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# Antecedents and outcomes of memorable halal food experiences of non-Muslim tourists

Erose Sthapit: *Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki, Finland and Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK*

Peter Björk: *Department of Marketing, Hanken School of Economics – Vaasa Campus, Vaasa, Finland*

Senthilkumaran Piramanayagam: *Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, India, and*

Dafnis N. Coudounaris: *Aalborg University Business School of the Aalborg University, Aalborg Universitet, Aalborg, Denmark; School of Economics and Business Administration, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia and Tutor of Entrepreneurial Marketing, University of London, London, UK*

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to examine the underlying antecedents of memorable halal food experiences by considering how specific internal factors of non-Muslim tourists – novelty seeking, authenticity and sensory appeal – combine with external factors in a restaurant setting – togetherness, experience co-creation and substantive staging of the servicescape – to effect memorable halal food experiences. The study also examined the relationship between memorable halal food experiences and place attachment.

**Design/methodology/approach** – During the first week of August 2021, an online survey was used for data collection and shared on Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mturk) as well as sent to non-Muslim people known to the authors to have had halal food experiences in a tourism setting. A total of 293 valid responses were obtained.

**Findings** – The results revealed that novelty seeking, authenticity, experience co-creation, substantive staging of the servicescape, togetherness and sensory appeal influence memorable halal food experiences. Furthermore, these experiences positively impact place attachment.

**Originality/value** – This is one of the first studies to explore non-Muslim tourists' memorable halal food experiences.

**Keywords** Halal, Halal food, Memorable halal food experience, Place attachment, Non-Muslim tourists

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Today, the halal food industry is a lucrative market niche driven by demand from both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers (Jia and Chaozhi, 2021; Rahman *et al.*, 2020), as halal foods have a reputation for being hygienic and palatable (Talib *et al.*, 2015). Halal food is food in which ingredients and manufacturing processes are in accordance with Islamic

values and teachings (Suhartanto *et al.*, 2020). Examples of the differences between halal and non-halal food include the lack of alcohol and pork in halal menu items and the use of specific slaughter methods (Liu *et al.*, 2020). Existing studies indicate a positive response to halal food among non-Muslim consumers (Mathew *et al.*, 2014; Haque *et al.*, 2015). Most studies on halal food have focussed on decision-making styles and religiosity (Usman *et al.*, 2021), consumers' attitudes (Akin and Okumus, 2020) and supply chain issues (Ali *et al.*, 2021) and have been conducted primarily among tourists of Muslim nationalities (Dabphet, 2021). There are a limited number of empirical studies exploring non-Muslim tourists' halal food experiences (Rahman *et al.*, 2020). Recent studies on the halal food experiences of tourists consider loyalty formation (Suhartanto *et al.*, 2020); destination selection, satisfaction and retention (Mannaa, 2020); customer satisfaction and behavioural intention (Ratnasari *et al.*, 2021) and loyalty of intention for halal tourism destinations (Rahman *et al.*, 2020). Very few studies have examined the memorable tourism experience (MTE) concept in the context of halal food (Sthapit *et al.*, 2021), which is the focus of this study.

In today's experiential marketplace, tourists must be offered MTEs in order for a destination to gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto, 2018). Understanding the factors related to MTEs is critical to the success of destination management (Wei *et al.*, 2019); however, a large part of the literature elaborating on the MTE construct has been devoted to direct replication in new contexts to validate prior MTEs (Sthapit *et al.*, 2019a), with few studies developing integrative models that incorporate other constructs that might explicitly impact MTEs (Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto, 2018). In addition, because MTE is a multifaceted concept, little agreement exists on the theoretical frameworks (Coelho *et al.*, 2018) and specific constructs that comprise an MTE (Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto, 2018). Furthermore, existing studies on MTEs are vague and fragmented (Coelho *et al.*, 2018). Some recent studies have suggested a need to identify other decisive dimensions that impact tourists' MTEs (Stone *et al.*, 2019) because the original seven MTE dimensions introduced by Stone *et al.* (2021) may only apply to general tourism environments, such as tourists' food experiences and not specific contexts, such as non-Muslim tourists' memorable halal food experiences.

The present study seeks to fill this research gap by discussing related theoretical arguments and concepts while testing a new model of memorable halal food experiences among non-Muslim tourists. For this study and based on previous research, we chose six antecedents – novelty seeking, authenticity, experience co-creation, substantive staging of the servicescape, sensory appeal and togetherness – which could impact memorable halal food experiences and one outcome variable (place attachment).

According to Petrick (2002), *novelty seeking* is a crucial element of a tourist's motivation to travel and greatly influences their decision-making. Sutton (2001, p. 107) suggested that "ordinary meals are non-events," and Stone *et al.* (2021) noted that food experiences are more memorable if they occur outside the usual environment.

*Authenticity* is one of the most important aspects of the food tourism experience (Ellis *et al.*, 2018). The embedding of authenticity in cooking methods and unique foodways is a key motive for food tourists (Kim *et al.*, 2019). Some studies have indicated a positive relationship between authenticity and MTE (Mostafa Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2021), including memorable food experiences (Anton *et al.*, 2019; Sthapit, 2017).

In food-related experiences, the active participation of tourists enhances the experience (Stone *et al.*, 2019), necessitating personalised and direct interaction with the service provider (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). These social interactions are part of the co-created experience (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). In the tourism industry, creating MTEs through *experience co-creation* is crucial (Mathis *et al.*, 2016) and memorability is an outcome of experience co-creation (Campos *et al.*, 2016).

A positive perception of an environment in terms of its spatial layout, signs and symbols leaves favourable subjective memories (Dong and Siu, 2013). In the context of tourist's food consumption, studies have identified *substantive staging of the servicescape* as a critical factor affecting the memorability of food experiences (Sthapit, 2017; Sthapit *et al.*, 2019a).

Some studies have indicated the significance of *togetherness* in tourists' food experiences (Goolaup and Mossberg, 2017; Mynttinen *et al.*, 2015; Sthapit, 2017, 2019). Togetherness can be linked to the concept of commensality (Sobal and Nelson, 2003) and the desire to spend time with family and friends (McIntosh *et al.*, 1995). The commensality of unique culinary experiences offers opportunities for positive memory creation. Such experiences can take on special significance and become the highlight of travel experience recollection (Schänzel and Lynch, 2016).

