

# FACTORS AFFECTING THE ADOPTION OF SMART TOURISM APP STUDY AMONG TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS IN MALAYSIA

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## ABSTRACT

Globally, smart tourism market demands has a tremendous impact on the number of tourists visiting Malaysia. Arguably, the tourism sector brings a positive effect to rural communities' areas through the economic diversification from various business activities. Therefore, the government had put serious attention to this sector as it brings a positive outcome especially to generate more income for local people. However, it has been observed that employees in the tourism industry in Malaysia are lack of awareness in adopting the Islamic smart tourism concept even though they are aware of the diversification of Malaysian' ethnic and culture. For example, lack of knowledge about cultural sensitivity and Halal food will create an issue for foreign tourist and local people. Furthermore, the lack of promotion and information about historical places in Malaysia and interesting places to visit have become the main concern of failing to adopt smart tourism in Malaysia. Therefore, this study intends to examine the impact of Trust (goodwill, predictability, competence), Culture (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity), Technology readiness (insecurity, innovativeness, discomfort, complexity), and the moderating role of social media platforms to provide more understanding about the Islamic smart tourism industry in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** *Smart Tourism, Trust, Culture, Technology Readiness, Social Media.*

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most important factors and the main engine of the economy in light of the global economic recession, Furthermore, according to Veal, (2017), tourism is one of the most important industries that are related to travel, entertainment, and travelling between countries or within the country. However, this industry is constantly increasing and developing in the world. (Jackson, 2019; Bahaee, Pisani, & Shavakh, 2014). Some studies in the past revealed tourism sector plays a major role in the economy of remote communities and is a major factor in cultural exchange between societies in general, and in particular religious tourism. (Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015). Moreover, tourism is considered a source of income for remote areas, such as mosques in the mountains regions, which constitutes a source of income for the residents of these areas. As shown in figure 1.1: Travel & Tourism sector performance

According to the figure shown below in the economic report for tourism and travel for 185 countries around the world. The tourism and travel sector witnessed an increase in economic growth by 3.5% in 2019, which is an increase compared to the previous year as it recorded a growth of 2.5% as it recorded create many new jobs. All this helps governments to create new jobs and eliminate unemployment.



Figure 1.1: Travel & Tourism sector performance in (2019), Source: World Travel & Tourism Council (2020)

In 2019, Travel & Tourism’s direct, indirect and induced impact accounted for:

US\$8.9 trillion contribution of the world’s GDP, 10.3% of global GDP, 330 million jobs, 1 in 10 job around the world. US\$1.7 trillion visitor exports (6.8% of total exports, 28.3% of global services exports), US\$948 billion capital investment (4.3% of total investment)

However, in Malaysia Islamic tourism has been a sector that boosts the development of a country. After seeing the potential of the tourism sector towards economic growth, government involves the extension of the sector as it gives a significant impact on the economy. There is much research done on the relationship between the tourism sector and economic growth. (Osborne, & Williams, 2016; Cheuk, et al., 2017; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Zhaldak, & Shulgina, 2016). There is a positive relationship in the tourism sector and economic growth. As the tourism sector develops, the economic growth would also increase in accordance with it. Malaysian government is giving importance to this sector because it creates job opportunities either direct or indirectly, increases sales and profit, income and many more. Direct sectors such as hotel, restaurant, and transport are the sectors which are openly involved in the sector and the indirect sector are such those that contribute indirectly towards the sector.

Thus, as many sectors are involved in the sector, the business and people involved have received a positive effect from it. For example, as more and more tourists visit Malaysia, there will be more transaction taking place where the local business would gain profit and also provide job opportunities. When this sector develops, it can reduce the rate of unemployment in Malaysia. The government are allocating a huge amount of money to develop this sector and try to increase the benefit that can be gained from this sector (Gan, et al., 2016; Jaafar, et al., 2015; Mariani, et al., 2016; Ganglmair-Wooliscroft, & Wooliscroft, 2016).

