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**Young Travelers Different Perspective  
on a Muslim Destination Image and  
Travel Constraints**

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## **Young Travelers Different Perspective on a Muslim Destination Image and Travel Constraints**

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### **Abstract**

Different ethnic and/or racial groups vary in their leisure preferences and behaviors due to different constraints and affordances, as well as the destination image. However, there is few studies discussed the relationship and differences between destination image and travel constraints among people from different nations representing different cultures, not mention to understand potential culture influence on destination images and travel constraints. The youth tourism market was shown its significance from economic, social as well as cultural benefits to the destinations and the tourists. Studies showed that the young tourists usually traveled longer and more frequently than other segments of markets. This study was conducted to identify the young international travelers' perception of a Muslim destination and the perceived travel constraints from cross-cultural perspective via Taiwan and America. There are three purposes of this study is threefold. First, this study is conducted to identify the perceptions of the youth market resulting from a Muslim destination image and associated travel constraints. Second, this study intends to depict the relationship between destination image and travel constraints as perceived by the young travelers cross cultural comparativeness. Third, to observe the Muslim cultures influence on the destination image and culture constraint for young international travelers.

**Keywords:** Muslim Culture, Destination Image, Traveler Constraints, Young Traveler

## **Introduction**

The role of national and cultural characteristics in shaping tourist behavior and motivations has been discussed in the literature (Graburn, 1995; Pizam and Sussmann, 1995; Richardson and Crompton 1988; Ritter, 1987). Additionally, different ethnic and/or racial groups vary in their leisure preferences and behaviors due to different constraints and affordances, also illustrated in numerous studies, as well as the destination image. However, there is few studies discussed the relationship and differences between destination image and travel constraints among people from different nations representing different cultures, not mention to understand potential culture influence on destination images and travel constraints for choosing the right attributes of the goal market.

According to Mansfield and Winckler (2008), the tourism industry in Arab countries is still in the “infancy phase.” In a case study of an Islamic destination, Bahrain, Mansfield and Winckler (2008) identified several existing barriers including over-dependence on single market, religious opposition to tourism related consumption, political unrest, strong competition, volatile oil prices, and, short staying periods. Mansfield and Winckler (2008) suggested that potential non-Arab tourism markets may perceive Islamic destinations negatively due to religious\behaviours such as strict codes of conduct. Hashim, Murphy, and Hashim (2007) conducted a qualitative study to exam the web-based image of an Islamic/Muslim tourism destination, Malaysia. They concluded that images of the Islamic/Muslim tourism destination are stimuli for visitors to form perceptions in the pleasure travel decision making process, including the post-travel evaluation process. Mansfield and Winckler (2008) recommended Islamic tourism destinations develop strategies to overcome over-dependency on a single market. According to Blanke and Mia (2005), creatively targeted new markets, “particularly in Asia and “untapped” parts of Europe”, will be the strategies for Islamic tourism destination (p.66).

In exploring potential tourism markets the youth tourism market is considered a potential segment for Muslim tourism destinations. The youth tourism market was shown its significance from economic, social as well as cultural benefits to the destinations and the tourists. Studies showed that the young tourists usually traveled longer and more frequently than other segments of markets. The youth travel market is vital to international tourism (including Muslim destinations) in market size and unique characteristics of travel patterns. The youth travel market accounts for roughly one-fifth of tourism travel and is predicted to continue to grow (Horak & Weber, 2000; Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2007). Young travelers are not only a significant segment of the travel market, but also possess significant expenditure power. Studies showed that young tourists usually travel longer and more frequently than members of other market segments (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Thus, younger travelers’ destination expenditures are significant. This segment of travel market has gained the attention of tourism researchers. Kim, Oh, and Jogaratnam (2007) identified seven unique push motivations of international and US college

student travelers. Richards and Wilson suggested the destination selection maybe an important factor when examining youth travel market behaviors. In addition, several constructs were deemed critical in the selection process, including destination perception and factors that may inhibit travel intention and actual behaviour.