People tend to look for attributes in their food choices that engage one or more of their senses (Sthapit, 2017). Thus, *sensory appeal* is a basic determinant of food choice in that people pay attention to sensory characteristics in their search for new food experiences (Pollard *et al.*, 1998). When comparing food choices while travelling to those made at home, sensory appeal is significantly more important during travel (Wang *et al.*, 2019), which supports the notion of the connection between sensory experience and memory (Stone *et al.*, 2021).

*Place attachment* refers to an attitudinal, emotional response and perceived proximity to a place (Hummon, 1992) that can be formed through functional, tangible factors and/or social relationships (Lewicka, 2011) of a co-creative nature (Suntikul and Jachna, 2016). Memories are an important component of place attachment that depends on positive MTEs (Sthapit *et al.*, 2017). Studies have found a positive relationship between MTEs and place attachment (Sthapit *et al.*, 2019a; Tsai, 2016).

This study aimed to examine the underlying antecedents of memorable halal food experiences by considering how non-Muslim tourists' internal factors – novelty seeking, authenticity and sensory appeal – combine with external factors in a restaurant setting – togetherness, experience co-creation and substantive staging of the servicescape – to affect memorable halal food experiences. The study also examined the relationship between memorable halal food experiences and place attachment. In addition, following the introduction, the literature review containing the theoretical foundation and the conceptualisation of the main constructs is presented. Then, the method and data analysis is reported, and finally, the conclusions, discussion and implications are discussed.

## **Literature review**

### *Halal and halal food*

According to Hosain (2021), Halal is an Arabic word which means to be lawful and permitted to consume or to do according to Islamic philosophy. By halal, the Muslims mean anything (object or action) that is free from the prohibition mentioned in the Holy Quran. Typically, the term halal describes permissible food for Muslims (Saville and Mahbubi, 2021). Halal also refers to high-quality food products based on hygienic practices, sanitation and religious compliance (Al-shami and Abdullah, 2021). Halal carries the typical characteristic of credence (Grunert, 2005) and the primary means of halal food is to eliminate the occurrence of haram substance in food through a food management system which based on the controls performed in each step of the production steps and chain (Benkerroum, 2013).

Currently, the demand for safe and halal food continues to increase (Kohilvani *et al.*, 2021) and the global halal industry is a trillion-dollar fast-growing market segment (Rajeb *et al.*, 2021). Halal food is the most essential component of halal (Sthapit *et al.*, 2021; Xiong and Zhang, 2020). Halal food assures tourists that animals have been slaughtered according to

the zibah ritual (Mohsin *et al.*, 2020) and is acknowledged to be clean, hygienic and of good quality (Alzeera *et al.*, 2018). In addition, given its high concerns on health, environmental and quality issues (Olya and Al-Ansi, 2018), halal food is considered a prominent cuisine that is offered to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers and is made available at various outlets (Battour *et al.*, 2021; Rahman *et al.*, 2020). In the same vein, today, other religions such as Hindu, Buddhist and Christian (non-Muslims) are also consuming halal food for their dietary health (Rahman *et al.*, 2020). Non-Muslims are considered contributors to this flourishing sector (Rahman *et al.*, 2020) and halal-themed events of local culinary traditions, lifestyles and heritage that are associated with Muslims attract both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists (Yousaf and Xiucheng, 2018). Non-Muslim consumers place great importance on quality food choices and selection due to concerns over health, ethics in food preparation and being green and environmentally friendly (Damit *et al.*, 2018). For example, Mathew *et al.* (2014) found that non-Muslims were attracted by elements in the halal concept of food, particularly hygiene and cleanliness, which are ultimately reflected in the quality of the halal food. Experiences of halal food consumption can also influence the positive perception of halal food (Damit *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, many non-Muslim countries engage with halal hotels, halal resorts, halal restaurants, halal trips, halal products and services and halal foods to encourage tourists to visit (Akhtar *et al.*, 2019). Countries in Asia, namely, Thailand, Japan and South Korea, market their countries through halal food culture and cuisine (Yousaf and Xiucheng, 2018).

#### *Theoretical foundation, research hypotheses and framework*

This paper uses cognitive appraisal theory (CAT) as the theoretical foundation to link the antecedents of memorable halal food experience (novelty, authenticity, experience co-creation, substantive staging of the servicescape, togetherness and sensory appeal) and place attachment. In addition, in this study, memorable halal food experiences characterise a cognitive dimension. This concept of appraisal refers to an evaluative judgement and interpretation of experiences (Lazarus, 1991). CAT focusses on the role of cognition in emotion and suggests that emotion emerges from the appraisal of an event or situation (Roseman and Smith, 2001), in this context, halal food experiences. Cognitive appraisals of an experience elicit specific emotions, which have an effect on behavioural responses (Lazarus, 1991). According to CAT, a tourist who favourably evaluates a travel experience may feel a joyful emotion and perform further behaviours that promote this feeling (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999). Manthiou *et al.* (2016) noted that memorable experiences are linked to the stimulation of an individual's cognitive system, which attributes a special meaning to and interpretation of their participation in the event. Environmental cues help shape tourists' experiences, which affects their emotions and behavioural outcomes. In the same vein, place attachment refers to a person's positive beliefs about and emotional connections with a specific destination resulting from cognitive evaluations (Williams and Vaske, 2003). Therefore, memorable halal food experience is proposed as a predictor of place attachment in this model.

#### *Novelty seeking*

Tourist experiences have been widely conceptualised as novelty seeking (Lee and Crompton, 1992) and destinations' culinary delicacies are believed to satisfy the pursuit of novelty (Long, 2004). Eating novel foods during a holiday is a mark of an authentic experience in which most visitors want to participate (Mynttinen *et al.*, 2015). For example, Mynttinen *et al.* (2015) study found that Russian tourists in the South Savo region of Finland put their personal taste preferences aside when given the opportunity to try something novel and

exciting. However, tourists have varying attitudes towards food, which means that their interests regarding food and their desire to search out new experiences will also vary (Sthapit *et al.*, 2021).

