

**INTERNATIONAL NON-MUSLIM TOURIST  
SATISFACTION WITH ISLAMIC AND GENERIC  
DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES IN JEDDAH,  
SAUDI ARABIA**

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**by**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

EDM	Expectancy Disconfirmation Model
EDT	Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory
HOLSAT	Holiday Satisfaction Model
OAV	Overall Average Value
SERVPERF	Service Performance Model
SERVQUAL	Service Quality Model
WTO	World Tourism Organization

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Appendix A      Questionnaire (English)

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# **KEPUASAN PELANCONG ANTARABANGSA BUKAN MUSLIM TERHADAP ATRIBUT DESTINASI ISLAM DAN GENERIK DI JEDDAH, ARAB SAUDI**

## **ABSTRAK**

Arab Saudi secara tradisinya telah menjadi pusat pelancongan keagamaan. Dengan pengenalan Visi 2030 Saudi, negara ini memperluas tawaran pelancongannya melewati pelancongan keagamaan. Perubahan ini menandakan penyesuaian strategi untuk menarik lebih ramai pelancong global dengan melaksanakan peraturan yang dirancang untuk meningkatkan daya tarikan destinasi. Transformasi yang drastik bagi mencapai objektifnya masih terdapat jurang yang kritikal dalam memahami pengalaman pelancong khususnya pelancong bukan islam yang berlatar belakang budaya dan agama yang berbeza apabila berhadapan dengan pendekatan konservatif Islam di negara yang majoritinya beragama Islam. Selain itu, sektor pelancongan Arab Saudi tertumpu terutamanya pada ziarah keagamaan telah memperkenalkan visa pelancong rekreasi pada 2019. Kajian lanjut diperlukan mengenai kepuasan pelancong antarabangsa yang berkunjung untuk aktiviti bukan agama. Sorotan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kajian yang menggunakan ‘Disconfirmatory Theory’ adalah terhad dalam konteks atribut destinasi Islamik. Dengan mengaplikasi ‘Disconfirmatory Theory’, kajian ini mengkaji kepuasan pelancong bukan Islam antarabangsa terhadap atribut destinasi Islamik serta yang attritbut generik dalam konteks bandar Jeddah. Kepuasan pelancong dinilai menggunakan model HOLSAT. Sebaliknya, pengaruh atribut Islamik dan generik terhadap kepuasan perjalanan dinilai menggunakan Expectancy Disconfirmation Model (EDM), dengan tujuan untuk menentukan sama ada atribut Islamik menghalang kejayaan pengalaman perjalanan

pelancong bukan Muslim. Secara khusus, model konseptual kajian yang berdasarkan EDM diolah sedikit untuk memasukkan pemboleh ubah kesetiaan. Data dikumpul melalui tinjauan sendiri, menghasilkan 391 maklum balas yang boleh digunakan, dan dianalisis menggunakan perisian SPSS. Ujian-t sampel berpasangan digunakan untuk membandingkan persepsi sebelum dan selepas lawatan pelancong, manakala analisis regresi linear digunakan untuk mengkaji model konsep kajian. Keputusan model HOLSAT menunjukkan bahawa tujuh daripada 25 pernyataan atribut generik dan tiga daripada 10 pernyataan atribut Islamik mengalami jurang negatif antara jangkaan dan pengalaman, sekaligus menunjukkan skop potensi peningkatan dalam kepuasan pelancong. Selain itu, hubungan antara pemboleh ubah penyelidikan dalam rangka kerja konsep kajian adalah sejajar dengan penemuan sebelumnya, walaupun terdapat sedikit variasi dalam kekuatan dan kepentingan. Kajian ini meningkatkan pemahaman teori dengan memperluaskan model HOLSAT serta model EDM dalam konteks kepuasan atribut Islamik, menonjolkan sifat tersendiri atribut destinasi Islamik daripada yang generik. Selain itu, hasil penyelidikan meletakkan asas untuk membangunkan strategi yang memupuk suasana yang benar-benar inklusif dan akomodatif untuk pelancong antarabangsa yang melawat Arab Saudi untuk tujuan bukan agama, sekali gus menyumbang kepada peningkatan keseluruhan sektor pelancongan Arab Saudi yang semakin berkembang.

# **INTERNATIONAL NON-MUSLIM TOURIST SATISFACTION WITH ISLAMIC AND GENERIC DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES IN JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA**

## **ABSTRACT**

Saudi Arabia has traditionally been a hub for religious tourism. With the introduction of the 2030 Vision, the country expands its tourism offering beyond religious tourism. This shift marks a strategic realignment to attract more diverse global travellers by implementing regulations designed to enhance the destination's appeal. Despite these ambitious reforms, there remains a critical gap in understanding the experience of tourists from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds when navigating conservative Islamic customs in a Muslim-majority country. Moreover, given that Saudi Arabia's tourism sector primarily focused on religious pilgrimages before the introduction of the leisure tourist visa in 2019, further research is needed on the satisfaction of international tourists visiting for non-religious activities. Literature shows that studies utilising the disconfirmation theory are scarce within the context of Islamic destination attributes. By utilising the disconfirmation theory, this study examines international non-Muslim tourists' satisfaction with Islamic destination attributes as well as the generic ones within the context of Jeddah city. Tourist satisfaction was assessed using the HOLSAT model, while the influence of Islamic and generic attributes on travel satisfaction was evaluated utilising the Expectancy Disconfirmation Model (EDM), with the aim to determine whether Islamic attributes hinder the success of the travel experience of non-Muslim tourists. Notably, the study's conceptual model, which is grounded in the EDM, was slightly modified to incorporate the loyalty variable. Data were collected via a self-administered survey, yielding 391