Given the significant impact of youth traveler behaviours, further investigation of destination perception and related constructs is warranted. Thus, destination image and perceived travel constraints by young travelers considering Muslim destinations are the major focus of this study.

This study was conducted to identify the young international travelers' perception of a Muslim destination and the perceived travel constraints from cross-cultural perspective via Taiwan and America. Given the significant impact of youth traveler behaviours, further investigation of destination perception and related constructs is warranted. Thus, destination image and perceived travel constraints for young travelers with different international travel experience considering Muslim destinations are the major focus of this study. To be more specific, the purpose of this study is threefold. First, this study is conducted to identify the perceptions of the international youth market resulting from examining a Muslim destination image and associated travel constraints. Second, this study intends to depict the relationship between destination image and travel constraints as perceived by the international young travelers cross cultural comparativeness. Third, to observe the Muslim cultures influence on the destination image and culture constraint for young international travelers is another research objective of this study.

## **Literature Review**

Among the factors that affect travel decisions and travel related behaviours are perceptions about destination image and travel constraints. In their study of the travel decision making process, Um and Crompton (1992) found travel inhibitors (i.e., travel constraints) and facilitators (i.e. destination image) play important roles in the pleasure travel decision making process. Um and Crompton (1992) concluded that "*facilitators (i.e., destination image) were most influential in whether a potential destination in the early evoked set was selected for the late evoked set, whereas inhibitors (i.e., travel constraints) were most influential in whether an alternative in the late evoked set was selected as a final destination (p. 23).*" This study was conducted to identify the young travelers' perceptions of a Muslim destination and the perceived travel constraints as relatively few studies have explored this topic. The following sections address both destination image and travel constraints related literature review.

## Destination Image

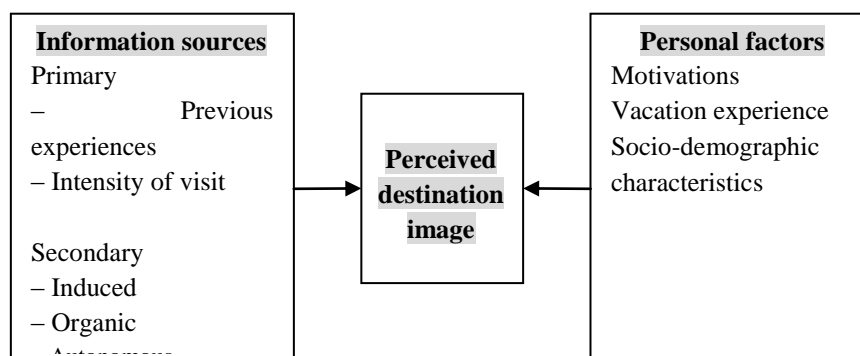
Image and image formation have been examined extensively in the tourism literature due to its complex conceptual nature and its important role in influencing tourist decision making (Choi et al., 2007). Although originally developed for economics, Boulding (1956) explored image concept as it pertains to tourism.

As a result, the concept of image within tourism research is defined as an overall perception or a series of impressions about a place or a destination. In addition, many tourism researchers agreed that the destination image research line emerged from Hunt's work of 1971. As this time forwards, due to its multidisciplinary, there have been numerous and varied approaches on destination image. Furthermore, destination image represents tourists' destination attitudes and influences tourist behaviours. Thus, in order to understand tourist behaviours, destination image has been a significant research topic for three decades.

Moreover, Stabler (1988) divided the factors influencing the formation of a consumer's destination image into supply and demand. Demand factors are similar to push factors such as motivation, perception, and individual characteristics, whereas supply factors are similar to pull factors which correspond to induced image formation (Gunn, 1972).

Since Stabler's contribution, influence factors have been recharacterized as external and internal factors such as stimulus factors and personal factors (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). External stimulus factors are typically defined as the physical object and previous experience, whereas personal factors consist of the internal social and psychological characteristics of the perceiver. Based on contributions from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), Beerli & Martin (2004) developed a model (figure 1) which explains the different factors that form the post-visit image of a destination. Baloglu and McCleary further argued that information sources and personal factors would affect destination image formation.

