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# PROVISION OF SHARIAH-COMPLIANT HOTEL SERVICES TOWARDS MUSLIM TOURISM IN MALAYSIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Statistics issued by the Islamic Tourism Centre (2015) shows that in Malaysia, there are more than 2.835 million hotels which provide services for tourists, both domestic and from abroad. Hence, Malaysia has the potential to highlight hospitality products which may better attract more tourists to visit Malaysia. However, provision of shariah-compliant hotel services is still inadequate to facilitate Muslim tourists. This is due to the inseparability of hotel services from gambling activity and opening of casinos. Likewise with the issue of halal food which is also called into question. Thus, the purpose of this research is to study the provision of shariah-compliant hotel services to tap the potential of increased Muslim tourism and also to determine the difference in level of services between genders. This research uses survey study method and data is collected through distribution of questionnaire. 72 respondents among hospitality staff are selected as respondents using purposive sampling method. Data is analysed using descriptive statistics and also Mann Whitney U test. Research results find that there are three aspects of providing shariah-compliant hotel services which should be emphasized, which are; the aspect of halal food preparation, the Islamic physical design of the hotel and Islamic modest dressing of hospitality staff. Research results also finds that there is no difference in level of hotel services between the genders.*

**Keywords:** Hotel, shariah-compliant, Muslim tourism, *halal*, services

**Cite this Article:** Rosmawati Mohamad Rasit, Salasiah Hanin Hamjah and Siti Fatma Mansor, Provision of Shariah-Compliant Hotel Services towards Muslim Tourism in Malaysia, International Journal of Civil Engineering and Technology, 9(9), 2018, pp. 1815–1823.

<http://www.iaeme.com/IJCIET/issues.asp?JType=IJCIET&VType=9&IType=9>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry contributes to national per capita revenue. Malaysian tourism statistics show that 21.75 percent of 25 million foreign tourists who visited Malaysia in the year 2012 were Muslim tourists (ITC 2012). This shows that Malaysia has a good potential in promoting Muslim tourism. Abdul Ghani (2013) stated that Malaysia is one of the main Muslim tourist destinations with increasing number of arrivals since the year 2000, besides Muslim countries, Malaysia is also frequently one of the choices of tourists from various other countries in the world. An ETP report in the year 2012 stated that the arrival of 25.03 million tourists had contributed RM60.6 billion to Malaysia. The tourism industry is in a strong position as one of the three main contributors of foreign exchange earnings to the Malaysian economy (ETP Report 2012).

Therefore, according to Mohd Fadil (2011), in efforts to promote tourism, the hospitality or hotel sector in Malaysia has to be upgraded. The hotel sector should be required to provide *halal* food and beverage, supply a copy of al-Quran in each guest room with prayer carpet and direction of *Qiblah* indicated, maintain a prayer hall for guests, and separate recreational facilities for men and women. It is important for a shariah-compliant hotel to provide various benefits and cater to the needs of Muslim visitors and tourists. The concept of shariah compliance means providing services such as comfortable accommodation, *halal* food and beverage as well as management with Islamic characteristics based on al-Quran and Shariah (Mohd Fadil 2011). Hence, the creation of shariah-compliant hotels is not only to fulfill the demands of human nature for facilities while on tour, but also to facilitate customers to fulfill proper worship of Allah SWT.

## 2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

According to Mohd Fadil (2011a), the hospitality or hotel sector is one of the important components in the tourism industry to provide tourists with facilities of accommodation and food and beverage. Further, Mohd Fadil (2011a) stated that the hotel industry in Malaysia needs to make changes to provide Muslim consumer-friendly services and facilities. Statistics reported by the World Tourism Organization (2010) showed that Shariah-compliant hotels represent almost 10 percent of the global tourism market.

