

**ASSESSMENT OF THE INCLUSION OF MUSLIM FRIENDLY TRAVEL  
PACKAGE BY OUTBOUND TOUR AGENCY IN JOHOR BAHRU**

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## ABSTRACT

Muslim Friendly travel package widely sell in the market by both Muslim-owned and non-Muslim owned travel agencies. Hence, this research aim to assess the inclusion of the Muslim Friendly travel package by outbound tour agency in Johor Bahru based on four main objectives: (i) to assess the level of understanding about Muslim Friendly Tourism and facilities among tour agency during creating outbound tour package; (ii) to identify the elements that can be categorized as Muslim Friendly facilities during designing of the outbound tour package; (iii) to study the motivation of travel agency in promoting Muslim outbound tour package; and (iv) to examine the challenges that faced by tour agency to design and promote Muslim Friendly outbound packages. By applying qualitative method of in-depth interview and conversations within eight travel agencies who actively promoting Muslim Friendly package and two travel agencies that are not promoting Muslim Friendly package in Johor Bahru, it would gain a comprehensive understanding of Muslim Friendly tourism, the development of the package, the motivation of promoting Muslim Friendly package as well as the challenges while developing the package. The results shows that the travel agencies who promoting the Muslim Friendly package are understand the basic requirements to cater Muslim travellers which are Halal foods, prayer facilities and no non-Halal activities. Besides, the motivation and challenges of promoting Muslim package also been assessed in order to identify the difference of understanding between Muslim-owned agencies and non-Muslim-owned agencies. Therefore, this study is beneficial to all tourism stakeholders especially travel agencies to identify the inclusion of a Muslim Friendly tour package.

## ABSTRAK

Pakej pelancongan Mesra Muslim yang terdapat di pasaran tumbuh bagai cendawan selepas hujan. Pakej-pakej tersebut dijual oleh agensi pelancongan yang dimiliki oleh Muslim dan juga bukan Muslim. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menilai kandungan pakej pelancongan Mesra Muslim berdasarkan empat objektif iaitu: (i) menilai tahap pemahaman terhadap pelancongan Mesra Muslim dalam kalangan agency pelancongan, (ii) mengenalpasti elemen yang dikategorikan sebagai pelancongan Mesra Muslim ketika dalam proses membina pakej, (iii) mengenalpasti tujuan agensi pelancongan menjual pakej pelancongan Mesra Muslim, dan (iv) cabaran dalam membina dan menjual pakej pelancongan Mesra Muslim. Dengan menggunakan kaedah kualitatif dengan menemubual lapan agensi milik Muslim yang aktif mempromosikan pakej pelancongan Mesra Muslim serta dua lagi agensi bukan muslim yang mana tidak menjual pakej pelancongan Mesra Muslim di Johor Bahru dipercayai dapat memberi hasil kajian yang kompresensif berkaitan dengan pemahaman terhadap pelancongan Mesra Muslim, proses membangunkan pakej pelancongan Mesra Muslim, tujuan dan juga cabaran dalam membangunkan serta mempromosikan pakej pelancongan Mesra Muslim. Hasil daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa agensi pelancongan faham akan keperluan asas bagi memenuhi kehendak pelancong Muslim, iaitu makanan Halal, keperluan solat dan juga tiada aktiviti berunsurkan Haram. Selain itu, factor dorongan dan halangan juga dikaji bagi mengenalpasti perbezaan kefahaman Antara agensi milik Muslim dan bukan Muslim. Oleh itu, kajian ini manfaat untuk pengendali pelancongan terutamanya agensi pelancongan bagi menentukan kandungan pakej pelancongan Mesra Muslim.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter is to study the inclusion of Muslim Friendly tour package by the outbound travel agencies in Johor Bahru. This chapter is divided into nine sections which are, background of study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, theoretical framework, research scope, research framework and the study area.

#### **1.2 Background of Study**

Over the decades, the growth of Muslim population is increasing rapidly as Islam is the second largest religious in the world (Hackett & McClendon, 2017). The number of Muslim population is expected to reach 26 percent of the world's population by 2030 as stated in Table 1.1 where it indicates the estimation of world Muslim population from year 2000-2075. It is estimated that the population reach to 25 percent in year 2020 and increase approximately 33 percent in 2075.