**Figure 1.** *The Model of the Formation of Destination Image (Beerli & Martin, 2004)*



Since destination image impacts the decision making process for all travelers, including young tourists, it is critical to competitiveness in the global



travel marketplace and deserves to be studied further in the new millennium where Islamic culture is an area of interest as an Information source as well as a Personal factor.

Destination perception is critical to competitiveness in the global travel marketplace. Destination image impacts the decision making process for all travelers, including young tourists.

### **Traveler Constraint**

Travel constraints are critical to the decision making process. Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) identified three types of constraints that inhibit an individuals' participation in leisure and recreation activities. The three constraints which form a hierarchy order are: intrapersonal constraints, interpersonal constraints and structural constraints. It is critical to identify perceived constraints in order to provide insights into understanding leisure behaviour. Although the concept of constraint has been applied to travel and tourism, relatively few studies have focused on travel related behaviours.

Similar to leisure behaviours, travel studies have established that travel constraints often inhibit individual travel behaviour and have an impact on various stages of the decision making process (Um & Crompton, 1992; Crompton & Ankomah, 1993). Travel and tourism studies identified travel related constraints such as fear, health, time, family, lack of a companion to travel with, destination attributes induced constraints, cost, and economic factors prohibit tourists to travel to destinations (Botha, Crompton & Kim, 1999; Crompton & Ankomah, 1993; Fleischer & Pizam, 2002; Huang & Tsai, 2003; Lee & Tideswell, 2005; Nyaupane & Andereck, 2008). Among the relatively few studies addressing this aspect, some travel constraint studies support the three hierarchy order of constraints identified by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2002) where others identified unique travel constraints (Botha, Crompton & Kim, 1999). Studies also focused on identified travel constraints related to specific travel market (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002; Hudson, 2000; Lee & Tideswell, 2005) and specific type of travel constraints (Nyaupane & Andereck, 2008).

Inspired by previous studies, constraints perceived by young international travelers to a Muslim destination will further contribute to understanding travel constraints.

### **Research Design**

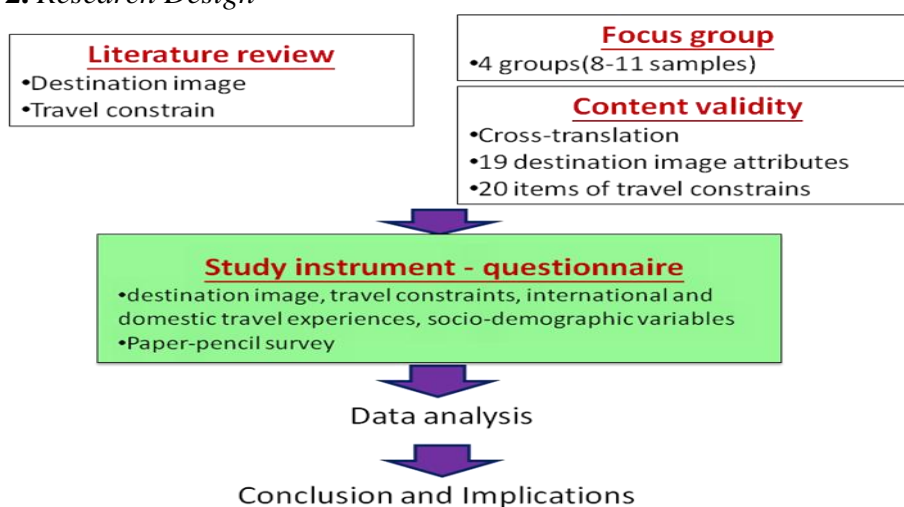
Inspired by destination image and travel constraint related studies, assessing the relationship of destination image and travel constraints seemed warranted. Thus, the purpose of this study is threefold. First, this study is conducted to identify the perceptions of the international youth market resulting from examining a Muslim destination image and associated travel

constraints. Second, this study intends to depict the relationship between destination image and travel constraints as perceived by the international young travelers cross cultural comparativeness. Third, to observe the Muslim cultures influence on the destination image and culture constraint for young international travelers is another research objective of this study.