However, statistics issued by the Halal Hub Section, Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia (JAKIM 2010) show that there are only 64 restaurants in hotels which have a valid *halal* certification, compared to 2000 hotels nation-wide which have restaurants in their premises. This shows that most hotels in Malaysia still lack awareness in providing facilities for *halal* food and beverage. Besides this, according to Abdul Kadir (1991), the growth of leading hotels in tourist areas also offer gambling activity and casinos are opened to reap manifold profits.

Thus, Muhammad Zam (2013) argued that the hotel sector in Malaysia has created a new trend in promoting *halal* food services to the consumer. This is because shariah-compliant hotels are indeed needed in efforts to offer facilities and services such *halal* food and beverage, space for prayers, indicator for *qiblah* direction, prayer carpet and a copy of al-

Quran in guestrooms as well as entertainment permitted by Shariah (Abdul Ghani 2013; Muhamad Rafiq 2013; Mohd Fadil 2011). This scenario creates an opportunity for the hotel sector to provide shariah-compliant facilities in order to properly uplift the Muslim tourism sector. Hence, there is a requirement to scientifically study this issue.

### 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research is conducted with the following objectives:

1. To study the provision of Shariah-compliant hotel services in order to promote Muslim tourism.
2. To study the difference in level of shariah-compliant hotel services rendered between the genders.

### 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 4.1. Concept of Muslim Tourism

Hasan et al. (2010) held the opinion that there are some categories of Muslim tourism: *Musafir*, *Ziarah*, *Rehlah*, *Siyahah*, as well as *Umrah* and *Hajj* comprising of the respective purpose of tourism such as business affair, study, preaching, eco-tour, obtaining information and taking lessons from it, health, recreation, friendship or kinship bond, taking refuge or protection from threats as well as change of attitude to seek Allah's pleasure. Asmak & Fatimah (2010) explained that the above recorded terminology are found in Al-Quran which urges and encourages Muslims and is a form of *ibadah* (worship) in Islam if accompanied with the right intention. In the eyes of the public, tourism is a pleasure trip (Zainab et al. 2008). According to Andek Masnah (2010), intention or the goal of Muslim tourism is required to conform with Shariah and universal moral values as well give benefit to both the tourism industry and the tourist. If emphasis is lop-sided towards material development to the neglect of spiritual elements, it will to some extent adversely affect moral values, life norms, culture, race and religion which have been preserved up to then (Andek Masnah 2010).

Shakiri (2006) stated that Muslim tourism is not only limited to tourism motivated purely by religion but also includes all forms of tourism not contradictory to Islamic values. Islamic values means not committing matters which contradict Islam, such as fornication, excessive entertainment and neglecting prayers. Henderson (2009) held the opinion that it refers to tourism which places religious considerations as important even though it is not the main motive of the journey. In Muslim tourism, the main priority is to respect Islam so that the purpose of the Muslim group is not to get carried away and neglect religious matters as this will increasingly mislead the human heart. Rapid world development with all the use of sophisticated technology is beyond man's control. However, it requires inner restraint and self-awareness to control everything in order that religion is still firmly upheld in whatever is done.

#### 4.2. Concept of Shariah-compliant Hotel

Shepard (2006) stated that hotels have rapidly developed as lucrative businesses for their owners. The function of a hotel today is not only to provide lodging for travellers, but also as a community centre with facilities for meetings, for screening slideshows, movies, etc., communication and personal services. Md Hamzaimi et al. (2015) stated that the concept of Shariah-compliant hotel is quite new and this term is not widely used in the academic world or industry. Besides this, Mohd Fadil (2011) argued that the shariah-compliant hotel concept is still in its introductory stage and is built in response to an influx of requests from Muslim

tourists. Apart from the term Shariah-compliant hotel, it is also known as Muslim hotel or Islamic hotel which may be defined as a hotel that provides services consistent with Shariah principles (Nuruljannah 2011; Mohd Rizal et al. 2012; Md Hamzaimi et al. 2015).