*Novelty* can be defined as the “degree of contrast between present perception and past experience, making it the opposite of familiarity” (Assaker *et al.*, 2011, p. 891). Others define *novelty* as a tendency to approach novel experiences (Pearson, 1970) and as a feeling of being new, unique and unusual in experience (Cheng and Lu, 2013). In the context of food, novelty denotes newness and/or unusualness associated with consuming foods and beverages outside of one’s typical environment (Tse and Crotts, 2005) and is a core input for memories (Kim *et al.*, 2012). Novelty seeking is an innate quality of travellers (Cohen, 1979). Novelty is both a motivation for tourism and a factor that affects the memorability of a tourism experience (Wei *et al.*, 2019). Novelty has been identified as a precursor to MTEs (Wei *et al.*, 2019), and the concept is fundamental to understanding tourism experiences (Mitas and Bastiaansen, 2018). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H1.* Novelty seeking positively influences memorable halal food experiences.

### *Authenticity*

Authenticity refers to something that is unique, genuine and real (Ram *et al.*, 2016) and is a key construct in the study of tourist experiences (MacCannell, 1976). From a tourism perspective, authenticity is defined as the level of enjoyment felt by tourists in the experiences they perceive as genuine (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010). Wang (1999) argued that the term authenticity is of great importance for tourism destination competitiveness and that it can be studied from three different perspectives: objective, constructive and existential. Objective authenticity is linked to the originality of services and attractions at a destination, while constructive authenticity involves the symbolic meanings attached to an attraction, which have been suggested to be derived from socio-public discourses (Wang, 1999). Existential authenticity refers to an individual’s perceptions of what makes an experience authentic (Wang, 1999).

An authentic food experience is a kind of cultural phenomenon in which chefs, restaurants, recipes and dishes are considered in ways that allow visitors to integrate into the local culture and spirit (Baldacchino, 2015). In line with the concept of constructive authenticity, restaurant authenticity is defined as customers’ subjective belief that they are having an authentic (halal) food experience in a restaurant (Kim *et al.*, 2020). According to Cohen and Avieli (2004), tourists consider multiple indicators of authenticity, such as ingredients, cooking methods or presentation, although not all of these indicators affect visitor appraisal in the same manner. In many culinary experiences, tourists evaluate the authenticity of the food based on how it is prepared, while in others, authenticity might be established by the ingredients used (Anton *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, authenticity has been identified as an antecedent of MTE (Sthapit and Björk, 2017) and one of the most important aspects of tourists’ food experiences (Ellis *et al.*, 2018). Thus, we proposed our second hypothesis:

*H2.* The authenticity (of a restaurant) positively influences memorable halal food experiences.

### *Experience co-creation*

According to Vargo and Lusch (2004), the customer is not a passive recipient of pre-existing value but rather an active creator of value. In other words, the modern tourist plays an

active role in deciding what they will do during their journey by interacting with tourism service providers at the destination, influencing other tourists and choosing how to satisfy all aspects of their personality and needs (Mathis *et al.*, 2016). In addition, today's tourists are viewed as co-creators of their experiences (Sugathan and Ranjan, 2019). Tourists' interactions, active participation in the experience and attitudes while sharing the experience with others are antecedents of experience co-creation (Neuhof *et al.*, 2012). During a halal food experience, tourists' participation in experience co-creation may include interactions with staff members (Grönroos, 2011) and will greatly impact their evaluation of a tourism experience (McCartney and Chen, 2020).

Through the concept of experience co-creation, with a greater emphasis on the customer than on the service, marketing organisations have moved from a goods-dominant approach to a service-dominant (S-D) approach (Mathis *et al.*, 2016). S-D logic views co-creation in terms of participatory, interactive activities that involve different actors, while *value* is defined as "value-in-use," i.e. "the value for customers, created by them during their usage of resources" (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014, p. 209). S-D logic suggests that customers play an active role in tandem with the service provider in co-creating experiences and value, and establishing a dialogue is a prerequisite to experience co-creation (Chathoth *et al.*, 2016). This direct interaction between service providers and customers is an important dimension of experience co-creation (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). Some studies indicate a positive linkage between co-creation and memorable vacation experiences (Mathis *et al.*, 2016; Sthapit *et al.*, 2018), including memorable food experiences (Sthapit *et al.*, 2019a). Thus, our third hypothesis is as follows:

H3. Experience co-creation positively influences memorable halal food experiences.

#### *Substantive staging of the servicescape*

Servicescape refers to the physical environment of a service context, including the exterior and interior design (e.g. building design, signs, symbols and artefacts) and ambient conditions (e.g. temperature, light, scent, noise, odour and music; Bitner, 1992). Although various definitions exist in the literature, scholars of tourism generally agree that servicescape can be divided into two dimensions: substantive staging and communicative staging (Dong and Siu, 2013). Concepts such as atmosphere and ambiance are physical components of the environment used in wide or narrow scopes and are usually related to the substantive staging of the servicescape (Dedeoglu *et al.*, 2018). Substantive staging of the servicescape involves functional and mechanical clues that refer to the physical creation of the service environment (Dong and Siu, 2013). Physical elements include spatial layout (layout of exit and entry; Bitner, 1992), equipment layout (furnishings; Ryu and Jang, 2007), facility (architectural design, colour, outside appearance and interior design; Lucas, 2003), symbols and artefacts (signage and style of decor; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996), ambiance (internal climate, music, temperature and scent; Ryu and Jang, 2007) and dining equipment (glassware and linen; Ryu and Jang, 2007). Previous evidence demonstrates that a higher degree of servicescape performance forms a higher evaluation of the customer's experience, and this experience leads to a positive evaluation (Dong and Siu, 2013). Studies have also indicated a positive relationship between the substantive staging of a servicescape and a memorable experience (Sthapit, 2017; Sthapit *et al.*, 2019a). Thus, we made the following hypothesis:

H4. Substantive staging of a servicescape positively influences memorable halal food experiences.



### *Togetherness*

According to Ignatov and Smith (2006), being with friends and family while eating is one of the main reasons given for travelling. Personal relationships and social bonds can be strengthened by eating together, and sharing food experiences with members of one's close familial or social group can boost the pleasure of the culinary experience (Warde and Martens, 2000). Some studies have acknowledged the importance of togetherness in tourists' food experiences (Ignatov and Smith, 2006; Mynttinen *et al.*, 2015). Chandralal and Valenzuela (2015) emphasised that the enjoyment and excitement caused by social dynamics among travel companions can create more memorable travel experiences. Similarly, a study by Stone, Soulard, Migacz and Wolf (2018) showed that family and friends were notable companions in food or drink experiences and were cited most often when recalling memorable food experiences. Moreover, several interviewees in Sthapit's (2017) study expressed the belief that family togetherness and socialisation were consistently important and enriched their experiences, which contributed to the memorability of the food experiences and Mynttinen *et al.* (2015) found that meals were typically enjoyed more in the company of friends and that food was felt to be important for family gatherings. Thus, we formed the following hypothesis:

H5. Togetherness positively influences memorable halal food experiences.