In the other hand, social media offers digital marketing and brings sustainable solutions for business to help achieve a larger prospect of tourists. Furthermore, social media is an effective digital marketing strategy that enables businesses to reach out to a larger target audience at the same time. It involves creating and sharing content (Mariani, Di Felice, & Mura, 2016) such as Social Networking (Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Microblogging Twitter, Tumblr), Photo Sharing, (Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat), Video Sharing (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook Live, Periscope, Vimeo).

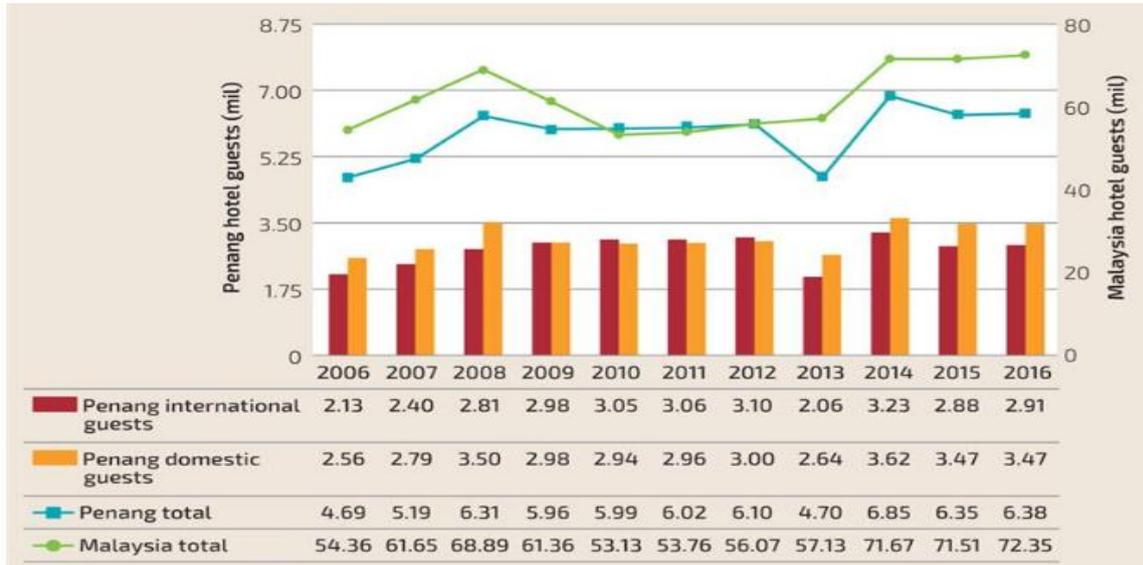
Furthermore, factors that should be taken into consideration is that even though the number of tourists is increasing annually but the development in the tourism sector develops even faster because of the new adoption of using smart tourism via social media.

**EMPIRICAL REVIEW OF THE STUDY**

The study’s key contribution looks at the relationship between trust, culture and technology and its effects on the sustainability of smart tourism through the influence of social media moderately.

Whilst contributing to the body of knowledge, this study provides practical and educational implications to all the travel agents prospective consumers, governmental concerned authorities and sustainable smart tourism. Furthermore, the study aimed to highlight the significance of trust culture and technology readiness. With a unique combination of predictor variables (trust, culture and technology readiness) and the criterion variable