Generally, a Shariah-compliant hotel may be defined as a hotel which provides services consistent with Shariah principles not limited to only *halal* food and beverage, but more than this, it extends to the entire hotel operations (Mohd Rizal et al. 2012 & Nor ‘Azzah et al. 2015). According to a study by Nuruljannah (2014) in her article entitled “Analysis of Shariah-compliant hotel in Malaysia”, she concluded that it is also known as a Muslim or Islamic hotel which may be defined as a hotel which provides services consistent with Shariah principles considered as a code of ethics to lay the guidelines for the entire life in Islam.

Md Hamzaimi et al. (2015) defined a Shariah-compliant hotel as one with its management and services based on Islamic Shariah principles, in addition to providing a tranquil, comfortable and sound ambience with guest-friendly services. Hesham et al. (2014) stated that a Shariah-compliant hotel is defined as one which provides services consistent with Shariah principles. In addition, Zakiah & Fadilah (2013) argued that a Shariah-compliant hotel is not limited to purely providing *halal* food and beverage but involves the entire hotel operations.

Hesyam et al. (2014) argued that most Shariah-compliant hotels which operate in the Middle-East comprise of various versions in terms of management and business. A hotel which does not serve alcohol is categorised as Shariah-compliant even though in other aspects it does not conform to rules laid down by Shariah. In addition, the hotel is required to have a restaurant and other services with only female staff to serve specifically female guests (Hesyam et al. 2014).

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses survey study method and data collection is by distribution of questionnaire. Charles (2004) held the opinion that the survey method is the most frequently method used to collect descriptive information on a group of individuals. Selection of 72 respondents from among hospitality staff is based on purposive sampling, a procedure of sampling whereby a group of subjects possess certain characteristics as research respondents. Thus, research criteria only specify some physical characteristics of a Shariah-compliant hotel: providing *halal* food and beverage, ethical apparel of hospitality staff in Islamically modest fashion, Islamic characteristics of management and facilities. Apart from that, this research involves three hotel locations which fulfill the said criteria (Table 1).

**Table 1** Frequency of Population and Research Sample

No.	Research Location	Population Total	*Sample Size 95% (+-5%)
1.	De Palma Hotel, Shah Alam	80	30
3.	Tabung Haji HQ Hotel, Kuala Lumpur	20	10
4.	Tabung Haji Hotel, Kelana Jaya	44	32
	TOTAL	144	72

\* (Source: 2007 Cohen et al. Table)

Data is analysed by descriptive statistics and also Mann Whitney U test. Chua (2008) stated that Mann Whitney U test is a non-parametric test for analysis of differences between independent and dependent variables. Apart from that, according to Ananda (2009) the Mann Whitney U test is a statistical test which enables the researcher to compare two samples

towards a nominal or ordinal variable. For example, it is used to compare significant differences between male and female students toward the ordinal variable such as work.

## 6. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Providing Shariah-Compliant Hotel Services in the Promotion of Muslim Tourism

Based on the distribution of frequency and percentage toward providing of shariah-compliant hotel services in promoting Muslim tourism, there are 13 items related to such services stated within three main constructs: ‘providing *halal* food and beverage’, ‘providing hotel facilities with Islamic characteristics’ and ‘providing hospitality staff’.

**Table 2** Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Shariah-compliant Hotel Services in Promotion of Muslim Tourism