**Table 1.1 : World Muslim Population Estimation from 2000-2075**  
(Source: Bhuiyan, Siwar, Ismail & Islam (2010))

Year	World Population	Muslim (%)	Muslim Population
2000	6,150,471,087	22.72	1,397,526,691
2010	6,925,824,107	23.90	1,654,941,394
2020	7,798,921,234	25.13	1,959,770,095
2030	8,782,084,481	26.43	2,320,726,124
2040	9,889,189,225	27.79	2,748,211,429
2050	11,135,860,028	29.22	3,254,412,872
2075	14,984,127,319	33.14	4,966,253,886

The growth of the Muslim population and according to the State of the Global Islamic Finance Report (2017), their increasing disposable income worth over \$2 trillion, and by 2019, will reach to \$3.735 trillion have resulted in a large number of Muslims taking up travel for leisure, business, healthcare and religious reasons. This increment has resulted in Muslim travellers becoming one of the fastest growing travel segments in the tourism industry. The worldwide growth of the Muslim population in the middle class and younger population has meant that Muslim travellers are becoming a significant segment within the global travel and tourism sector. However, currently only Malaysia, Indonesia and UAE have a National Tourism Organization (NTO) driven program to target the Muslim Friendly Tourism market (COMCEC, 2016).

According to Henderson (2010), Muslim tourists are most likely to look for destination that Muslim community are populated in which the destination can provide the tourists with Halal Friendly tourism environment. Tourism industry in Malaysia has been recognised as the country's key drivers of social and economic growth. In the effort of developing an outstanding tourism outlook like Muslim tourism, homestay, eco-tourism and more, Malaysia government has established many facilities and appointed to travel agencies (Zulkifli, Rahman, Awang & Man, 2011). Therefore, in order to increase the tourist arrival globally, the development of religious tourism is a kind of strategy to capture the tourists. During the marketing segmentation and

development of tour package, the tour agency have to consider the product differentiation and travellers preferences of tour activities (Keng & Cheng, 1999).

According to CrescentRating who is a globally renowned independent accreditation and rating standard for Muslim Friendly travel services has classified the needs of Muslim travellers into three main aspects which are (1) Need to have, (2) Good to have, and (3) Nice to have. Details as in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2 Classification of Muslim Traveller Needs  
(Source: CrescentRating Pte. Ltd., 2012)**

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Details</b>
Need to have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Halal food services</li> <li>• Solat Facilities</li> </ul>
Good to have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water usage friendly washroom</li> <li>• Ramadhan services &amp; facilities</li> </ul>
Nice to have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No non-Halal activities</li> <li>• Recreation services and facilities</li> </ul>

As a Muslim, it is required to perform Solat five times a day and seeking for Halal food. Food outlets have to display the Halal certification in order to gain trust within the travellers as the certification could make them feel free of worries and they can eat confidently (Fazal, 2014).

Keng & Cheng (1999) mentioned that, in the effort of targeting the requirements of different segment of markets, the tour agency have to establish various tour package by considering their customer preferences. However, this research attempt to identify the consideration of tour operator in assessing Muslim Friendly concept during managing tour packages in facilities aspect. In the end of the research, the understanding of Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT), the motivation of travel agencies to promoting Muslim Friendly package, the elements of MFT and also the challenges of promoting Muslim Friendly outbound tour package will be discussed briefly.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

Despite of there are abundance of discussion related to the study of the Shariah-compliant hotel (Samori & Sabtu, 2014; Razalli, Abdullah, & Hassan, 2012; Mansouri, 2014), however, currently, the literature that discuss on the Muslim Friendly travel package promoted by the local travel agency is scanty. In addition, there are several problem that been identified in this research.

Firstly, there are the loosely defined terms and used interchangeably of terms used. A review done by Battour and Ismail (2015), some researchers have tried to define Islamic tourism and Halal tourism in tourism and destination marketing literatures (Battour et al., 2014; Carboni, Perelli, & Sistu, 2014; Din, 1989; Jafari & Scott, 2014; Timothy & Iverson, 2006; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). However most have not taken into consideration the Islamic law (Shariah), the target customers (i.e. Muslims or non-Muslims), the location of activity (i.e. Muslim vs non-Muslim country), the product and service offered (i.e. food, facilities), and the purpose of travel. Most of these definitions are loosely defined and used interchangeably.