usable responses, and analysed using SPSS software. Paired sample t-tests were employed to compare tourists' pre- and post-visit perceptions, while linear regression analysis was utilised to examine the study's conceptual model. The HOLSAT model result indicates that seven of the 25 generic attribute statements and three of the 10 Islamic attribute statements experienced a negative gap between expectation and experience, indicating areas of potential improvement in tourist satisfaction. Additionally, the relationship between the research variables in the study's conceptual framework aligns with previous findings, albeit with slight variations in strength and significance. This study enhances theoretical understanding by expanding the HOLSAT model as well as the EDM model within the context of Islamic attribute satisfaction, highlighting the distinctive nature of Islamic destination attributes from the generic ones. Besides, the research outcomes lay the groundwork for developing strategies that foster a genuinely inclusive and accommodating atmosphere for international tourists visiting Saudi Arabia for non-religious purposes, thereby contributing to the overall enhancement of Saudi Arabia's growing tourism sector.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Tourism has become an increasingly important industry, contributing significantly to the global economy and shaping the social, cultural, and environmental landscape of many destinations. According to the World Tourism Organization (2021), international tourist arrivals reached 1.5 billion in 2019, generating over \$1.5 trillion in export earnings. Tourism also offers a range of social and cultural benefits, such as promoting cross-cultural exchange, preserving and protecting heritage sites, and supporting local communities (UNWTO, 2021). Many countries view tourism as a valuable investment opportunity to increase their income. Further, destinations are growing aware that research is critical to boosting tourism in today's highly competitive environment (Yang & Ren, 2021).

In order to maintain a competitive marketplace, travel destinations should meet tourists' expectations to ensure a satisfactory tourism experience. Tourist satisfaction is an indicator of the quality of service a destination provides. It was empirically proven that satisfied tourists are likely to revisit and recommend the destination to others (e.g., Bui & Le, 2016; Chi & Qu, 2008). Scholarly investigations have demonstrated a positive correlation between tourist satisfaction and expenditure behaviour, stating that satisfied tourists tend to allocate more financial resources during their visit, contributing to enhanced economic benefits for the destination (Chen & Dwyer, 2007). Furthermore, a destination with high tourist satisfaction can significantly improve its image and reputation, leading to increased tourism demand and more favourable media coverage (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Many models have been proposed in the literature to assess tourist satisfaction, including the performance-only model (SERVPERF), the outcome input model (EQUITY), the congruity model, the service quality model (SERVQUAL), and the holiday satisfaction model (HOLSAT). According to the literature, the HOLSAT model is widely recognised as the most popular method of assessing tourist satisfaction. Slack (2019) has noted that the HOLSAT model distinguishes itself from other satisfaction models by addressing key limitations in measuring satisfaction. While other models primarily focus on assessing satisfaction with specific services, the HOLSAT model takes a broader perspective by measuring overall satisfaction with the destination. By encompassing the overall holiday experience, the HOLSAT model provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating tourist satisfaction, allowing researchers and practitioners to gain insights into the holistic aspects of destination satisfaction beyond individual service encounters. This broader approach ensures a more comprehensive understanding of tourists' overall satisfaction with their holiday experience in a particular destination.

The HOLSAT model assesses tourist satisfaction by comparing the expectations of tourists with their travel experience (Chi & Qu, 2008; Truong & Foster, 2006; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Measuring satisfaction based on the post-consumption evaluation that meets or exceeds expectations is known as the Cognitive Approach (Del Bosque & San Martín, 2008). Tourists' expectations are developed based on the knowledge perceived toward the destination (cognitive image) before the travel (Oliver, 1980). Because the cognitive image, to some degree, represents a service provider's true capabilities, it allows consumers to anticipate service quality accurately (Wang et al., 2009). Oliver (1980) suggested that the customer compares the perceived performance or experience with their initial expectations when they purchase or

consume products or services. Tourist satisfaction occurs when tourists' post-trip perceptions (experiences) exceed their expectations (pre-trip perceptions). In contrast, tourists will be dissatisfied if their experiences fall short of expectations. This system is based on the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), developed by Oliver (1980).

The expectancy disconfirmation paradigm by Oliver (1980) was found to be the most dominant approach in customer satisfaction research, which forms the theoretical foundation of The Expectancy Disconfirmation Model (EDM) (Oliver, 1980, 1997), the service quality model (SERVQUAL) (Parasuraman et al., 1991; Zeithaml et al., 1985), and the holiday satisfaction model (HOLSAT) (Tribe & Snaith, 1998). The EDM is a specific application or operationalisation of the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory. The EDM provides a more concrete framework for evaluating customer satisfaction by focusing on the disconfirmation between pre-purchase expectations and post-purchase performance. It emphasises the role of expectations and the perceived performance of a product or service in shaping customer satisfaction (Oliver, 1980, 1997). The SERVQUAL model first measures tourist expectations and then the service performance, referring to the gap difference between them. SERVQUAL model is widely applied and has a particular degree of validity and reliability. Similarly, the HOLSAT model was developed from the SERVQUAL model to measure travel experience. The instrument of the HOLSAT model addresses the multidimensional nature of tourist satisfaction with a specific destination by comparing the expectation of destination attributes (e.g., restaurants, shops, and accommodation) with actual attributes' performance to measure the satisfaction (Tribe & Snaith, 1998; Meimand et al., 2013).