No.	Statement	Percentage (%) & Frequency (N)				Mean	SD
		SDA	DA	A	SA		
<b>Providing Halal F&amp;B</b>							
1	<i>Halal</i> and non- <i>halal</i> food preparation requires separate kitchens.	(0)	(0)	40.3%	59.7%	3.59	0.49
2	Follows <i>Halal</i> Hub procedure.	(0)	(0)	51.4%	48.6%	3.48	0.50
3	Serves <i>halal</i> food and beverage.	1.4 %	(0)	51.4%	47.2%	3.45	0.52
4	Personal hygiene and food security are given priority.	(0)	(0)	47.2%	52.8%	3.52	0.50
<b>Providing Islamic Hotel Services</b>							
5	Provides copy of al-Quran, prayer carpet and <i>Qiblah</i> indicator in each hotel room	(0)	(0)	43.1%	56.9%	3.56	0.49
6	Space for prayer	(0)	(0)	47.2%	52.8%	3.52	0.50
7	Comfortable rooms.	(0)	1.4%	45.8%	52.8%	3.51	0.53
8	Position of bed and toilet are not facing <i>Qiblah</i> .	(0)	(0)	55.6%	44.4%	3.44	0.50
9	Provides calendar for prayer times	(0)	1.4%	56.9%	41.7%	3.40	0.52
<b>Providing Hospitality Staff</b>							
11	Hospitality staff wear Islamic modest dressing	5.6%	1.4%	48.6%	44.4%	3.31	0.76
12	Hospitality staff are required to check marital status of guests	(0)	4.2%	61.1%	34.7%	3.30	0.54
13	Hospitality staff must maintain etiquette and morals	(0)	(0)	43.1%	56.9%	3.56	0.49

SDA=Strongly DisAgree

DA=DisAgree

A=Agree

SA=Strongly Agree

Based on the frequency and percentage of the research findings, the entire 72 respondents who represent 100% agree with the highest mean (mean=3.59) item that “*halal* and non-*halal* food preparation requires separate kitchens”. This finding strengthens the argument of Battour et al. (2010) that *halal* and non-*halal* food may not be cooked in the same kitchen using the same utensils. This finding is also in line with the opinion held by Khairudin (2013) that in the handling of *halal* food such as preparation, storage, serving, packing and so on, there must not be contact or proximity to non-*halal* things which are forbidden for consumption or use by Muslims. Besides that, this finding is supported by the research findings of Md Hamzaimi et. al (2015) which showed that 50 out of 55 respondents agreed

that a Shariah-compliant hotel serve *halal* and good or fine food. This item is in the category of *halal* food and beverage aspect because according to Mohd Yusuf (2014) selection of *halal* food is important as it forms blood, flesh and the heart.

Descriptive analysis for the items with second highest mean value, “Provides a copy of al-Quran, prayer carpet and *Qiblah* indicator in each hotel room“ and item “hospitality staff must maintain etiquette and morals”, each scoring a mean value of (mean=3.56). Respondents gave a very good feedback of 100 percent agreement. These items are categorized in the providing of Islamic hotel facilities. A Shariah-compliant hotel should have the facilities for providing services such as al-Quran and prayer carpet as well as *Qiblah* indicator in each hotel room. Therefore, each Shariah-compliant hotel should have the facilities to provide such services for the convenience of Muslim guests as discussed by Zakiah & Noorsalwati (2012); Mohd Fadil (2011); Henderson (2010); Najahudin (2010).

Likewise with the item “hospitality staff must maintain etiquette and morals”. This item is in line with the view held by Salasiah & Razaleigh (2003) whereby entrepreneurs of hotels should acculturate Islamic values in the environment such as maintaining Muslim etiquette and decency at the swimming pool and so on. Mohammad Shahrin (2009) also held the view that staff providing services in the hotel sector should have a pleasant personality such as good manners, good communicative skills, sensitiveness and concern for hotel guests, and honesty. Thus, it may be stated that hospitality staff of a *Shariah*-compliant hotel must keep their etiquette and morals.

## 7. HYPOTHESIS TEST FOR LEVEL OF SHARIAH-COMPLIANT HOTEL SERVICES BETWEEN THE GENDERS IN PROMOTING MUSLIM TOURISM

There is a significant difference in providing *Shariah*-compliant hotel services between male and female staff. The results (Table 3) shows the outcome of the Man Whitney U test conducted to determine the average difference in giving of *Shariah*-compliant hotel services between genders. The findings show that the independent samples are not significant (U= 523.500 P >.005). This shows that there is no significant relation in the level of services between the genders. This means that the gender factor does not influence giving of *Shariah*-compliant hotel services by hospitality staff.