Secondly, since there are issues in term of terms used, hence it lead to the less knowledge and confusion on the definition on Islamic concept is happen when the tour operators doesn't understand the meaning of 'Muslim Friendly' or 'Halal Friendly' concept especially among the non-Muslim operators. The tour operators do not go deeply into what really Islamic concept all about. Hence, facilities such as hotels, resorts, cruise, restaurants, airport and parks need a standardization system in order to certify as Halal or Muslim Friendly facilities (Battour & Ismail, 2015).

Third, according to The Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC), there are confrontation of some travel stakeholders to develop Muslim Friendly Tourism. Because of the negative sentiments showed by various anti-Islamic media on the words like 'Muslims', 'Halal', 'Shariah' and also 'Islam'. These situation lead to some of the

travel stakeholders in several Muslim countries became resist to established Muslim Travel Tourism in their own country. The important concern arise not only from a misunderstanding on the meaning of Muslim Friendly Tourism, but also the view that it will abolish the traditional tourism in the destination itself. Thus, these stakeholder should be expose to better education and awareness of Muslim Friendly Tourism in order to lessen the fears among them.

Fourth, is concerning on the security and negative sentiments towards Muslims countries that driven by Islamophobia. In the recent years terrorist attack which happened in Paris, France, California-USA and also Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey has caused a bad sentiment against the Muslims as well as Muslim countries (COMCEC, 2015). This will lead to the difficulties of travel operator in promoting destinations and to curb the fear of traveller to travel worldwide.

Lastly, the problem of limited availability of attractions provided. According to a report by COMCEC in 2015, there are still most of OIC member states does not provide high quality of tourism infrastructure. This has given disadvantages to the development of not only Muslim tourism but also tourism system as a whole.

Nevertheless, this research attempt to study on the assessment of the inclusion of Muslim Friendly travel package by the outbound travel agencies which inclusive of the understanding of Muslim Friendly tourism, the elements of Muslim Friendly tourism, the motivation and challenges among the travel agencies.

#### **1.4 Research Objective**

The objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To assess the level of understanding about Muslim Friendly Tourism and facilities among tour agency during creating outbound tour package.
2. To identify the elements that can be categorized as Muslim Friendly facilities during designing of the outbound tour package.
3. To study the motivation of travel agency in promoting Muslim outbound tour package.
4. To examine the challenges that faced by tour agency to design Muslim Friendly outbound packages.