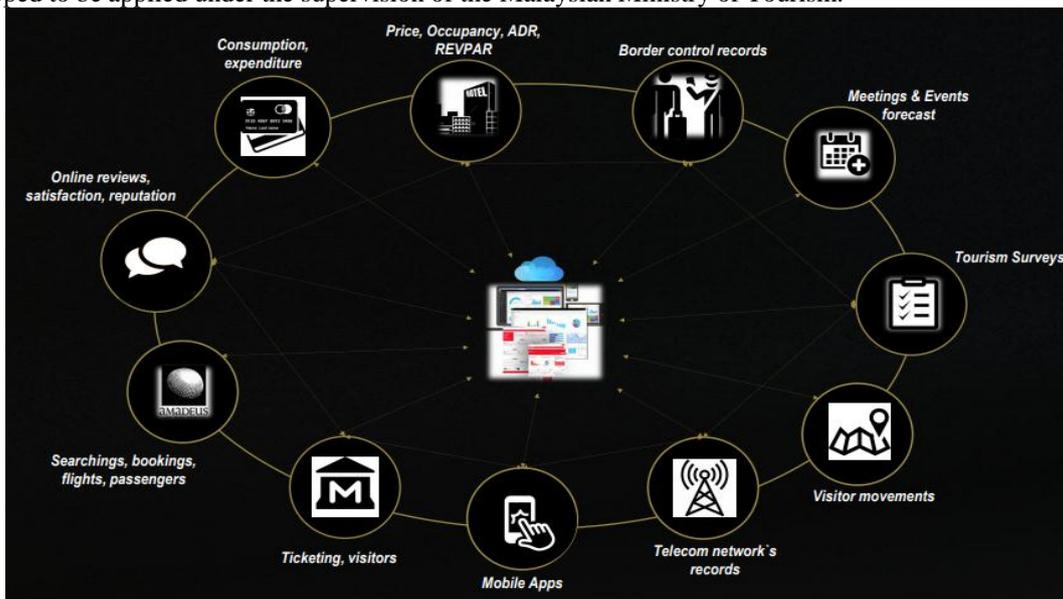
(Islamic smart tourism) the study examined the moderating effect of social media on the relationships between the two i.e. predictor variables and the criterion variable. Previously, there have been lack of studies found on the subject of the moderating effect of social media on the relationships between trusts, culture and technology readiness on Islamic smart tourism.



**Figure: 1.2 Hotel guest in Penang and Malaysia 2006-2016, Source: Ministry of Tourism & Culture of Malaysia (2018)**

Smart services tourism is a service of the community smart services tourism app, smart travel for tourists and the world. This service will integrate with tourism stakeholders and also visitors, attracting in smart services tourism app. Featured services are ICT based services in the form of Smart Tourism Online interaction, content display information such as list of tours in the app, register culinary, handicrafts smart services tourism app, performing arts area, tourist villages, and supporting other tours are interactive and informative (tariffs, pricing, hours of operation, contact person, rating visitor).

For example, Figure: 1.2 shows the activity of tourists coming from Arab countries within the cities of Malaysia using hotels and transport, brings benefits to the Malaysian economy. Furthermore, the Figure, 1.3 can be developed to be applied under the supervision of the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism.



**Figure: 1.3 Smart Tourism Marketing Through Smart Phones, Source: Kulshrestha, (2019).**  
**CONCEPTUAL ISSUES ISLAMIC SMART TOURISM CONCEPT**

Previous investigations by (Okazaki, Andreu, & Campo 2017; Mariani et al., 2016), revealed that an in-depth knowledge of tourists' perceptions is vital in determining the competitiveness of any tourism destinations.

Consequently, the most important role comes from social media and the intermediary as a role between the owners of companies and the tourists, to achieve the largest number of tourists into the country. Thus, three critical elements which determine the support as well as the success and to assist the success of tourism transfers. Moreover, provide more information easily accessible and reliable, all these factors affect: Trust, Culture and Technology Readiness. (Ganglmair-Wooliscroft, & Wooliscroft, 2016; Xiang, et al., 2015; Sun, et al., 2016; Ku, & Chen, 2015; Kiráľová, & Pavlíčka, 2015; Hudson, & Hudson, 2017).

Tourists companies in Malaysia take these factors in order to implement smart tourism and use technology to attract more tourists, by using marketing in social media methods. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Zhaldak, & Shulgina, 2016). For example, according to the study by Andonian, Kuwabara, Yamakawa, Ishida, (2016), Japan's tourism industry is on the verge of becoming a major economic engine for its country. In 2020, Japan will be hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games and shall enjoy a global platform for its people, culture, and their landmarks.