**Table 3** Man Whitney U Test Coefficient of Level of *Shariah*-compliant Hotel Services in Promoting Muslim Tourism between Genders

Variable		N	MEAN	Menu Rank	U	Sig.
Gender	Men	37	23.685	33.15	523.500	.148
	Women	35	3.4694			
Providing of Shariah-compliant Hotel Services					40.04	

Research results show that there is no significant difference between male and female respondents in giving *Shariah*-compliant hotel services. Research findings are in line with what was argued by Haryati (2013) in her study that, there is no significant difference between the work-stress factor among staff of MAINS Holdings Sdn. Bhd.(MHSB). Research results strengthen the findings of a study by Mahnorlina (2004) which showed that gender

does not influence one's career development. This shows that the majority of respondents in this research give their services for the purpose of devotion to Allah SWT.

In other words, according to Ab. Aziz (2010), each worker is a slave of Allah, thus certainly he would stay away from what is forbidden by Him. In other words, he would invite other parties to do righteous deeds and prevent evil. It is in line with the words of Allah SWT verse 110 surah al-Imran, al-Quran, as in the following meaning:

You (True Believers in Islamic Monotheism, and real Followers of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his Sunna) are the best people ever raised up for mankind: you enjoy *al-Ma'ruf* and forbid *al-Munkar*, and you believe in Allah. And had the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) believed, it would have been better for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are *al-Fasiqun*.

Sayyid Qutb (2000) interpreted the above verse: that Allah SWT commanded a group of Muslims to convey the message of calling to goodness and forbidding wrong or evil. It is not an easy matter to convey a message, but the responsibility has to be fulfilled so that mankind will live to please Allah. Thus Ting (2005) stated that a hotel needs to ensure that its services are the best so that hotel guests will feel that they are welcome and comfortable staying in the hotel, This is the only way that the hotel's reputation may be enhanced and attract other visitors. Thus, the hotel management plays an important role in successfully operating hotel by ensuring customer satisfaction. Besides that, Mohd Fadil (2011) argued that in efforts to upgrade the *Shariah*-compliant hotel sector, it has to provide services such as serving *halal* food and beverage, supplying in each hotel room a copy of al-Quran, prayer carpet and *Qiblah* indicator, providing a prayer hall for visitors, and separate recreational facilities for men and women.

In addition to ensuring customer satisfaction, ethics and service have also to be emphasized as argued by Aishah (1989) that in food business, customer service is the key to success and profitability. In conclusion, research findings reject the hypothesis constructed through the Man Whitney U Test. Research findings show that there is no difference in service between gender in giving *Shariah*-compliant hotel services. This clearly shows that research respondents give their best service to their clients.

## 8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, providing hotel services which conform with *Shariah* is crucial to welcome Muslim tourists from various countries in the world in order that they, who come from different cultures, may feel confident that Malaysia is the destination for Muslim tourists. Likewise, hospitality staff, who manage hotel services which conform with *Shariah* guidelines, are the intermediary and spokesmen in promoting Muslim tourism. Research results find that there are three aspects of providing *Shariah*-compliant hotel services which must be emphasized; providing of *halal* food and beverage, Islamic characteristics of hotel physical design and Islamic modesty in apparel fashion of hospitality staff. Research results also find that there is no difference between genders in the level of hotel services rendered. Research findings are beneficial to the hotel sector in the promotion of Muslim tourism through aspects of *Shariah*-compliance. Should these research findings be applied in developing *Shariah*-compliant hotel products by entrepreneurs involved, the image of Malaysia as a Muslim tourism destination will continue to develop.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was supported by University Research Grants Scheme (GUP) (GUP-2018-011).

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