#### **1.5 Research Question**

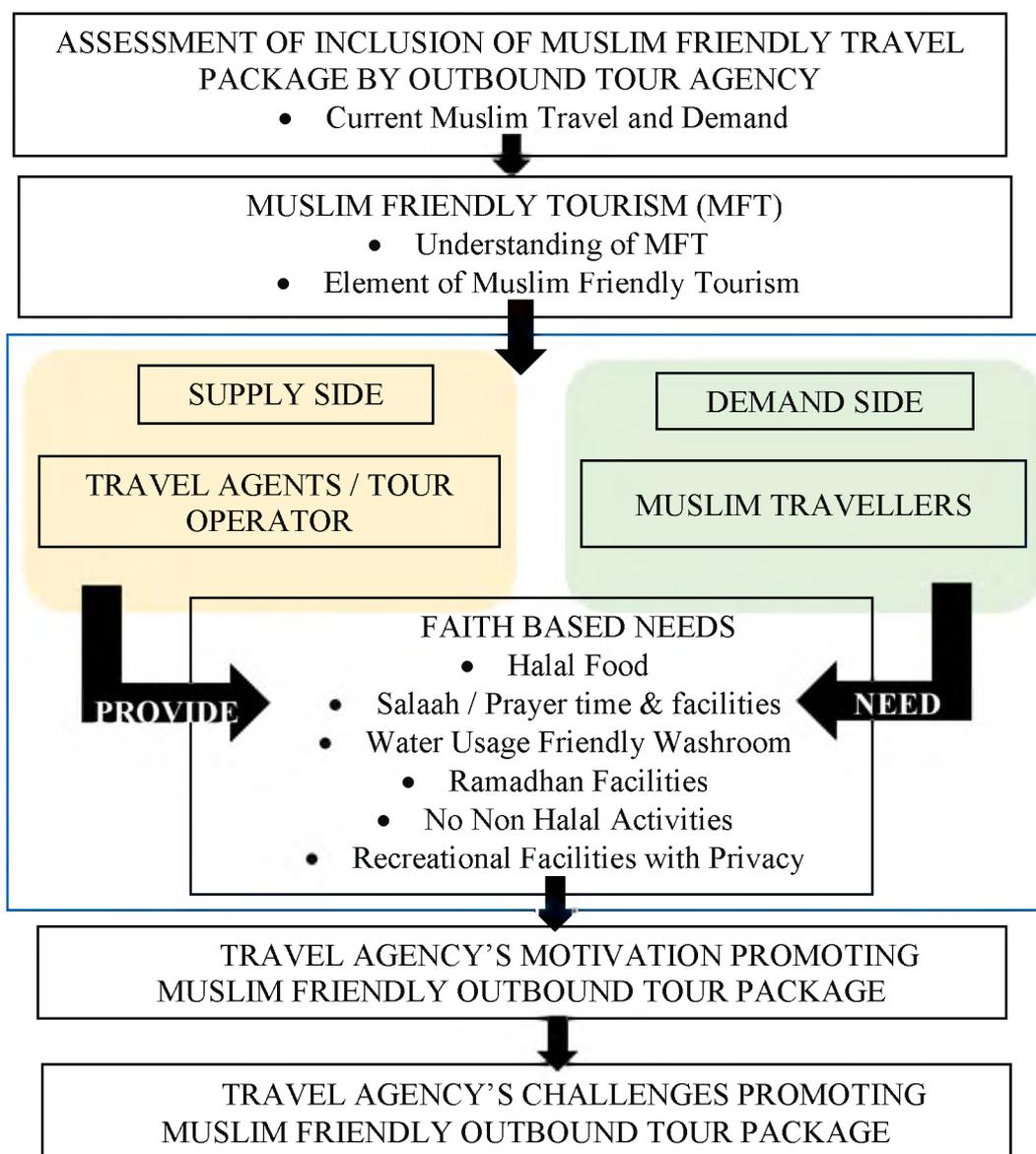
From this research, few research question are been identified to ensure the research can be conducted:

1. What is the understanding of Muslim Friendly facilities among tour agency in Johor Bahru?
  - a. Do the travel agencies understand about Muslim Friendly facilities?
  - b. What do they understand?
  - c. Where do they gain information regarding Muslim Friendly facilities?

2. What are the elements that tour agency consider in creating outbound tour package?
  - a. What elements do the travel agency consider during creating the outbound packages?
  - b. Who involve in designing outbound tour packages?
  - c. Does the ground operators give cooperation and consultation on the Muslim Friendly facilities?
  
3. What are the reasons the travel agency promoting Muslim Friendly package?
  - a. Why does the travel agency selling Muslim Friendly package?
  - b. Does the Muslim Friendly package accepted by non-Muslim?
  
4. What are the challenges that tour agency encounter in designing Muslim Friendly outbound packages?
  - a. Is there any challenges in designing Muslim Friendly outbound packages?
  - b. How does the travel agency curb the issue?

## 1.6 Theoretical Framework

To analyse the tour agency's inclusion during designing Muslim Friendly outbound tour package, it is important to understand the Muslim travel trend and demand, the understanding of Muslim Friendly tourism, the key role of supply and demand side as stated in Fig 1.1 which the theoretical framework of the study.