### *Sensory appeal*

Food is believed to be the only product that evokes and involves all five human senses. In addition to the food itself, the sensory food experience is achieved through the environment in which food is consumed by means of sight, smell, taste and touch (Berg and Sevton, 2014). Many studies on tourist experiences have argued that tourism should be treated as a multiple sensory experience (Kim and Eves, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2009). The sensory appeal of food – its smell, taste and visual appearance – is central to the culinary experience. The colours, smells and tastes of the food lead to a lasting impression (Lv *et al.*, 2020), and the appearance of food and the aesthetic appeal of the cooking performance can add value to the food experience (Suntikul *et al.*, 2020). Kivela and Crofts (2006) emphasised that tasting local food and beverages on holiday is a pleasurable sensory experience. The smell and taste of food readily evoke one's memory of a visited destination, and the positive experiences of these senses tend to be key considerations for most people in food and drink settings (Rousta and Jamshidi, 2020). Thus, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H6. Sensory appeal positively influences memorable halal food experiences.

### *Memorable halal food experience and place attachment*

According to Kim and Chen (2019), MTEs are highly self-centred and viewed as special, subjective events in one's life that are stored in long-term memory, while others define MTE as a "tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred" (Kim *et al.*, 2012, p. 13). In this study's context, a memorable halal food experience refers to one that is remembered and recalled in vivid detail after an *in situ* halal food experience. Offering consumers MTEs is crucial to being competitive in the tourism industry (Ye *et al.*, 2020). Travellers who have had MTEs at a destination are more likely to revisit the destination (Zhang *et al.*, 2018) and bring others (Sthapit, 2017). Place attachment depends on positive MTEs (Sthapit *et al.*, 2017). Studies that have found a positive relationship between memories of a trip experience and place attachment include Tsai (2016) and



Sthapit *et al.* (2019a) studies which found a direct, positive impact from MTEs on place attachment. Place attachment refers to a person's positive beliefs about and emotional connections with a specific destination resulting from cognitive evaluations (Williams and Vaske, 2003). In other words, place attachment is an attitudinal, emotional response and perceived proximity to a place (Hummon, 1992) formed through functional, tangible factors and/or social relationships (Lewicka, 2011) of a co-creative nature (Suntikul and Jachna, 2016). Thus, our final hypothesis is as follows:

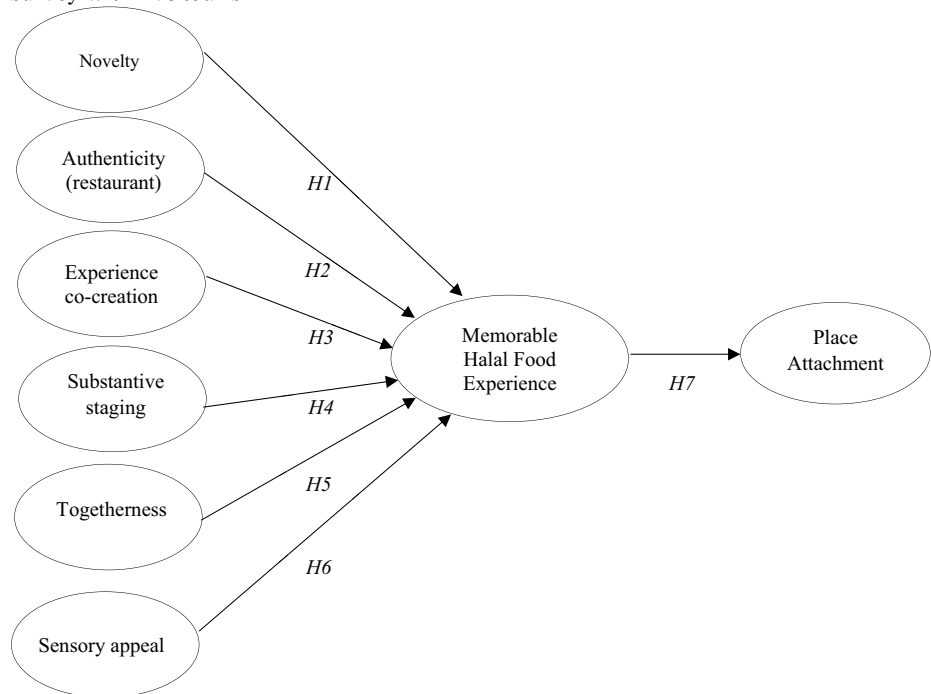
*H7. Memorable halal food experiences positively influence tourist place attachment.*

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of this study.

## Methods

### *Pilot test, data collection method and instrumentation*

This study used a Web-based cross-sectional survey. The justification for the use of a Web-based questionnaire is that online methods have both low cost and fast response times (Görizt, 2004). Web-based surveys also offer quick and easy access to research participants despite their geographic locations (Deutskens *et al.*, 2006) and have low social desirability effects on survey answers due to the absence of interviewers (Duffy *et al.*, 2005). Moreover, online surveys offer opportunities for instant data entry (Wilson and Laskey, 2003) and immediate data coding (Dillman, 2007). Two data collections were conducted: one for the pilot test and one for the final study. The authors pre-tested the survey with five tourism



**Figure 1.**  
Conceptual model

researchers possessing expertise in topics related to the present study to confirm the relevance, clarity, flow and phrasing of the questions.

The target population for the final study was non-Muslim tourists who had consumed halal food in a restaurant within the 12 months preceding the data collection (August 2020–July 2021). The survey was comprising two sections. The first section included demographic variables and travel characteristics. The second section consisted of eight key constructs: novelty seeking, authenticity (restaurant), experience co-creation, substantive staging, togetherness, sensory appeal, memorable halal food experience and place attachment. Operationalisation of the constructs used in this study (variables sources and measurement items) shows the different sources and items used to measure the eight constructs. The 32 items used in the study were scored using a five-point Likert scale with anchors of “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Operationalisation of the constructs used in this study (variables sources and measurement items)

Novelty (Sthapit *et al.*, 2019b):

- X1 I had once-in-a-lifetime halal food experience.
- X2 I had a unique halal food experience.
- X3 My recent halal food experience was different from previous experiences.
- X4 I experienced something new during my recent halal food experience.