Various tourist groups may hold varying viewpoints regarding the critical destination attributes (Kozak, 2002; Mayo & Jarvis, 1981). Thus, to improve the tourism market position, it is crucial to utilise local resources and consider the preferences and satisfaction of tourists in the tourism market (Nhan & Dua, 2019). Gomezelj and Mihalič (2008) suggest that the success of a tourist destination in the tourism market is determined by how effectively its resources are managed and developed to meet tourists' needs. Tourists tend to positively perceive the destination when their expectations are met (Pritchard & Havitz, 2006). Besides, tourists' experiences with tourism products are crucial for measuring destination competitiveness (Pavlović et al., 2016). Accordingly, considering the existing literature on tourist satisfaction, expectations, and experiences, tourists' satisfaction was assessed using the HOLSAT model in the context of Saudi Arabia, where the Saudi government is attempting to develop the country as a leading tourist destination and boost its competitiveness in the global tourism industry. Furthermore, the influence of tourists' expectations and experience with destination attributes on overall satisfaction was evaluated, considering the EDM proposed by Oliver (1980).

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is located across the central and northern Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia exhibits a rich cultural heritage and is the home of the holiest cities for Muslims, Mecca and Medina (Assas, 2020). Since its formation in 1932, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has radically transformed, and traditional places, like Jeddah, have tremendously developed into modern cities. Likewise, cities that were once merely known as oasis towns, such as Riyadh, have flourished into modern metropolitan cities and business hubs (Bakry et al., 2019). Since the discovery

of oil in Saudi Arabia in 1938, the country has undergone a dramatic transformation, particularly in its economy and society. The vast oil reserves in the country have been the driving force behind its economic growth, enabling the government to fund various development projects and diversify its economy (Al-Rasheed, 2013). The influx of expatriate workers and the oil boom have led to significant changes in the country's society, including modernising its infrastructure and education system and improving its healthcare and welfare services (Al-Khateeb, 1998).

In addition, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been a leading religious tourism destination for a long time. Saudi Arabia's tourism activities have revolved around religious tourism. Most tourists visit Saudi Arabia for religious purposes (Tabash et al., 2023). Makkah and Madinah are the most famous cities for religious tourism, as they have been home to the Islamic message since ancient times. Statistics show that 42% of tourists came from Middle Eastern countries, followed by 26% of tourists from South Asian countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Iran, and Nepal) ("Saudi Arabia: Country-specific: Arrivals of non-resident tourists at national borders," 2022). Additionally, the top five tourist source countries of Saudi Arabia in 2019 are countries with a Muslim majority, as illustrated in the following table ("Saudi Arabia: Country-specific: Arrivals of non-resident tourists at national borders," 2022).

Table 1.1 Top 5 Foreign Countries Visiting Saudi Arabia in 2019

Country name	Number of tourists	Percentage
Kuwait	2,187,736	16.1%
Pakistan	1,902,694	13.95%
Indonesia	1,134,405	8.32%
Egypt	917,496	6.73%
United Arab Emirates	700,619	5.14%

**Source:** World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), eLibrary, Arrivals of non-resident tourists at national borders (2022)

Despite the reputation of Saudi Arabia as a premier destination for religious tourism, Saudi Arabia is expanding its tourism industry, transitioning from solely offering religious tourism products to including leisure and entertainment options (Mansour & Mumuni, 2019). Saudi Arabia has the potential to succeed in delivering leisure tourism as it has a rich heritage, opulent history, and a diversity of natural beauty which can be utilised for tourism purposes (Abuhjeeleh, 2019). As a result, the Saudi government has launched a Vision 2030 campaign to diversify the country's economy and reduce its dependence on oil exports. The government has made significant efforts to promote leisure tourism as part of this vision. Saudi Arabia invested in building new attractions and reinforcing the infrastructure to attract a broader range of leisure tourists (Mansour & Mumuni, 2019). More importantly, with Saudi Arabia's intention to enter the leisure tourism market segment, the authority realised that many regulations had to be adjusted to increase the destination's appeal to international tourists visiting for non-religious purposes (Bar'el. Z, 2021). This includes a new regulation regarding the leisure visa requirements, international tourists' dress code, and other regulations related to Saudi Arabia's conservative culture, which will be discussed in the following section.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Tourism in Saudi Arabia considers Islamic principles and ethical values. In Saudi Arabia, religion has placed ethics, morals, and values in the structural and institutional systems (Cochran, 2019). This results in a cultural and social unity that has led to one civilisation alongside Arabian norms and values. For a long time, the image of Saudi Arabia has been described as a conservative Islamic nation (Abuhjeeleh, 2019; Hoza, 2019). A study conducted by Hader (2017) identifies how