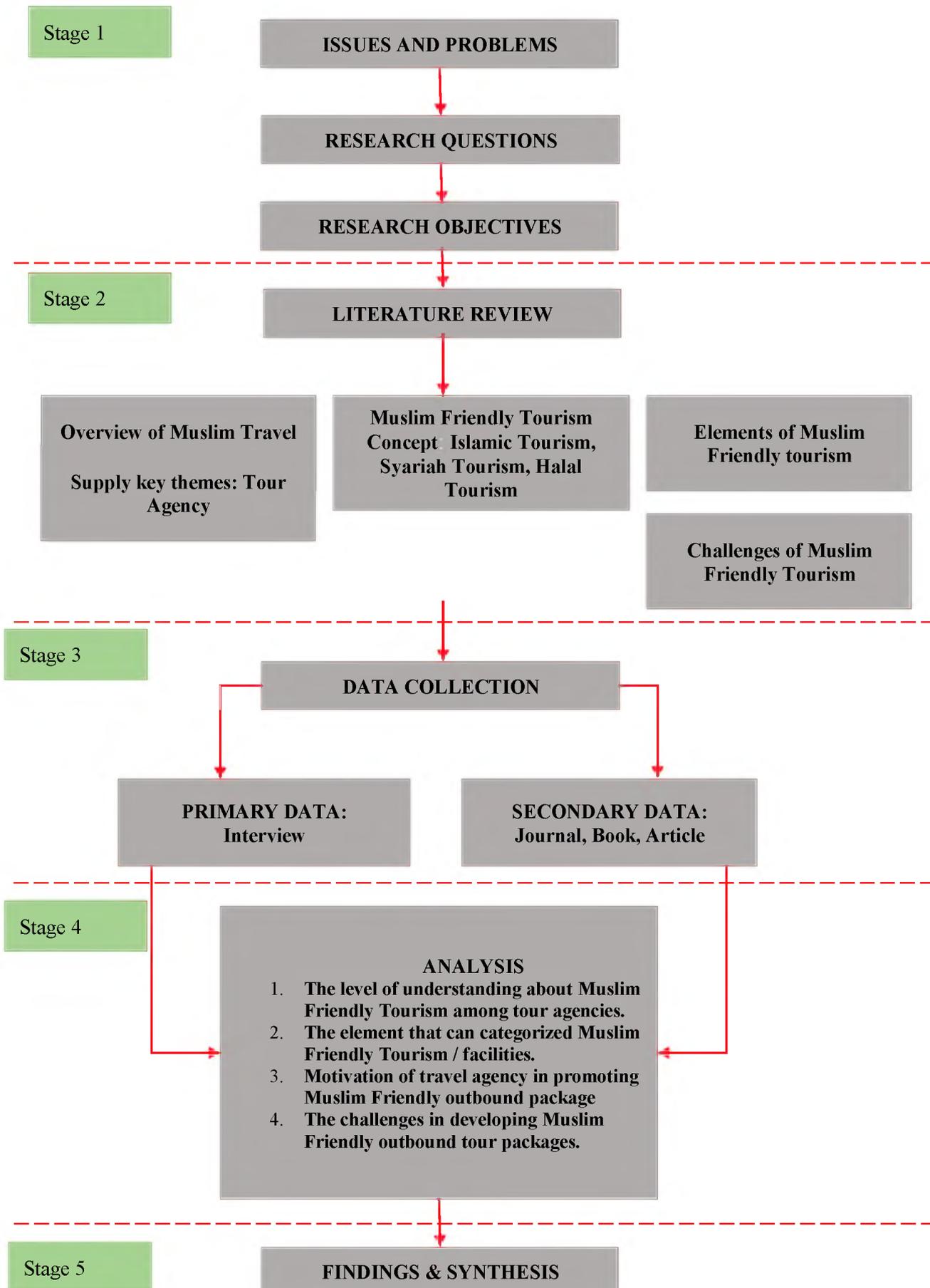
**Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework of the Study**

## 1.7 Research Scope

Based on the objectives that to be achieved, the study tried to explore four main aspects, which are:

- i. Outbound travel agency owners who are selling and not selling Muslim travel packages which located in Johor Bahru city.
- ii. The six faith based needs of travellers to include in the tour package which are: (1) Halal food, (2) Prayer time & facilities, (3) Water usage friendly washroom, (4) Ramadhan facilities, (5) No non-Halal activities and (6) Recreational facilities with privacy.
- iii. The reason of promoting Muslim Friendly tour package.
- iv. Challenges of designing and promoting Muslim Friendly tour package.