*Authenticity (restaurant)* (Meng and Choi, 2017; Wang and Mattila, 2015)

The halal food restaurant that I visited:

- X5 Is an authentic restaurant.
- X6 Made me feel connected to Islamic culture.
- X7 I experienced and/or learned about the lifestyle of the old days at this halal food restaurant.
- X8 This restaurant took me back in time.
- X9 I was served authentic halal food.

*Experience co-creation* (Mathis *et al.*, 2016):

- X10 Working alongside food service staff allowed me to have a great social interaction during my recent halal food experience, which I enjoyed.
- X11 I felt comfortable working with foodservice staff during my recent halal food experience.
- X12 The setting allowed me to effectively collaborate with food service staff during my recent halal food experience.
- X13 My recent halal food experience was enhanced because of my participation in the experience.
- X14 I felt confident in my ability to collaborate with food service staff during my recent halal food experience.

*Substantive staging of servicescape* (Durna *et al.*, 2015):

- X15 The architecture of the restaurant was attractive.
- X16 The atmosphere of the restaurant was cheerful.
- X17 The decor of the restaurant was fashionable.

- X18 The restaurant had a nice smell.

*Togetherness* (Choe and Kim, 2019; Suntikul *et al.*, 2020):

- X19 My friendship with my travel companion has increased while eating food together.
- X20 Eating halal food helps me interact with the people I travel with.
- X21 Socialising with friends is important for my halal food experience.
- X22 Socialising with family is important for my halal food experience.

*Sensory appeal* (Mohamed *et al.*, 2020):

- X23 The halal food I consumed tasted good.
- X24 The halal food that I consumed smelled nice.
- X25 The halal food I consumed looked nice.

*Memorable halal food experience* (Oh, Fiore and Jeoung, 2007):

- X26 I have wonderful memories of my recent halal food experience.
- X27 I will not forget my recent halal food experience.
- X28 I will remember my recent halal food experience.

*Place Attachment* (Williams and Vaske, 2003):

- X29 I feel that the recent destination where is tasted halal food is a part of me.
- X30 The recent destination where I tasted halal food is the best place for what I like to do.
- X31 The recent destination where I tasted halal food is very special to me.
- X32 No other place can compare to this destination where I tasted halal food.

Data were collected from members of the authors' personal networks (professionals that did not include close social contacts, such as friends and family) and Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). An email containing a link to the questionnaire was sent to members of the authors' personal networks and posted on MTurk. MTurk is a crowdsourcing marketplace that allows individuals (Turkers) to complete human intelligence tasks (HITs). MTurk participants tend to be demographically more diverse than conventional internet samples, and the data obtained are generally as reliable as information collected through traditional methods (Buhrmester *et al.*, 2011). The online survey link was posted on MTurk and was active for the first week of August 2021. Each participant was paid US\$1.00 upon completion of the survey. Steps were taken to reduce threats to validity. Firstly, before publishing the HIT, the system qualification of an approval rating greater than 99% (percentage of approved HITs) was chosen. Secondly, to avoid participants providing bad quality data, respondents were informed before completing the HIT that each response pattern would be monitored and that any indication of irrelevant and random responding would result in a lack of compensation. Thirdly, all the responses were carefully screened, and invalid responses were rejected. Participants who failed the screening during their first attempt were not offered a second chance.

## Results

In the study, the authors apply five different data analyses and use descriptive statistics such as frequencies. In addition, covariance analysis (for hypotheses testing) as well as Pearson correlations, reliability analysis (Cronbach  $\alpha$ ), calculation of AVEs and construct reliabilities, and discriminant validity are used. Moreover, the authors use structural equation modelling analysis, specifically confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), with the assistance of AMOS 27 software to estimate and test the fit of the attitudinal model. In particular, for estimation of the fit of the model, the maximum likelihood with bootstrapping of 2,000 samples was adopted.

### *Overall profile of the participants*

This study was conducted using 293 samples of non-Muslim tourists. A majority of the respondents were male (210). The respondents' ages ranged from 20 to 66 years, with the largest group (105) being between 30 and 39 years old. Relationship status was as follows: married (184), single (88), co-habiting (8), engaged (8) and divorced (5). The majority were American (170), followed by Indian (80), with a total representation of 10 nationalities. The majority were Christian (211), followed by Hindu (72), Buddhist (8) and Sikh (2). The destinations visited ranged from Dubai to New York, with the majority of the trips being domestic (207). More than half of the respondents were repeat visitors (190). Travel companion situations consisted of family (partner and child) (120), friends (106), partner (husband/wife) (58) and alone (9). The number of people in the participant's travel party ranged from 1 to 25, and most travelled in groups of more than two people (213). The purpose of the travel was most often identified as for leisure/tourism (239). In response to the question, "Do you eat halal food while at home?" 174 said yes (Table 1).

### *Confirmatory factor analysis*

CFA is used to test the fit of the model because it provides an accurate method to test the fit and is important in estimating the relationships of the model (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The various statistics provided by the final run of CFA reveal that the fit of the model is very good, bearing in mind that comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.897, which is close to 0.9, chi-square by degrees of freedom = 2.722, which is below than 3.000 and RMSEA = 0.077 which is below than the international threshold of 0.08 (Hair *et al.*, 2019, p. 642).

Initially, the model fit is very good, as the statistics of root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and CFI were 0.077 and 0.897, respectively. The RMSEA value was below the international threshold of 0.080 (Hair *et al.*, 2014). There were no missing values for any variables. The initial non-unidimensional solution of AMOS 27 found chi-square = 1,390.1 with degrees of freedom (df) = 436, CFI = 0.867 and RMSEA = 0.087. The unidimensional solution was achieved in the fifth run of the model with chi-square = 1,403.9, CFI = 0.866 and RMSEA = 0.086. The CFA of the process used the maximum likelihood tool with bootstrap for 2,000 times. The modification indices revealed e16 to e18 = 45.621, e6 to e7 = 27.654, e19 to e20 = 23.956, e1 to e2 = 21.940, e7 to e8 = 10.585, e13 to e14 = 10.419, e12 to e13 = 8.153 and e6 to e8 = 8.086. The 8th covariance of e6 to e8 produced an estimate with chi-square = 1,217.0, df = 433, CMIN/DF = 2.811, CFI = 0.891 and RMSEA = 0.079.

