrowded (Wang et al., 2019). Halal tourism activities especially halal tourism-based events and festivals, might pollute and harm the environment (Wang et al., 2019); leading to overcrowding of the community area (Krishnaswamy et al., 2018); as well as environmental pollution and an increase in garbage (Amuquandoh, 2010). Moreover, it may also cause air pollution due to the usage of vehicles (Krishnaswamy et al., 2018). There have been numerous studies that show that perceived costs play a role in the rejection of tourist attraction development (Krishnaswamy et al., 2018). Residents' support for tourism sustainability may be influenced by their perception on both negative and positive economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism (Vieira et al., 2016). Thus, there will

always be groups of residents who support the sustainable development of tourism when they recognise that the change is beneficial to the community's well-being, while others will oppose it, as they believe the change is harmful (Caizares, Tabales & García, 2014). In order to better comprehend how perceived impacts have influenced the formation of residents' support for halal tourism sustainability, further studies could be conducted while residents may have different perceptions (McCartney & In, 2016), especially in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Halal Tourism Sustainability and Residents' Support Post-COVID-19**

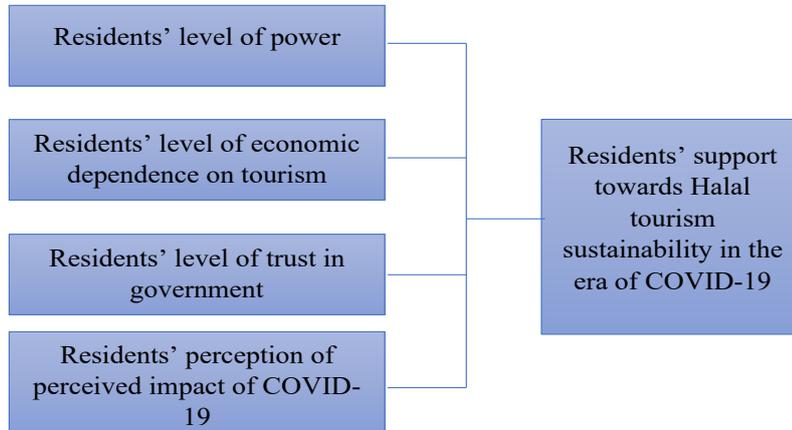
Halal tourism encompasses a range of faith-based services such as halal-certified food, alcohol-free accommodations, prayer facilities, gender segregation options, and modest dress codes which are designed to meet Islamic principles while remaining inclusive to non-Muslim travellers (Li et al., 2023). In contrast to conventional tourism, which typically emphasizes leisure and revenue irrespective of religious considerations, halal tourism integrates ethical and socio-cultural dimensions that appeal to values-driven Muslim tourists (Gossling et al., 2023). Before the COVID-19 outbreak, this segment had shown robust growth and sustainability potential. However, the pandemic has introduced new pressures on residents' support for halal tourism sustainability. Several studies investigated (a) Power: During COVID-19 lockdowns, many residents reported having diminished influence over tourism planning, which reduced their power in decisions about recovery funding and the implementation of halal-compliant facilities (Puvana, 2024; Li et al., 2024); (b) Lack of Trust: During the COVID-19 pandemic, uncertainties surrounding health protocols and uneven government support has decreased residents' trust in authorities and tourism operators, weakening local confidence in sustainable halal tourism initiatives (Zhou et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2023); (c) Economic Dependence: Residents with high economic reliance on tourism, especially in halal tourism demonstrate stronger support for its sustainability, even amid COVID-19 disruptions, as they seek to protect their livelihoods (Teng, 2019; Woosnam et al., 2022; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2021). By examining these dimensions of power, trust, and economic dependence post-COVID-19 recovery period, researchers can better understand how to foster community-aligned, resilient halal tourism that upholds both religious values and sustainable development goals.

### **The Conceptual Framework**

As previously mentioned, the main aim of this conceptual paper is to investigate the state of knowledge regarding the sustainability of halal tourism by assessing residents' support for the growth of halal tourism and determining how this support is impacted by assumed factors. The assumed factors re deliberated as above to relate the importance of residents' support towards halal tourism sustainability. Thus, the conceptual framework developed by Ramely (2020) was employed since it could assist in determining the formation of residents' support in the context of sustainable halal tourism development. This current framework has been extended to include the halal context. This initial conceptual framework presents the overall structure in examining the residents' support towards halal tourism sustainability in the era of COVID-19, as highlighted in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*The Initial Conceptual Framework of Residents' Support Based on Review of Literature for Sustainable Halal Tourism Development and adapted from Ramely (2020)*



### **Methodology**

This conceptual study adopts a structured literature review (SLR) as its primary methodological approach to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework on residents' support for halal tourism sustainability in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The SLR method allows for a systematic, transparent, and replicable process of identifying, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant academic literature. This approach is particularly suited for conceptual research where theoretical development and the integration of interdisciplinary insights are essential.