## 1.8 Research Framework



## 1.9 Study Area

Johor Bahru is one of the fastest-growing cities in Malaysia after Kuala Lumpur. It is the main commercial centre for Johor and is located in the Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore Growth Triangle. The city has a very close economic relationship with Singapore as many Singaporeans frequently visit for shopping, entertainment, and dining which generate the city economy with the stronger Singapore dollar. Due to this, Johor Bahru's retail scene was continuously developed to meet the needs of its consumers.

Based on the information gained from Johor Tourism website, there are 413 tour agencies listed in Johor state and 164 travel agencies are located in Johor Bahru city. Those tour agencies provide inbound tours, outbound tours, ticketing, car rental, coach service and more. This research only focuses on travel agency that operating outbound tours. Therefore, out of the total numbers of travel agencies in Johor Bahru city, 59 travel agencies are specialised in operating for outbound packages. Those tour agencies are:-

**Table 1.3 List of Outbound Travel Agencies in Johor Bahru**

No	List of Travel Agencies
1	AD Travel and Tours Sdn. Bhd
2	Aerowana Travel Sdn. Bhd
3	AJ Express Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd.
4	AL Chua Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
5	Al- Mashyur International Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
6	Al-Zahabi Travel Sdn. Bhd
7	Andalusia Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
8	Arrayyan Travel Services Sdn. Bhd
9	Atlantic Pacific Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
10	B & T Holiday Tours Sdn. Bhd

11	Bagus Holiday Sdn. Bhd
12	Bin Khaled Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
13	BT Tune Holidays & Services Sdn. Bhd
14	Causeway Holidays Sdn. Bhd
15	Deluxe Tours (Johor) Sdn. Bhd
16	East Coast Adventure Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
17	Enjoy Holiday Tour Sdn. Bhd
18	Entire Express Travel Corporation (M) Sdn. Bhd
19	Executive Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
20	Ezz Travel Sdn. Bhd
21	Faith Tours & Travel Sdn. Bhd
22	Fa Izin International Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
23	Felda Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
24	Holiday Tours & Travel Sdn. Bhd
25	IK Chin Travel Services (M) Sdn. Bhd
26	Island Paradise Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
27	J & C Travel Sdn. Bhd
28	Jenshen Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
29	K.H Travel (M) Sdn. Bhd
30	Kanghui Travel Sdn. Bhd
31	M.T.P. Abdul Kadir Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
32	Mados Tours & Travel Sdn. Bhd
33	Mega Top Holiday & Transport Sdn. Bhd
34	Megaworld Holidays Sdn. Bhd
35	Mumtaz Travel Sdn. Bhd
36	Nepline Travel Sdn. Bhd
37	Nordin Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
38	NS Holidays Tours Sdn. Bhd
39	Nusantara 707 Travel Services Sdn. Bhd
40	Overseas Travel & Tours (M) Sdn. Bhd
41	Parlo Tours Sdn. Bhd (Oad Travel Sdn. Bhd)
42	POTO Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
43	Rajawali Bintang Travel Sdn. Bhd

44	Reliance Shipping & Travel Agencies (J) Sdn. Bhd
45	S.N Vacation Sdn. Bhd
46	Sin Chung Tours Sdn. Bhd
47	Sinair Travel Sdn. Bhd
48	Sri-America Travel Corporation (Johore) Sdn. Bhd
49	Staging Connections Events & Travel Sdn. Bhd
50	Star Vision Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd
51	Tiram Travel Sdn. Bhd
52	Top Budget Travel Sdn. Bhd
53	Top One Travel Services Corporation (M) Sdn. Bhd
54	Tristar Travel Network Sdn. Bhd
55	Triways Travel Network (Johor) Sdn. Bhd
56	Truly Travel Mart Tours & Transport Sdn. Bhd
57	V Travel Sdn. Bhd
58	Volume Holidays Sdn. Bhd
59	Z.B.T Tours Limousine Services Sdn. Bhd

However, from the list above, only travel agencies that equipped with below criteria will be selected:

- i. Promoting outbound tour package
- ii. Members of Malaysia Association of Tour and Travel Agent (MATTA)
- iii. Frequently update website and social media
- iv. Operated more than three years

In order to understand the challenges of designing and promoting Muslim outbound tour package, 4 agencies that not promoting Muslim tour package also been selected as the sample.

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