Since the 184th case produced Mahalanobis d-squared = 130.523, we eliminated it as the value was extremely high (above 100.000) and produced a better RMSEA = 0.077 and CFI = 0.897 than the solution of the eight covariances. The extraction of the 180th case with Mahalanobis d-squared = 103.546 produced a solution with a worse RMSEA = 0.895 and

**Table 1.**  
Demographic and  
travel characteristics  
of respondents  
(N = 293)

Characteristics	No. of respondents	Characteristics	No. of respondents
<i>Gender</i>		<i>Religion</i>	
Male	210	Christian	211
Female	83	Hindu	72
<i>Age</i>		Buddhist	8
20–29	75	Sikh	2
30–39	105	<i>Type of trip</i>	
40–49	47	Domestic	207
>50	66	International	86
<i>Relationship status</i>		<i>First-time or repeat visitors to the destination</i>	
Single	88	First-time visitor	103
Married	184	Repeat visitor	190
Divorced	5	Travel companion	
Engaged	8	Family (partner and child)	120
Co-habiting	8	Friends	106
<i>Nationality</i>		Partner (husband/wife)	58
American	170	Alone	9
Indian	80	<i>Number of people in the travel party</i>	
Canadian	25	1	18
Brazilian	8	2	62
Chinese	4	>2	213
British	2	<i>Purpose of the trip</i>	
Italian	1	Leisure/tourism	239
Portuguese	1	Business	54
Thai	1	<i>Do you eat halal food while at home?</i>	
Irish	1	Yes	174
		No	119

CFI = 0.078. None of the variables generated standardised regression weights below the acceptable value of 0.500. Figure 2 shows the final estimate of the model.

The final run of CFA produced an estimate/solution with chi-square = 1,178.7, CFI = 0.897 and RMSEA = 0.077. Some statistics of interest found in the test of the fit of the model are as follows: NPAR = 127, CMIN = 1,178.695, DF = 433, P = 0.000, CMIN/DF = 2.722, NFI or Delta1 = 0.847, RFI or rho1 = 0.825, IFI or Delta2 = 0.898, TLI or rho2 = 0.882, RMSEA = 0.077, RMSEA LO 90 = 0.072, RMSEA HI 90 = 0.082 and PCLOSE = 0.000.

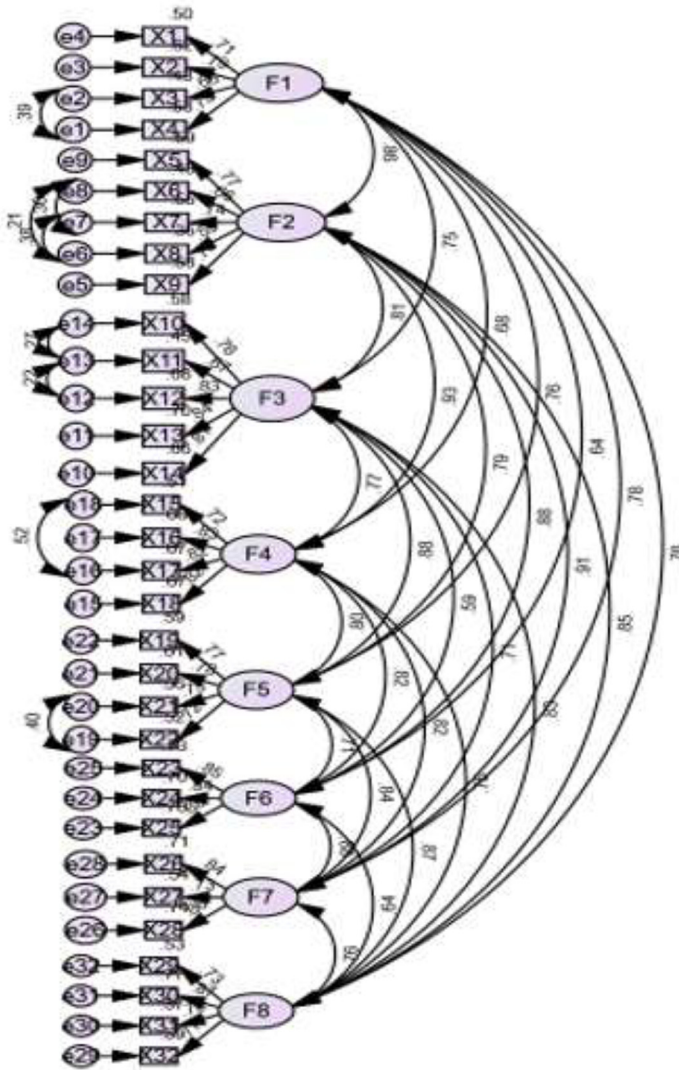
Table 2 below shows the correlation matrix indicating that the correlations are below the threshold value of 0.7, and therefore, the problem of multicollinearity does not exist.

#### *Test of hypotheses*

Based on the covariances found via the CFA of AMOS 27, the study tested the hypotheses, as presented in Table 3. The covariances between the independent constructs F1–F6 and the dependent construct F7 and between the independent construct F7 and the dependent construct F8 (see Figure 1) were determined. Table 3 shows that all seven hypotheses are supported and all relationships in the model are positive and significant at the 99% confidence level.

#### *Reliability versus validity*

This study measured reliability via the construct reliabilities calculated in Table 4 in and the use of CFA and the estimation of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the eight constructs. Table 4 shows that all



**Notes\*:** F1: Novelty, F2: Authenticity (restaurant), F3: Experience Co-creation, F4: Substantive Staging, F5: Togetherness, F6: Sensory Appeal, F7: Memorable Halal Food Experience, and F8: Place Attachment

**Figure 2.**  
Final estimation of the model\*

A constructs had construct reliabilities above 0.7, with the average construct reliability being 0.843. Additionally, the reliabilities of the constructs calculated via CFA presented in Table 4 are as follows: novelty seeking = 0.882, authenticity = 0.886, experience co-creation = 0.932, substantive staging = 0.925, togetherness = 0.903, sensory appeal =