Recently, tourism has been positioned as an engine to solve social challenges in Japan and support its economic growth. As mentioned above, using digital marketing is getting through at its initial level in Malaysia, instead of having all the basic smart tourism in social media of this sector, as it is the core concern of this study. Furthermore, studies have revealed that lack of technological awareness, unproductive use of computers, mistrust in technology, security; privacy and communication have been few of the major barriers in the diffusion of smart tourism.

Furthermore, its multi-variedness travel agents and focused applications serve the customer with specific cultural concerns and the same scenario applies to amplify regional tourism. Conversely, in Malaysia, prospective consumers are facing different challenges towards smart tourism in social media (Idris, Edwards & McDonald, 2017). Like many other developing countries Malaysians are believed to be facing issues with its technology readiness and lack of trust in its people toward smart tourism.

Technology readiness is said to be the backbone of digital marketing practice (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). However, consumers approach towards digital marketing certainly varies from person to person and place to place (Ryan, 2016). In the developing states, digital marketing has been suffering widely due to the lower level of technology readiness; as consumers' willingness to buy online shows the potential of digital marketing (Kraemer et al., 2006). At the same time, customers are expected to have a mixed attitude (optimistic, pessimistic or neutral) towards ideas, innovations or even services. It is worthy to note that technology readiness may or may not be influenced by the cultural diversities and so far Western cultures have been the main focus of technology diffusion research (Ganglmair-Wooliscroft, & Wooliscroft, 2016; Xiang, et al., 2015; Sun, et al., 2016; Ku, & Chen, 2015).

Trust, a multidimensional concept, plays an imperative role in the adoption and diffusion of digital marketing (Ryan, 2016). Few studies have explored a general perspective on the importance of trust in smart tourism in digital marketing (Kourouthanassis, et al., 2017; Wang, et al., 2017; Gössling, et al., 2016). Similarly, a study conducted in the context of the USA and Canada showed a positive relationship between privacy and security with trust in smart tourism in digital marketing.

Promoting trust in digital marketing helped to diffuse digital marketing by offering immense support to both customers and businesses (Baltes, 2015) in building their confidence in digital marketing. All the above-mentioned studies have been conducted in the perspective of the developed states like; the USA, Australia and New Zealand etc. (Sun, et al., 2016; Ku, & Chen, 2015; Kiráľová, & Pavlíčka, 2015). Whereas; further research in this area of perspective of the developing nations in general and Malaysia, in particular, is still pending.

In addition, the second objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between trust and diffusion of smart tourism in digital marketing in Malaysia. Furthermore, according to Barbara if the proposed ideas technologies or innovations are in agreement with the cultural values, those receive the better and quicker response in the societies, as religiosity or religiousness outlines cultures, and the cultural values eventually influence adoption or diffusion processes (Kourouthanassis, et al., 2017; Xiang, et al., 2015). Studies also suggest a catalytic role of technology readiness in the fields of technology management, adoption and diffusion. On hand, many studies (Gan, et al., 2016; Jaafar, et al., 2015; Mariani, et al., 2016) indicate a positive relationship between technology readiness and diffusion of innovations or latest technologies. On the other hand, few other studies (Ku, & Chen, 2015; Kiráľová, & Pavlíčka, 2015) have found an insignificant