The study instrument used to collect supporting data was developed using a two phased approach. The first phase consisted of an in-depth literature review on both destination image and travel constraints. The second phase consisted of conducting four focus group meetings intended to further identify the destination image of a Muslim destination, Brunie Darussalam. Each of the focus groups consisted of eight to eleven convenience samples of international young travelers from Taiwan who were visiting the United States. The focus group meetings ranged from one to two hour discussions wherein the participants' feelings and thoughts about Brunei were noted. This process resulted in a list of 19 destination image attributes describing Brunei Darussalam. In addition, a 20-item travel constraints list also resulted from the four meetings.

Upon completion of the focus group meetings, a survey questionnaire was developed using the three-phase cross translation process. The questionnaire included the intended examined variables identified in the focus group meeting, including destination image, travel constraints, international and domestic travel experiences, and other related socio-demographic variables. The questionnaire, first developed in English, was then to Mandarin by three Taiwanese international students who were studying in the United States. The Mandarin version was further verified by a tourism scholar from Taiwan. To ensure translation accuracy, the Mandarin version of the questionnaire was then translated back to English by five other international students from Taiwan. Once the validity and readiness of the study instrument was established, it was used to collect data from representative samples of young international students from Taiwan. The research design is shown on Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** *Research Design*



## Research Finding

As one objective of this study was to identify the international youth market's perception of destination image and travel constraints to a Muslim destination, the study's sample frame was younger travelers from Taiwan and American young travelers. Thus, criteria sampling was applied to recruit younger travelers ranging from 18 to 35 years old who had traveled overseas. In order to fulfill these objectives, the researchers collected data from National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism in Taiwan and Rosen College. Among the approximately 4,500 students queried, a total of 512 valid samples (203 for American and 309 for Taiwanese were successfully collected) met the required criteria and were then included in the data analysis process. Table 1 lists the sample demographics, travel experiences and travel intention to Brunei of each country. The result shows that American young travelers have more travel experiences and higher intention than Taiwanese.

**Table 1.** *The Demographics, Travel Experiences and Travel Intention to Brunei*

Variables	Items	USA n=203 Mean; % / scale	Taiwan n=309 Mean; % / scale
<b>Demographics</b>	Age (mean)	<b>21.98</b>	21.65
	Gender (female)	70.4%	<b>71.8%</b>
	Marriage status (single)	90.6%	<b>94.8%</b>
	Education (above college)	<b>98.5%</b>	98.4%
<b>Travel experiences</b>	Traveled overseas over 2 times in the past 5 years	<b>45.8%</b>	21.7%
	Taken domestic vacations over 2 times in the past 5 years	<b>94.6%</b>	58.6%
	Have traveled to Brunei type of destination	<b>19.2%</b>	0.6%
	Family and Friends traveled to Brunei destination	<b>2.0%</b>	1.0%
<b>Travel intention to Brunei</b>	How are you familiar with Brunei?	<b>2.48 / 7</b>	1.6 / 7
	How are you familiar with Muslim?	<b>2.83 / 7</b>	2.47 / 7
	What is your desire to visit this travel destination in the future?	<b>4.21 / 7</b>	3.11 / 7
	How likely are you to visit this travel destination in the future?	<b>3.41 / 7</b>	3.01 / 7
	How interested are you in getting more information about this travel destination?	<b>3.72 / 7</b>	3.55 / 7

### Reliability and Validity Test

The Cronbach's alpha values for destination image, and travel constraint for American and Taiwanese tourist are respectively 0.98, 0.93 and 0.94 and 0.89. They are satisfactory, as a measurement over 0.7 indicates adequate to strong levels of internal consistency. The test shows all dimensions have high consistency and the survey has certain reliability. As for validity, the questionnaire adopts from scale profiles available in related literature and revised based on the opinions of tour behavior experts. Hence, the survey has certain content validity.

### Muslim Destination Image

Only one item of destination image, appealing local food and beverage, is significantly difference between US and Taiwanese young travelers. It means there is no statistic significantly different evidence proved American young travelers with different destination image from Taiwanese (See Table 2).