Constructs	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8
F1	<i>0.849</i>							
F2	0.662	<i>0.832</i>						
F3	0.551	0.606	<i>0.884</i>					
F4	0.480	0.685	0.574	<i>0.892</i>				
F5	0.556	0.595	0.679	0.600	<i>0.869</i>			
F6	0.441	0.684	0.393	0.624	0.508	<i>0.926</i>		
F7	0.579	0.667	0.509	0.624	0.639	0.680	<i>0.901</i>	
F8	0.563	0.650	0.627	0.553	0.668	0.437	0.564	<i>0.884</i>

**Table 2.**  
Correlation matrix  
(N = 292)\*

**Notes:** Constructs\*: F1: novelty, F2: authenticity (restaurant), F3: experience co-creation, F4: substantive staging, F5: togetherness, F6: sensory appeal, F7: memorable halal food experience and F8: place attachment. Diagonal shows the square root of AVE

Hypo-theses	Relationship*	Beta	Estimate Std. error	C.R. (t)	Sig. ( <i>p</i> -value)	Status of hypotheses
<i>H1</i>	F1: Novelty to F7	0.566	0.070	8.091	0.000	Supported
<i>H2</i>	F2: Authenticity (restaurant) to F7	0.614	0.063	9.699	0.000	Supported
<i>H3</i>	F3: Experience co-creation to F7	0.500	0.058	8.600	0.000	Supported
<i>H4</i>	F4: Substantive staging to F7	0.604	0.065	9.347	0.000	Supported
<i>H5</i>	F5: Togetherness to F7	0.561	0.066	8.551	0.000	Supported
<i>H6</i>	F6: Sensory appeal to F7	0.673	0.068	9.964	0.000	Supported
<i>H7</i>	F7: Memorable halal food experience to F8	0.582	0.069	8.434	0.000	Supported

**Table 3.**  
Test of hypotheses  
using CFA  
(covariances) via  
AMOS 27 (N = 292)

**Note:** \*F8: Place attachment

0.940, memorable halal food experience = 0.913 and place attachment = 0.918. Furthermore, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the eight constructs was above the critical value of 0.7. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was calculated via Scale tool Reliability Analysis in SPSS 27 as follows: novelty seeking = 0.832, authenticity = 0.845, experience co-creation = 0.895, substantive staging = 0.886, togetherness = 0.858, sensory appeal = 0.894, memorable halal food experience = 0.852 and place attachment = 0.857. The average Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.865.

A two-step procedure was performed to evaluate convergent validity. In the first step, the standardised regression weights of all variables were found to be above 0.5 (within the range of 0.594 to 0.885), showing no convergent validity. Only 27 out of the 32 values of standardised regression weights are above 0.7, indicating convergent validity. In the second step, the calculation of the variance extracted from each construct exceeded 50%; thus, the model showed somewhat convergent validity. Specifically, the variance extracted for the eight constructs was above 50%, with novelty seeking = 0.721, authenticity = 0.692, experience co-creation = 0.781, substantive staging = 0.795, togetherness = 0.755, sensory appeal = 0.858, memorable halal food experience = 0.811 and place attachment = 0.781; the average variance extracted (AVE) was 0.774. These calculations reveal that each construct has a variance extracted greater than 0.5. Since the AVE is 0.774 and is greater than 0.5, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) discriminant validity criterion is satisfied.



Variables	Item reliability								Eigen- values	$\delta$ = 1-item reliability
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8		
X1	0.709								0.709	0.291
X2	0.787								0.787	0.213
X3	0.658								0.658	0.342
X4	0.730								0.730	0.270
X5		0.765							0.765	0.235
X6		0.656							0.636	0.364
X7		0.738							0.738	0.262
X8		0.594							0.594	0.406
X9		0.729							0.729	0.271
X10			0.761						0.761	0.259
X11			0.668						0.668	0.332
X12			0.826						0.826	0.174
X13			0.836						0.836	0.164
X14			0.812						0.812	0.188
X15				0.716					0.716	0.284
X16				0.826					0.826	0.174
X17				0.817					0.817	0.183
X18				0.820					0.820	0.180
X19					0.768				0.768	0.232
X20					0.782				0.782	0.218
X21					0.749				0.749	0.251
X22					0.722				0.722	0.278
X23						0.852			0.852	0.148
X24						0.837			0.837	0.163
X25						0.885			0.885	0.115
X26							0.842		0.842	0.158
X27							0.731		0.731	0.269
X28							0.861		0.861	0.139
X29								0.726	0.726	0.274
X30								0.875	0.875	0.125
X31								0.756	0.756	0.244
X32								0.766	0.766	0.234
Variance extracted 72.10 69.24 78.06 79.48 75.53 85.80 81.13 78.08 AVE = 77.43										
%										
Construct reliability 0.882 0.886 0.932 0.925 0.903 0.940 0.913 0.918 ACR = 0.912										

**Notes:** The following formulae are used for calculating VE and CR of constructs:  $VE = \Sigma$  of standardised regression weights<sup>2</sup>/n,  $CR = (\Sigma \text{ of standardised regression weights})^2 / [(\Sigma \text{ of standardised regression weights})^2 + (\Sigma \delta)]$ , AVE = average variance extracted, ACR = average construct reliability, constructs: F1: novelty, F2: authenticity (restaurant), F3: experience co-creation, F4: substantive staging, F5: togetherness, F6: sensory appeal, F7: memorable halal food experience and F8: place attachment

**Table 4.**  
Completely  
standardised factor  
loadings, variance  
extracted and  
estimates of  
construct reliability  
(N = 292)\*

Table 2 above indicates the criteria for discriminant validity, which is achieved when the square root of AVE is higher than the correlation among the constructs. All the constructs explain more information through their items than through their inter-relationships. Based on Hu and Bentler (1999), all the constructs in this study performed well, suggesting that they can be used in the present conceptual model (see Figure 1).

## Conclusion and discussion

This study's objective was to exemplify the antecedents and outcomes of memorable halal food experiences among non-Muslim tourists. The results echo the theoretical underpinnings of CAT by demonstrating that non-Muslim tourists' subjective interpretations of their halal food experiences (novelty, authenticity, experience co-creation, substantive staging of the servicescape, togetherness and sensory appeal) can trigger an attitudinal, emotional response and perceived proximity to a place (place attachment).