Saudi Arabia is perceived as a travel destination. The ten most frequent images and characteristics in respondents' minds include the destination's religious significance and value. Abuhjeeleh (2019) stated that due to Saudi Arabia's strict adherence to Islamic values and laws, potential tourists from non-Islamic cultural backgrounds are discouraged from visiting. In line with that, The Saudi Arabian authority has acknowledged the necessity of shifting the nation's image from a strictly conservative religious destination to a more inviting leisure destination for international tourists (Al-Hamdan, 2020). Bar'el (2021) stated that the authority of Saudi Arabia had established enormous regulations trying to change its image from a traditional, conservative, and insular society to a moderate one. For example, the prohibition on women driving was lifted in 2018 (Williams et al., 2019), along with the ban on cinemas (Arishi, 2021). Furthermore, Saudi Arabia announced a change in its policy regarding business operations during prayer time to boost tourism in the country, allowing commercial businesses to remain open during prayer times (AL-kinani, 2021). Additionally, Saudi Arabia has significantly updated its female dress code for foreign women visiting the country. They are no longer obliged to wear an Islamic abaya in public places, signifying a progressive shift in the country's approach to accommodating and welcoming international tourists (Skirka, 2019). Notably, efforts have been made to relax the rules concerning gender segregation in public areas, particularly in restaurants' dining areas. Restaurants and cafes in Saudi Arabia often practice gender segregation by offering a family section for families and females while having a separate section for men (Gassem & Al-Thaqafi, 2019).

Saudi Arabia has made significant strides in establishing itself as a hospitable destination for individuals from various religious and cultural backgrounds. Despite this progress, it is essential to recognise that the conservative values ingrained within



local society continue to play a significant role. For example, many businesses choose to continue the long-standing tradition of closing during prayer time as a way for employees to fulfil their religious obligations and participate in communal prayers (Al-Otaibi, 2021). Besides, while there has been an increased level of flexibility in the dress code for foreign tourists, including the removal of the requirement to wear an abaya, it is still expected that foreign tourists dress modestly and refrain from actions that could potentially offend local customs and expectations (Saudi Tourism Authority, 2023). Moreover, although gender segregation is no longer required in the food sector, provides a family section for females and married couples and another single section for single men (Gassem & Al-Thaqafi, 2019), this practice remains prevalent in many restaurants and coffee shops, reflecting the cultural norms of Saudi society. Additionally, it is essential to recognise that Saudi Arabia maintains several conservative laws applicable to all individuals within the kingdom, regardless of religion. These include a strict prohibition on alcohol, as well as a ban on casinos, gambling, and prostitution activities (Alhaidan et al., 2022; Ginawi, 2013).

The restrictions applied in Saudi Arabia may cause discomfort to tourists from dissimilar cultural and religious backgrounds. Scholars have posited that non-Muslim tourists might experience discomfort if they are compelled to conform to Islamic conservative customs and practices while visiting a Muslim country (Battour et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2020; Rahman & Zailani, 2017). The restrictions applied to international tourists, particularly those with different religious and cultural backgrounds, can limit their freedom and sense of individuality, negatively impacting their overall travel experience. The unfamiliarity of international tourists with these cultural norms may result in clarity and interpretation, contributing to additional inconvenience during their travels (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010; Battour et

al., 2011). With the significant progress made by the Saudi Arabian government in easing some of its conservative Islamic rules to encourage leisure tourism, it is worthwhile to examine the views of non-Muslim international travellers regarding the conservative Islamic nature of Saudi Arabia. Doing so can provide insights into how these cultural norms and regulations impact their experiences, perceptions, and satisfaction, ultimately influencing the success of tourism initiatives aimed at diversifying the kingdom's economy.

Another significant step towards promoting tourism in Saudi Arabia is the 2030 Vision Plan, which aims to enhance the country's tourism industry through a comprehensive and strategic development plan. The plan includes several initiatives, such as developing new tourist destinations, improving infrastructure, and introducing the leisure tourist visa. Saudi Arabia announced the introduction of a leisure tourist visa in September 2019, permitting tourists from 49 countries to visit the country for leisure (TouristVisa, 2021). The introduction of the leisure visa has been seen as a significant step forward in the country's efforts to diversify its economy and attract international tourists. As part of this effort, the government has also launched several new initiatives to improve infrastructure and support the industry's growth, such as developing new tourist attractions. This development has also highlighted a significant research gap in understanding the perceptions of international tourists visiting Saudi Arabia for non-religious purposes, mainly tourists who had visiting restrictions. Most existing studies and available statistics primarily focus on religious tourism and the experiences of Muslim tourists visiting for religious pilgrimages, such as Hajj and Umrah (e.g., Islam, 2021; Hassan et al., 2022). Moreover, there is a lack of research examining the emerging leisure tourism market in Saudi Arabia from the standpoint

of international tourists seeking leisure and recreational experiences rather than religious travel purposes.

Considering the generic destination attributes besides the Islamic ones is significant in examining how each attribute group influences overall holiday satisfaction. In other words, with the significant progress made by the Saudi Arabian government in easing some of its conservative Islamic rules to encourage international leisure tourism, it is worthwhile to examine whether the Islamic destination attributes hinder the success of travel experience satisfaction from the perspective of international non-Muslim tourists. This examination will shed light on the effectiveness of Saudi Arabia's regulatory changes and whether they sufficiently facilitate a satisfactory tourism experience for tourists with diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.