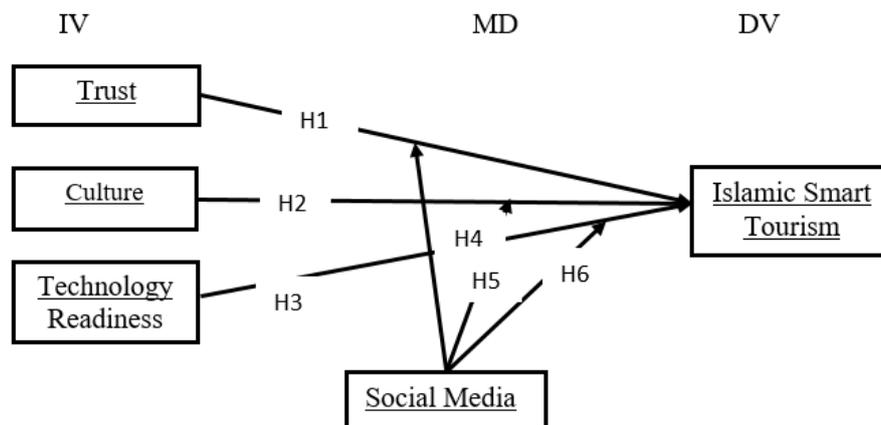
relationship between the technology readiness and diffusion of innovations. Literature review exposes two different standpoints with regards to the relationship between trust and diffusion of innovations or new technologies. However, studies (Laudon, & Traver, 2016; Wang, et al., 2017; Gössling, et al., 2016) reflect the significantly positive relationship between trust and diffusion of innovation or new technologies. While, on the other hand, studies (Bahae, et al., 2014; Koens, & Thomas, 2015), have found an insignificant relationship between trust and diffusion of innovation or new technologies including digital marketing.

As discussed above, empirical results of the studies, examining the relationships between technology readiness and diffusion of innovations or latest technologies including digital marketing are inconsistent. The relationships between trust and diffusion of innovations or latest technologies also show dissimilar results and lack of consistency; hence it is appropriate to add a moderating variable that can determine the ability of diffusion in digital marketing to be benefitted from technology readiness and trust practices. Based on a thorough literature review, it can be hypothesized that the religiosity may influence the relationship between trust, culture and technology readiness. (Cheuk, et al., 2017; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Zhaldak, & Shulgina, 2016).

Hence, under the light of the above discussion, this study focus on investigating the moderating effect of social media on the relationship between trust, culture and technology readiness with sustainability in smart tourism of digital marketing in the tourism sector.

**THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ROGERS' THEORY**

A research framework developed based on an extensive literature review. The relationships shown in the framework have been successfully derived from the literature. Trust, Culture and Technology readiness is an important tool to get familiarity with the consumers possessing innovative and pioneering mind-sets. Furthermore, in smart tourism trust is a central factor that offers customers resilience to deal with unfamiliar and anonymous vendors .



**Figure 1.4. Theoretical Framework**

Rogers' theory of diffusion of innovation indicates the enhancement of novel thoughts and notions, scientific information, and carry out within a society, where the increase embodies flow or movement from source to an adopter, normally via the communication system. It comprises of four basic elements namely; innovation, communication channels, time, and social system. In general, the diffusion of innovation theory explores five phases of diffusion of innovation: "knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation" (Rogers, 1995; Rogers, 2003). Based on the theories and literature discussed earlier, in current study consisted of three independent variables, first one which were the three dimensions of trust (goodwill, predictability and competence), second culture (Power distance, uncertainty avoidance ,individualism/collectivism and masculinity-femininity), third technology readiness (insecurity, innovativeness Discomfort, complexity). The dependent variable which is sustainability of smart tourism. The relationship between the former and the latter was moderated by social media. The illustration of the theoretical framework is depicted in Figure 1.4.

**Data Collection**

The self-administer research questionnaire was used for data collection. The population frame constitutes the tourism companies in Malaysia. There are Seventeen tourism companies in Malaysia the most popular: Intrepid Travel, G Adventures, Peregrine Adventures, Exodus Travels, Bamba, Destination Services Malaysia, National Geographic Journey, Sri Sutra Travel, Apple Vacations, Al Masyhur International Travel & Tours, Holiday

Tours & Travel, PYO Travel Malaysia, Reliance Travel Malaysia, Star Travel, Summit Holidays, YL Travel & Tours and Mayflower.

Moreover, the sample size constitutes 215 respondent selected nationwide through simple random sampling method. The respondents were the chief executives, departmental heads and senior middle managers. The upper management and middle management of the tourism sector are selected as unit of analysis because the concepts of technology readiness with the effect of social media are best reflected among them. It is also pointed by some researches that the trust and culture can be measured from those organizational members that carries the coherent knowledge about all the vital business processes (Janssen, Castaldi, Alexiev, & Den Hertog, 2015; Hertog, Van der Jong, 2010; Van Riel, Lemmink, & Ouwersloot, 2004). These researchers further clarified that these organizational members may include chief executives, senior executive member and senior middle managers of the organization.