The empirical results support all seven hypotheses. The relationship between novelty seeking and memorable halal food experiences is significant. Our findings concur with other studies indicating the significance of novelty seeking in the formation of MTE (Sthapit *et al.*, 2021; Wei *et al.*, 2019) and confirm that tasting new foods contributes to a memorable culinary experience (Sthapit, 2017). For example, Sthapit's (2017) study in the context of food experiences found that respondents were interested in tasting local food while at a destination because of the novelty involved. One of the dimensions in their proposed conceptual framework of tourists' memorable food experiences was novelty seeking. The higher the amount of novelty seeking satisfied during a halal food experience, the higher its memorability, supporting *H1*.

A positive correlation was also found between the authenticity of the restaurant and the likelihood of a memorable halal food experience. This study supports the findings of studies indicating a growing number of tourists seeking authenticity through tourism food experiences (Le *et al.*, 2019). The findings also support studies suggesting authenticity as an antecedent of MTE (Sthapit and Björk, 2017) and that authenticity is one of the most important aspects of tourists' food experiences while at a destination (Ellis *et al.*, 2018). This correlation supports *H2*.

The relationship between experience co-creation and memorable halal food experience, as put forth in *H3*, was also supported. During the experience co-creation process, non-Muslim diners can become involved either passively or actively; those who co-create their food experiences by actively interacting with service employees to learn about local specialities and food culture should have a more memorable experience. In other words, tourists who are more inclined towards active participation and who are engaged in the culinary experience tend to have a more memorable halal food experience. This result supports existing studies purporting co-creation as a significant predictor of the ability to remember an experience (Campos *et al.*, 2016; Sthapit *et al.*, 2018).

The association between the substantive staging of the servicescape and non-Muslim tourists' memorable halal food experiences was significant and positive, as hypothesized in *H4*. If the physical setting of the halal food service is attractive and cheerful, the memorability of tourists' halal food experiences is greater. This finding supports those indicating that a favourable perception of an environment creates favourable subjective memories (Dong and Siu, 2013; Sthapit, 2017). This result highlights the importance of the physical environment when consuming halal food at a tourism destination.

Additionally, our results show that the association between togetherness and memorable halal food experiences is positive, supporting *H5*. This finding concurs with existing studies indicating the importance of togetherness in tourists' gastronomic food experiences (Goolaup and Mossberg, 2017; Mynttinen *et al.*, 2015; Sthapit, 2017; Stone *et al.*, 2018) and that recalled food experiences are typically related to communal eating (Kauppinen-Räsänen *et al.*, 2013). For example, Goolaup and Mossberg (2017) identified that socialising with friends and family while enjoying food was a vital holiday experience for tourists.

We also found the relationship between sensory appeal and non-Muslim tourists' memorable halal food experiences to be significant, confirming *H6*. This finding is in line with studies indicating that tourists' culinary experiences connected to the sensory appeal of the food contribute to the development of food memories (Prescott *et al.*, 2002). According to Hjalager and Richards (2002), sensory pleasure derived from food and eating is important in fulfilling the experiential component of the tourist experience. This finding also supports existing studies that suggest the significance of sensory appeal in food tourism and its influence on the memorability of the trip (Chandralal and Valenzuela, 2013; Kauppinen-Räsänen *et al.*, 2013).

Finally, this study determined that halal food experience memorability has a significant effect on place attachment, which is congruous with studies indicating that tourists' memories of their food experiences impact place attachment (Sthapit *et al.*, 2019a; Tsai, 2016). The study found that non-Muslim tourists' memories of halal food experiences positively and significantly influenced their perceived proximity to the destination visited, supporting *H7*.

The overall theoretical contributions of this study include the extension of the existing literature on MTEs and halal food experience that comprises novelty, authenticity, experience co-creation, substantive staging of the servicescape, togetherness and sensory appeal. The findings extend Sthapit *et al.* (2021) conceptual framework for non-Muslim tourists' memorable halal food experience beyond taste (sensory appeal), spending time with family and friends (togetherness), ambience (substantive staging of servicescape) and novelty to include authenticity and experience co-creation as crucial variables that affect non-Muslim tourists' halal food experiences.

This study has managerial implications for halal food restaurants. Non-Muslim tourists have highly differentiated tastes and needs; thus, offering a variety of halal food choices should enhance their sense of autonomy and cater to diverse preferences, thereby contributing to a novel and memorable halal food experience. Halal food restaurants may find that offering a large variety of menu items gives them an advantage over outlets offering less food choice because it increases the likelihood that tourists will satisfy their desire for new food experiences while on a trip. In addition, employees at halal food restaurants should actively interact with non-Muslim tourists. Non-Muslim diners should not be viewed as passive agents but rather as active producers of their own consumption experiences. In fact, restaurant employees should be enthusiastic about customers showing a desire to co-create their experiences by actively interacting with the staff to learn about halal cuisine and food culture. Employees should recommend a variety of suitable halal dishes to best satisfy non-Muslim tourists' individual tastes. This study calls for a shift in the role of the staff of halal restaurants from service providers to memorable-experience co-creators. Thus, halal food restaurant managers should ensure high levels of training to improve the quality of staff-guest interactions. In addition, managers should beautify the physical settings of their halal food restaurants with cultural elements, and the setting should cater to both small and large groups to encourage a feeling of togetherness. Moreover, in addition to displaying halal certification, restaurant employees should be encouraged to tell stories about the preparation of the food when serving non-Muslim tourists, which will contribute to their perceived authenticity of the restaurant.

This study has some limitations. The findings of this study are exploratory in nature, and convenience sampling was used, limiting the study's generalisability. The study was also limited by the use of a Web-based survey questionnaire; this limitation might be overcome by adopting a greater array of research methods. In addition, the number of participants was limited. Studying a larger sample would address this issue. It is also

limited in that the survey was only available in English, which could have excluded non-English speakers from participating. Future studies should make the survey available in different languages. In addition, the study participants primarily were primarily American, so future studies would benefit from using a more multicultural sample base. Moreover, the time-lapse between the actual experience and completion of the survey was one year, which might have impacted survey responses. Data should be gathered shortly after a trip has been taken to avoid the creation of false memories.

Further research should explore the antecedents and outcomes of non-Muslim tourists' memorable halal food experiences in more detail. It would be interesting to investigate other antecedents relevant to food tourism practices and memorability, such as negative emotions and choice overload. Future studies could test the model by incorporating other outcome variables, such as hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, which might provide a broader understanding of non-Muslim tourists' memorable halal food experiences.

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### Further reading

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### Corresponding author

Erose Sthapit can be contacted at: [erose\\_sthapit@hotmail.com](mailto:erose_sthapit@hotmail.com)