To examine the influence of both Islamic and generic destination attributes on overall travel satisfaction, this study employs the Expectancy Disconfirmation Model (EDM). While the EDM has been widely used in prior research within the tourism context to examine generic destination attributes (e.g., Pizam & Milman, 1993; Hui et al., 2007), there remains a significant gap in its application to Islamic and generic destinations. The literature suggests that studies combining Islamic and generic destination attributes are rare when assessing tourists' satisfaction. A comprehensive review of empirical research into satisfaction with Islamic destination attributes by Basendwah et al. (2024) reveals that few studies have considered the intersection of Islamic and generic attributes in enhancing tourist satisfaction (e.g., Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Utami et al., 2018; Fajriyati et al., 2020). This review highlights a critical shortage of research applying the disconfirmation approach to evaluate tourist

satisfaction with both Islamic and generic destination attributes, thereby identifying a significant gap in the generic and Islamic destination attribute satisfaction field.

Tourist satisfaction is a crucial aspect of the success and growth of the tourism industry. Many studies have empirically proven that satisfied tourists are likely to revisit and recommend the destination to others, which is known as loyalty (e.g., Bui & Le, 2016; Chi & Qu, 2008). Thus, tourist satisfaction and loyalty are closely related concepts in the tourism industry. When tourists have a positive experience at a destination, they are more likely to return and recommend it to others. This creates a virtuous cycle for the destination, as satisfied tourists generate repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth, attracting more tourists and increasing revenue. In contrast, low satisfaction levels can lead to decreased loyalty, fewer repeat visits, and negative word-of-mouth, which can harm a destination's reputation and competitiveness. Thus, destinations must prioritise providing high-quality experiences that significantly boost tourist satisfaction and loyalty. This study not only measures satisfaction but also deeply investigates tourist loyalty, a critical determinant of a destination's ability to attract and retain visitors. Measuring tourist loyalty offers profound insights into the effectiveness of a destination in fostering enduring relationships with tourists. By comprehensively understanding the factors that drive tourist loyalty, destinations can pinpoint areas needing enhancement, thereby strategically improving the overall tourist experience. This proactive approach is essential for increasing tourist numbers, encouraging repeat visits, and generating robust word-of-mouth recommendations, which is vital for sustained growth in the competitive tourism market. Moreover, the continuous measurement of tourist loyalty facilitates the development of targeted marketing and promotional strategies, allowing destinations to focus their efforts on segments most likely to become repeat visitors and vocal advocates. Additionally,

tracking changes in tourist loyalty over time can provide valuable feedback on the impact of new policies or offerings, ensuring that destinations remain adaptable and competitive in evolving market conditions.

To sum up, this study aimed to identify how the conservative nature is perceived from the perspective of international non-Muslim tourists. In addition, this study considered international non-Muslim tourists' perspectives on generic destination attributes. Besides, in this study, the international non-Muslim tourists' loyalty was evaluated to predict their post-travel behaviour intentions, specifically their likelihood to review and recommend the destination. As for the area of this study, Saudi Arabia has a total area of approximately 2.15 million square kilometres. Thus, considering a specific research area as a case study helps narrow its scope, making it easier to collect relevant data and information and analyse and interpret the results. Additionally, focusing on a specific area as a case study helps to gain deeper insights into the topic and make more significant contributions to the field of study. The city of Jeddah was chosen as a case study. Jeddah is situated in western Saudi Arabia and is regarded as a major city because it is the largest city along the Red Sea coast, the second largest city overall, and the second largest population. Jeddah emerges as a pivotal site for examining the satisfaction of non-Muslim tourists. Its array of attractions, from historical landmarks like Al Balad to the well-developed infrastructure, uniquely positions it for comprehensive tourism research (Zamzam, n.d.). The diversity of experiences, from serene beach locales like Silver Sands Beach to extensive shopping and dining options, offers a rich tapestry for understanding varied tourist preferences and experiences. This diversity not only enhances Jeddah's appeal but also provides a broad base for analysing tourist satisfaction, differentiating it from other cities in the region.

#### **1.4 Research Question**

Based on the problem statement, this research reaches the following research questions.

1. What is the gap difference between the expectation and experience of international non-Muslim tourists with Islamic and generic destination attributes in Jeddah city?
2. What is the influence of Jeddah's Islamic and generic destination attributes on overall trip satisfaction?
3. What is the overall trip satisfaction and loyalty of international non-Muslim tourists in Jeddah city?

#### **1.5 Research Objectives**

1. To measure the gap difference between the expectation and experience of generic and Islamic attributes among international non-Muslim tourists in Jeddah city.
2. To determine the influence of Jeddah's Islamic and generic destination attributes on overall satisfaction.
3. To measure the overall satisfaction and loyalty of international non-Muslim tourists in Jeddah city.

#### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The current study examined the international non-Muslim tourists' satisfaction with Islamic and generic destination attributes in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. After

measuring the satisfaction of the Islamic and generic attributes, the influence of the generic and Islamic destination attributes on overall trip satisfaction was examined. Next, the post-visit behaviour intention was examined in this study to understand the tourists' likelihood of revisiting and recommending the destination. Due to Saudi Arabia's cultural diversity and vast geographic area, a land area of approximately 2,150,000 km<sup>2</sup>, concentrating on a specific area as a case study enables a more profound understanding of the topic and facilitates significant contributions to the field of study. The current study chose Jeddah City to conduct this research. The city of Jeddah is located on the western coast of Saudi Arabia. The city of Jeddah, chosen as the specific geographical setting for this study, holds significant prominence as a highly favoured tourist destination locally and internationally, drawing a substantial number of tourists annually. The city is a significant exemplification of the recent amplification and progression within Saudi Arabia's tourism sector. For example, according to the Saudi Open Data (2021), Jeddah welcomed around 10 million tourists in 2018, ascending to 11 million in 2019. Furthermore, the urban centre presents diverse enticements, engrossing tourists through its historical landmarks and dynamic cultural heritage. Jeddah prides itself on resilient tourism infrastructure, embracing an extensive array of lodging choices, firmly established transportation grids and top-notch hospitality provisions.

Furthermore, Jeddah's strategic placement along the coastal fringes of the Red Sea introduces distinctive prospects for multifaceted tourism pursuits, including water sports and beach-centric recreations (Ismail & Khalil, 2010). The proficiently developed tourism amenities and strategic geographic orientation of Jeddah assume a pivotal role in magnetising a varied spectrum of tourists, thereby rendering the

execution of this study's intended survey of the requisite sample size both convenient and attainable.

As for the scale of the study area, this research will concentrate specifically on Jeddah's urban area, defined by its official city boundaries. This area encompasses a rich tapestry of attractions catering to a broad tourist interest spectrum. Jeddah's historical landmarks, such as the UNESCO World Heritage site of Al-Balad and its charming old town, epitomise the city's deep-rooted cultural heritage. These sites offer a glimpse into the region's rich history and architectural traditions.

Additionally, Jeddah boasts modern leisure facilities that enhance its appeal as a contemporary travel destination. Notable among these is the Jeddah Corniche, a sprawling seaside promenade recently redeveloped to provide enhanced recreational activities, dining options, and public art displays. Similarly, the Red Sea waterfront offers unique marine and coastal experiences uncommon in other parts of Saudi Arabia, featuring water sports, boat tours, and coral reef excursions that attract adventure-seeking tourists.

Lastly, the study's population comprises international tourists visiting Saudi Arabia for non-religious purposes. Participation was limited to non-Muslim tourists as our focus is on exploring the emerging leisure tourism market in Saudi Arabia, specifically from the perspective of international tourists seeking recreational experiences rather than religious travel. Additionally, the study aimed to assess Saudi Arabia's friendliness from the perspective of non-Muslim tourists, considering its conservative nature.



## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

Many scholars emphasise the importance of understanding tourist expectations, experiences, and satisfaction. Pestana, Parreira, and Moutinho (2020) confirmed the importance of satisfaction in destination selection, tourism service consumption, and destination loyalty. Similarly, Kozak and Rimmington (2000) state that a satisfactory tourism experience is essential to successfully promoting a destination. Augustyn and Ho (1998) suggested that understanding tourists' perceptions of travel destinations can aid tourism planners in enhancing tourists' satisfaction by focusing on their preferred options. Satisfied tourists were among the best strategies to achieve a competitive advantage, resulting in positive word of mouth and increasing tourists' likelihood of revisiting the destination (Alexandris et al., 2006; Oppermann, 2000; Pritchard & Howard, 1997). Accordingly, the concept of tourist satisfaction has been extensively researched, but areas in tourist satisfaction studies have not yet been explored. This study has several theoretical and practical contributions. The following shows the theoretical and practical significance of the study.

Firstly, the recent announcement of Saudi Arabia's leisure tourist visa has opened new opportunities for a substantial portion of tourists to explore the country, which was previously inaccessible to them. However, this development has also highlighted a significant research gap in understanding the perceptions of international tourists visiting Saudi Arabia for non-religious purposes, mainly tourists with visiting restrictions. The vast majority of existing studies and available statistics primarily focus on religious tourism and the experiences of Muslim tourists visiting for religious pilgrimages, such as Hajj and Umrah (e.g., Islam, 2021; Hassan et al., 2022). Moreover, there is a lack of research examining the emerging leisure tourism market

in Saudi Arabia from the standpoint of international tourists seeking leisure and recreational experiences rather than religious travel purposes. This research void highlights the need to investigate and understand the satisfaction levels of international tourists visiting Saudi Arabia for non-religious purposes.

This research gap is crucial as it hinders a comprehensive understanding of the needs, preferences, and satisfaction levels of leisure tourists in Saudi Arabia. By addressing this gap, the study highlights the generic destination attributes contributing to the overall trip satisfaction of tourists visiting Saudi Arabia for non-religious purposes. This understanding will be valuable for Saudi Arabia's tourism industry to enhance its offerings, improve destination management strategies, and effectively cater to leisure tourists' needs to ensure satisfaction. Additionally, the generic destination attributes assessment from tourists' perspectives helps to determine where Saudi Arabia stands within the leisure tourism market. By understanding what aspects of the destination are lacking or need improvement, tourism planners and stakeholders can address these issues and enhance the emerging leisure tourism market of Saudi Arabia.