**Table 2.** *Descriptive Statistics of Muslim Destination Image*

Destination Image Attributes	USA n=203			Taiwan n=309			T test
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
Appealing local food & beverage	201	4.46	1.64	305	3.30	1.24	15.30**
Unique heritage	200	5.65	1.26	305	3.61	1.38	2.48
Refreshing/relaxing atmosphere	201	5.46	1.34	305	3.79	1.38	0.02
Friendly local people	200	4.96	1.37	304	3.77	1.33	0.14
Pleasant weather	201	5.18	1.27	304	3.78	1.35	0.28
Unique natural attractions	200	5.55	1.34	305	3.81	1.40	0.02
Suitable accommodations (hotels, resorts, etc.)	201	4.95	1.42	303	3.69	1.34	0.01
Various recreational opportunities	201	4.90	1.40	303	3.66	1.37	0.16
Inexpensive travel	202	3.52	1.58	302	3.88	1.47	1.13
Variety of unique cultural attraction	200	5.36	1.24	305	3.73	1.42	2.22
Good value for money	202	4.48	1.26	304	3.62	1.38	2.32
High-tech	201	3.72	1.48	305	3.29	1.26	1.24
Safe	202	4.19	1.45	304	3.55	1.44	0.73
Diverse and unique ethnic groups and cultures	202	5.38	1.28	304	3.72	1.42	1.28
Socially and politically stable	202	4.33	1.31	305	3.57	1.39	3.62
Advanced tourism industry	201	4.34	1.35	305	3.69	1.43	1.10
Modern	201	4.06	1.50	305	3.44	1.36	0.05
Open and welcoming	199	4.86	1.42	305	3.72	1.43	0.11
Adequate tourism infrastructure (airport, highway, hotels, shopping, etc.)	201	4.36	1.35	303	3.64	1.41	1.51

Note: Values are the mean of reported scores on a 7-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). SD means Standard Deviation; \* means P-value lower than 0.05 with significant difference; \*\* mean means P-value lower than 0.01 with strongly significant difference

### Travel Constraints to Muslim Destination

There are 13 of 20 attributes of travel constraint are significantly different between American and Taiwan young travelers. Among those 13 constraints, we discovered that the family and friends related items significant difference between Taiwanese and American young travelers. In other words, Taiwanese young traveler affected by family and friends more than American. Table 3 lists the findings of the frequency analysis performed on the 20 travel constraints attributes. In the meanwhile, the cultural related items also are not acceptable by Taiwanese young travelers which mean the American young travelers are much acceptable Muslim culture than Taiwanese young travelers, but the serious travel constraint to American young traveler is the money issue.

**Table 3.** *Descriptive Statistics of Travel Constraints to a Muslim Destination*

	N	USA Mean	n=203 SD	N	Taiwan Mean	n=30 9 SD	T test
It is too far away.	201	4.72	1.73	302	3.80	1.46	5.15*
I do not have enough money to travel to this type of destination	202	5.61	1.41	303	4.58	1.71	17.99**
Language is a major problem for me to have a vacation to this destination	202	4.58	1.60	303	3.85	1.51	1.44
It is not safe to travel to this destination.	201	3.98	1.50	301	3.64	1.22	2.01
My family and friends are not interested in visiting this destination	201	3.84	1.67	301	3.78	1.37	4.41*
My family and friends do not want to travel to this type of destination	201	3.63	1.67	303	3.39	1.28	8.92**
My family and friends discourage me from traveling to this type of destination.	201	3.01	1.67	302	3.24	1.26	10.88**
My family and friends do not want to travel with me to this type of destination.	201	3.42	1.65	303	3.32	1.32	9.49**
The extreme culture makes me feel uncomfortable to travel to this destination.	202	3.05	1.59	303	3.11	1.25	5.99*
The extreme culture make me feel not interested in visiting this destination	202	2.83	1.49	302	3.09	1.25	2.46
Unwelcome atmosphere due to the religion.	202	3.17	1.59	303	3.06	1.22	10.19**
I feel uncomfortable due to the religion.	202	3.06	1.53	303	3.06	1.22	6.39*
This destination is a muslim country	201	3.72	1.70	301	3.47	1.29	6.63**
It looks expensive to travel to this destination.	201	5.00	1.48	301	3.70	1.33	0.16
I am not interested in visiting this destination.	202	3.49	1.85	300	3.45	1.38	16.88**
I don't have time to visit this	200	4.54	1.59	303	3.78	1.51	0.33