A structured search was conducted across reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar, using key terms including “*halal tourism*,” “*sustainable tourism*,” “*resident support*,” “*COVID-19*,” “*perceived power*,” “*trust*,” and “*economic dependence*.” Inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed articles published within the last five years (2019–2024), with emphasis on empirical and conceptual studies related to tourism development, community engagement, and Islamic tourism practices. The review process followed a three-phase protocol: (1) identification of relevant sources; (2) screening and eligibility based on relevance, academic rigor, and contextual fit; and (3) synthesis and thematic coding of findings related to resident attitudes, stakeholder dynamics, and post-pandemic tourism recovery. This methodological approach ensures a robust theoretical foundation for analyzing the socio-economic and psychological dimensions that influence residents' support for halal tourism.

### **Research Implication**

The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, may have an impact on the amount of support received, whereby residents' perception of how this outbreak will influence their support remains unknown. This is because the COVID-19 pandemic has affected many industries in recent years, including the halal tourism industry. Due to operational difficulties, declining revenue, and a rising unemployment rate, it is difficult for all

services to run their businesses (Spanaki, Papatheodorou, & Pappas, 2021), and some firms were even shut down (Wiwatreungdech, 2021).

In order to strengthen local support for tourism and the future of industry in the destination, it is possible to prioritise management strategies while respecting the needs and rights of residents by understanding residents' attitudes towards sustainable tourism, as highlighted by Scaccia and Urioste-Stone (2016). This is because residents' support and active participation are critical to the implementation of long-term sustainable halal tourism development (Aziz et al., 2020). It is also crucial to comprehend the elements that influence residents' willingness to support tourism growth which leads to tourism sustainability.

### **Future Research**

The global tourism is continuously evolving; however, the COVID-19 pandemic has a lasting effect on this industry. Therefore, future research on halal tourism sustainability should address several critical gaps. First, there is a need for longitudinal studies that examine how residents' support for halal tourism changes over time, particularly as communities recover economically and socially from pandemic disruptions. Second, future work should explore cross-cultural comparisons across different Muslim-majority and minority regions. Cultural and religious interpretations of halal practices can vary which may influence residents' perceptions of what constitutes acceptable and sustainable halal tourism. Comparative studies can help policymakers and stakeholders design culturally sensitive tourism frameworks tailored to local contexts.

Third, further investigation is warranted into residents perceived power and empowerment mechanisms in tourism decision-making. While current findings suggest that low levels of perceived power reduce support for tourism development, future research should explore community-based governance models that can enhance participatory planning in halal tourism projects. Lastly, more empirical work is needed to understand the economic dependence. Researchers should examine how variables such as household income diversification, employment type (formal vs. informal tourism jobs), and government support influence the strength of economic dependence on tourism. This would allow for more targeted policy interventions that align economic incentives with sustainability goals. In conclusion, future research must adopt a multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach, combining insights from tourism studies, sociology, religious studies, and crisis management. This will help build a holistic theoretical and practical framework to guide sustainable halal tourism development that respects both residents' needs and visitors' values in a post-pandemic world.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study offers a timely and novel contribution to the emerging body of knowledge on halal tourism sustainability, particularly by integrating residents' perspectives during an unprecedented global crisis. While much of the existing literature on halal tourism focuses on consumer behavior, destination marketing, and service quality, few studies have critically examined the attitudes and roles of residents who are the key stakeholders in sustainable tourism development. In addition, the novelty of this research lies in its multidimensional analytical framework, which incorporates three overlooked variables in the halal tourism context: residents' perceived power, trust in governance and tourism management, and economic dependence on tourism. By applying these sociopsychological and economic constructs within the post-COVID-19 tourism recovery period, the study bridges important gaps between destination sustainability, Islamic tourism principles, and crisis resilience literature. Moreover, this study is one of the

first to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped residents' support for halal tourism development, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between public health crises, socio-economic pressures, and religious tourism models. The focus on halal tourism sustainability in empirical research compared to conventional tourism has added further originality for this study. In addition, the study's conceptual approach may serve as a foundation for developing future models and indicators for measuring sustainable halal tourism, not only in Muslim-majority nations but also in multicultural societies that aim to promote inclusive and ethical tourism.

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