Secondly, while Saudi Arabia has made significant progress in becoming a welcoming destination for people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, it is essential to acknowledge that the enduring influence of deeply ingrained conservative values in the local society and the presence of conservative regulations may potentially cause discomfort for tourists with different religious and cultural backgrounds. Literature shows that non-Muslim tourists may feel uneasy when required to adhere to Islamic customs in a Muslim country (Battour et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2020; Rahman & Zailani, 2017). Such restrictions can limit their freedom and negatively impact their travel experience, exacerbated by unfamiliarity

with these norms (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010; Battour et al., 2011). Considering Saudi Arabia's recent efforts to relax conservative Islamic regulations and promote leisure tourism, it is important to assess how non-Muslim international tourists perceive the country's conservative aspects. The current study aims to gauge the effectiveness of Saudi authorities in creating a more welcoming environment for non-Muslim tourists from diverse backgrounds. Battour et al. (2020) noted the limited coverage of literature concerning the perception of non-Muslim tourists visiting Muslim countries. Furthermore, research exploring how non-Muslim tourists perceive Islamic attributes in destinations with Muslim majorities has primarily focused on the context of Malaysia (e.g., Battour et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2022) and Indonesia (e.g., Wardi et al., 2018). It was argued that various other Muslim nations, including Turkey, UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, actively pursue strategies to enhance their tourism industries by creating visitor-friendly environments for non-Muslim travellers (Battour et al., 2018). Therefore, this study makes a valuable contribution to the field of tourism literature by expanding the exploration of non-Muslim tourists' perceptions of Islamic attributes within the specific context of Saudi Arabia.

Filling this research gap holds significant importance as it addresses a notable research gap in the realm of tourism literature, particularly concerning the perceptions of non-Muslim tourists when visiting Muslim countries. This research aims to provide valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of non-Muslim tourists visiting Saudi Arabia, enabling policymakers to better understand the challenges and opportunities associated with catering to diverse tourists. By delving into their viewpoints on Saudi Arabia's Islamic attributes, the study can facilitate the formulation of targeted strategies and policies that foster a more inclusive and accommodating

tourism environment. Additionally, with international non-Muslim tourists representing a burgeoning market characterised by easing previous travel restrictions after introducing the leisure tourist visa in 2019, comprehending their perspectives becomes crucial for enhancing their overall travel experience in Saudi Arabia.

Lastly, various models have been employed in the literature to evaluate tourist satisfaction, including the SERVPERF, EQUITY, Congruity, SERVQUAL, and HOLSAT models. Among these, the HOLSAT model, utilising the Expectancy Disconfirmation Approach, stands out as the most widely utilised and accepted model for evaluating tourist satisfaction. This approach draws inspiration from the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory initially formulated by Oliver (1980). It is worth noting that this approach has been incorporated into several models, including the expectancy disconfirmation model, the SERVQUAL model, and the HOLSAT model. However, when assessing tourists' satisfaction with their holiday experiences, the HOLSAT model has emerged as a dependable choice, surpassing the measurement of satisfaction with individual services (Slack, 2019). The HOLSAT model has commonly been applied in the context of assessing tourists' satisfaction with generic destination attributes, as seen in studies conducted by Malodia and Singla (2017), Meimand et al. (2013), Omar et al. (2015), Truong and Foster (2006). However, upon closer examination of tourists' satisfaction with Islamic attributes of destinations, a comprehensive review of empirical research studies conducted on the Scopus and Web of Science databases revealed a significant gap. Specifically, studies employing the disconfirmation approach to assess satisfaction with Islamic destination attributes are scarce. The current study addressed this research gap by investigating the satisfaction of non-Muslim tourists with Islamic attributes using the HOLSAT model. Besides, the study evaluated the influence of tourists' experience with Islamic and generic

destination attributes on their overall trip satisfaction, drawing from the Expectancy Disconfirmation Model proposed by Oliver (1980). Examining Islamic destination attributes using models based on the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory provides an opportunity to emphasise the unique characteristics of Islamic destination attributes compared to generic ones, enabling a critical comparative analysis between the two.

Table 1.2 Empirical Studies on Islamic Attribute Satisfaction in Scopus and Web of Science

No#	Author	No#	Author
1	Dabphet (2021)	17	Rashid et al. (2020)
2	Al-Ansi & Han (2019)	18	Juliana et al. (2021)
3	Harahsheh et al. (2020)	19	Al-Ansi et al. (2021)
4	Sumaryadi et al. (2021)	20	Rahman et al. (2022b)
5	Wibawa et al. (2021)	21	Eid (2015)
6	Rahman et al. (2020)	22	Eid & El-Gohary (2015)
7	Isa et al. (2018)	23	Battour et al. (2017)
8	Monoarfa et al. (2021)	24	Abror et al. (2019)
9	Abror et al. (2020)	25	Fajriyati et al. (2022)
10	Battour et al. (2014)	26	Fajriyati et al. (2020)
11	Suhartanto et al. (2022)	27	Yuliviona et al. (2019)
12	Han et al. (2019)	28	Nawi et al. (2019)
13	Rahman et al. (2022a)	29	Wardi et al. (2018)
14	Usman et al. (2019)	30	Yuliviona et al. (2018)
15	Battour et al. (2020)	31	Yaakop et al. (2017)
16	Suhartanto et al. (2021)	-	-

Source: Author

## 1.8 Definition of the Key Terms

### i. Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is a subjective evaluation of the performance of a product or service after consumption, often compared to prior expectations (Truong & Foster, 2006). It is a complex phenomenon influenced by cognitive, affective, psychological,

physiological, and other factors (Suhartanto et al., 2018). Tourist satisfaction can be characterised as a positive association between behavioural intentions and the quality of a product or service (Suhartanto et al., 2018). However, this definition cannot be generalised as there is no consensus and homogeneity regarding tourist satisfaction among the researchers.