**FINDINGS**

The collected data was analyzed using SPSS version 20.0 and PLS. As the research measures innovation capabilities and dependent variable service innovation have been earlier validated in cultural settings of some Western countries i.e. Netherlands and Dutch (Janssen, Castaldi and Alexiev, 2015). Therefore, this research work has conducted confirmatory factor analysis to check the psychometric properties of research constructs in Pakistani cultural context. Discriminate validity analysis is also conducted to further validate the psychometric properties of the research measure. Hypotheses testing has been made by using Hayes (2017) explained regression-based process analysis.

**RESULTS**

This study uses Structural Model Assessment according to the problem of the study and hypotheses, the researcher was able to arrive at a structural model that can ensure an estimate of the path coefficients. Furthermore, the strength and weaknesses of the relationships between the study frameworks constructs.

The study examined the proposed hypotheses identified in the research form model, the t-statistics was assessed for the standardized path coefficients by running bootstrap with 5000 re-samples. One-tailed t-tests was assumed because corresponds are extreme negative or extreme positive. 95% significance for t-value > 1.645 at level of p<0.05, and 99% significance for t-value > 2.326 at level of p<0.01, and 99.9% significance for t-value >3.091 at level of p<0.001. Table 1.1: Hypotheses testing results; Trust (T) -> Islamic Smart Tourism (ST), Culture (CU) -> ST, Technology Readiness (RE) -> ST, and moderating effect of (SM) on (T) ->, Moderating effect of (SM) on (CU) ->, Moderating effect of (SM) on (RE) ->

Table 1.1: Hypotheses testing results

	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	Standard Error (STERR)	t value	Decision
H <sub>1</sub>	Trust (T) -> Islamic Smart Tourism (ST) Effectiveness (DM)	0.307	0.05	0.07	*1.962	Supported
H <sub>2</sub>	Culture (CU) -> ST	-0.097	0.09	0.10	1.039	Not Supported
H <sub>3</sub>	Technology Readiness (RE) -> ST	0.313	0.08	0.08	*2.614	Supported
H <sub>4</sub>	Moderating effect of SM on T -> ST	0.08	p =0.05	0.050	0.014	Supported
H <sub>5</sub>	Moderating effect of SM on CU -> ST	0.08	p =0.05	0.050	0.011	Supported
H <sub>6</sub>	Moderating effect of SM on RE -> ST	0.07	p=0.09	0.050	0.012	Not Supported

Significant at level of \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05 (one-tiled test)

**CONCLUSION, FUTURE RESEARCH AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this research work yield some essential recommendations for the practitioners of the Islamic smart tourism in Malaysia. The findings revealed that promoting the trust, culture and technology readiness within the organization further encourages the innovative capabilities of the firm to get improved, develop and strengthen in bring the innovative services on the board. A strong market in social media can be established by developing a welcoming response to the tourism industry. Management should actively seek innovative ideas and the new ideas or proposals may not be resisted at all. Employees and managers may be encouraged for more experimentation and creative processes.

This study possesses certain limitations that further directs the new possibilities for future researches. This work has exclusively considered the Islamic smart tourism industry as an antecedent of service innovation and market, however, the aspect of learning are not covered. Forthcoming researches are suggested to check the role of technology readiness effect of social media Islamic smart tourism industry. The future researches may also explore the role of knowledge of social media strategies such as knowledge digital market. In addition to this, further exploration of the consequence of smart tourism in terms of service quality or customer satisfaction may also provide a vital direction for new researches. Furthermore, this work has validated and measured the conceptions of Islamic smart tourism and trust, culture and technology readiness with the effect of social media of Malaysia only. More empirical studies are required from different economies in digital marketing and tourism industry for the universal agreement and understanding of the variables conceptions.

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