destination.							
My health is a concern for traveling to this type of destination.	201	3.21	1.77	302	3.25	1.25	18.46**
My work and family obligation keep me from visiting this destination.	201	4.74	1.68	303	3.32	1.35	3.57
It is not fun to travel to this destination by myself.	203	5.14	1.75	303	3.95	1.62	1.33
I do not know much about this destination for vacation.	203	5.07	1.59	301	4.69	1.73	12.10**

Note: Values are the mean of reported scores on a 5-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). SD means Standard Deviation; \* means P-value lower than 0.05 with significant difference; \*\* mean means P-value lower than 0.01 with strongly significant difference

## Discussion

According to the country comparison result of young travelers' perceived Muslim destination, the findings recommend Muslim destinations promotion should focus on the quality of their tourism infrastructure, high technology, modern, and diverse variety of recreational activities designed to address the comfort and needs of tourists to attract both American and Taiwanese young travelers. It is also suggested to emphasize Muslim culture and heritage, local way of life, and friendly hospitality oriented destination services to distinguish from other competitive destinations.

As for comparison result of the travel constraint, there are some suggestions concluded: (1). For American young travelers, to decrease the structural constraint and the intrapersonal constraint are the key issues; (2). Muslim culture was viewed as significant constraint which inhibits Taiwanese young travelers from considering the Muslim destinations; (3). For Taiwanese young travelers, to decrease the cultural constraint and interpersonal constraint are the key issues, because the travel decision of Taiwanese young travelers influenced by family and friend stronger than American young travelers; (4). Destination marketing professionals carefully manage the culture related attributes to promote Muslim destination.

Furthermore, culture of a Muslim destination was viewed a salient image as well as an inhibitor for young international travelers. Local culture, lifestyle, and heritage are important image attributes of a Muslim destination possess pull effects to attract youth market to visit the destination. However, this study also found that Muslim culture was one dimension of travel constraint suggesting that Muslim culture was perceived as extreme which translated into inhibitor decreasing the desire to travel. This finding suggests destination marketing professional to carefully manage the culture related attributes to promote the destination.

Overall, there is the marketing strategy proposed from this study. Since Taiwanese family and friends have significant impact on the formation of young travelers' perceptions of Muslim destination image, it is suggested to

attract more Taiwanese young travelers visited Muslim destination by positively influence the family and friends of younger travelers, as well as schools, Hostels, travel agencies and social networking service . In other words, it is critical for a Muslim destination to positively influence the family and friends of Taiwanese younger travelers. The marketing campaign has to not only positively influence youth markets, but also has to appeal to related groups and information sources. For example, families, schools, Hostels, travel agencies and social networking service (Myspace, Facebook, Backpacker, Contikit, Couchsurfing, Twitter etc.). As for attracting American young travelers, to provide more economic packaged tour by decreasing the structural constraint, such as lower travel expenditure. In short, this study supports the findings of the Richards and Wilson (2004) study that found the desires of young international travelers to explore other cultures are not always fulfilled through travel. Additionally, family and friends have significant impact on the formation of young travelers' perceptions of Muslim destination image.

There are two limitations associated with this study. First, study findings are only applicable to youth travel markets. It is recommended further investigation be conducted on other travel markets. Second, the study focuses on travelers in the problem recognition stage of the travel decision making process. It is also recommended that other stages of the decision making process be examined to determine if relationships influence information sources and personal factors. For example, future study focusing on travelers' post-visit evaluation is recommended to identify destination image and travel constraints. After completing travel, destination images are most likely formed from primary information sources such as personal destination experience. Future study of post-visit measurements may identify factors that led to overcoming initial travel constraints which could provide useful information for effective marketing and management strategies.

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