## **ii. Tourist Expectation**

The expectation of tourists was defined by Ryan (1995) as the preconceived ideas and desires the tourists have about a specific travel destination, while Oliver (1987) stated that expectation is an individual's belief regarding how the product or service is likely to be delivered. Tourists' expectations can be formed based on the destination's image, particularly the cognitive image (Sadeh et al., 2012). Because the image represents the true capabilities of a travel destination, consumers can anticipate the perceived value more accurately.

## **iii. Tourist Experience**

Tourist experience can be defined as tourists' evaluation of undergoing events related to tourism activities in the three stages of travel: before the trip, during the trip, and after the trip (Tung & Ritchie, 2011).

## **iv. HOLSAT model**

HOLSAT model attempts to fix the complexity of measuring tourists' satisfaction with the travel destination. Tribe and Snaith (1998) developed this model to determine tourists' holiday satisfaction at a popular resort area in Varadero, Cuba. The HOLSAT model measures satisfaction by comparing tourist expectations and experience toward destination attributes (Truong & Foster, 2006). Tourists are asked

to assess their expectations toward destination attributes and their experience after visiting the destination (Meimand et al., 2013). This model is based on the expectancy disconfirmation theory.

**v. Islamic Destination Attributes**

The concept of Islamic destination attributes has emerged in response to the demand of Muslim tourists seeking destinations that align with Islamic and Sharia law principles. Islamic attributes encompass a variety of tourism facilities, regulations, services, and products designed following Islamic teachings and Sharia law. It represents the presence of Islamic norms and practices relevant to tourism at the destination (Battour et al., 2014). Based on the previous literature, Islamic destination attributes have been classified into physical and non-physical. The physical Islamic attributes pertain to features such as halal food provision and Muslim-friendly toilets, while the non-physical facets of Islamic attributes encompass amenities like Sharia-compliant entertainment tools and the availability of gender-segregated services (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015).

**vi. Generic Destination Attributes**

The definition of destination attributes is a set of attributes that, when taken as a whole, describe a place as a travel destination (Um, 1987). During the visit, tourists experience a wide range of attributes. Physical attributes include hotels, shops, restaurants, natural attractions, and historical attractions, while friendliness, different cultures, and safety are intangible attributes.

## **vii. Destination Loyalty**

The term loyalty has essentially existed in marketing studies as individuals' actual behaviour or intentions to repurchase a particular product or service (Hawkins et al., 1995). However, tourism scholars implemented the same concept under destination loyalty. The Destination loyalty concept could be described as a tourist's willingness to revisit a specific travel destination in the future and recommend it to others (Oliver, 1997).

## **1.9 Summary**

This chapter emphasizes the significance of tourist satisfaction in Saudi Arabia's evolving tourism sector. Saudi Arabia, traditionally focused on religious tourism, is now diversifying its offerings as part of Vision 2030 to attract leisure tourists and reduce reliance on oil. The study highlights the importance of meeting tourists' expectations to foster satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth. It leverages the Expectancy Disconfirmation Model (EDM) and the HOLSAT model to assess satisfaction with Islamic and generic destination attributes in Jeddah. Recent regulatory changes in Saudi Arabia, aimed at attracting non-Muslim tourists, underscore the need to understand their perceptions and satisfaction.

The research problem centres on potential discomfort among non-Muslim tourists due to Saudi Arabia's conservative Islamic environment. This study fills a gap in tourism literature by exploring how these cultural aspects affect tourist satisfaction and loyalty. The focus on Jeddah, a key urban centre, is justified by its growing importance as a tourism hub. The chapter concludes by outlining the study's scope, objectives, and key terms, setting the stage for research that will offer valuable insights for enhancing the tourism experience in Saudi Arabia.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature and formulate a theoretical framework for the study. Firstly, there will be a discussion about the evolution of tourist satisfaction studies, followed by the theoretical precepts and models used in tourist satisfaction studies. As satisfaction was measured by comparing expectations and experiences in this study, both concepts will be discussed in this chapter. The chapter also reviews each of the attributes considered for this study, including the Islamic and generic ones. After discussing the study-related attributes, the chapter reviews previous studies on post-visit behaviour intention (loyalty). The last section of this study illustrates the study's conceptual framework and the theoretical basis for its development.

#### **2.2 Tourists' Satisfaction**

The core of tourism today is the development and delivery of travel and visitation experiences to individuals who wish to see, understand, and experience the nature of different destinations and how people live, work, and enjoy life in those destinations. The evolution of tourism following the Second World War shifted from delivering tourism products to providing tourism experiences, representing one instance of a broader transformation of the overall economy into what Joseph and Gilmore (1999) define as an "Experience Economy." Experience represents an existing but previously unarticulated genre of economic output. It is an offering that has evolved beyond commodities, goods, and services. As an illustration, when individuals