

Muslim friendly tourism and accommodation of Malaysian hotel industries

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Muslim friendly tourism and accommodation of Malaysian hotel industries

Turismo y alojamiento amigable para los musulmanes de las industrias hoteleras de Malasia

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia is one of the countries that attract tourist from all over the world. There is no barrier for the tourist to select from a range of halal products and hotel services available. Therefore, several potential attributes of Muslim friendly hotel services were analyzed from two major tourist destination state of Malaysia, namely Kedah and Penang. The analysis was based on three major online accommodation service providers. The findings revealed the significant information of the Muslim friendly hotel services in Malaysia. Therefore, updating the current information of the Muslim friendly tourism services is recommended.

Keywords: Halal Products, Hotel, Malaysia, Muslim Friendly Services.

RESUMEN

Malasia es uno de los países que atrae a turistas de todo el mundo. No hay ninguna barrera para que el turista seleccione entre una gama de productos halal y servicios de hotel disponibles. Por lo tanto, se analizaron varios atributos potenciales de servicios hoteleros amigables para los musulmanes en dos de los principales destinos turísticos de Malasia, a saber, Kedah y Penang. El análisis se basó en tres proveedores principales de servicios de alojamiento en línea. Los hallazgos revelaron la importante información de los servicios de hotel musulmanes amigables en Malasia. Por lo tanto, se recomienda actualizar la información de los servicios turísticos musulmanes amigables.

Palabras clave: Hotel, Malasia, Productos Halal, Servicios Musulmanes Amigables.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia evolved Muslim friendly tourism as a favorable niche to draw the attention of the Muslim tourist from any part of the world. Due to the government's emphasis on Muslim traveler support, it offers Malaysia as a country of choice for tourists. The Malaysian government concern about Islamic worth not only for daily life but also at the traveler perspective. It has a fashionable Islamic heritage in addition to halal foods, Muslim friendly people, and a vast Islamic environment that allow Muslim tourist with a good Muslim friendly experience while traveling. Thus, Malaysia has made a whole exertion to become an Islamic and halal hub in recent years. It has shaped rules on unethical tourists, which the area of the unit which proscribed by Islam. However, yet some activities such as wearing skimpy clothing, drinking alcohol, sunbath, and serving non-halal food in restaurants are found in some tourist places (Henderson: 2010). It is crucial to reveal Muslim friendly tourism services in Malaysia. Thus, it will reflect the country's potential in branding itself as a Muslim friendly tourist destination (Shafaei & Mohamed: 2017).

Supplying the tourism goods and services required by the demand of Muslim tourists is called Muslim friendly tourism. It facilitates the Muslim consumer's respect and their dietary essential that comply with Islamic teachings which are defined by Islamic Shari'ah law following the Quran (the divine book), Hadith (the compilation of the traditions of Prophet Muhammad) and Fiqah (consensus opinions of a group of Islamic scholars). Therefore, Muslim friendly tourism service has an interpretation with Islamic rules. It is based on the development of Islamic practice for the Muslim traveler from any part of the world incompatible with their faith and practices. Bon & Hussain (2010) suggest that Muslim friendly tourism is a subtype of religious tourism, where the followers of Islam can follow their traveling requirements according to Islamic Sharia law. Each Muslim traveler must need to follow the fundamental Islamic structure. By providing the facilities to follow the Islamic Sharia law in the hotels, it may become Muslim friendly. The growing market of Islamic consumers as a result of international migration, education, and availability of online resources, the hotel industries are increasingly interested in meeting the needs of Muslim friendly tourists (Karim et al.: 2017).

Muslim friendly accommodation attributes referred to the Islamic and sharia compliance accommodation service and hospitality products. It has become one of the attractive segments in the travel and tourism industry in the current world. Figure 1 outlines various attributes of accommodation provision in Malaysia developed by the authors following Razzak et al., 2011 and reviewing different accommodation directories and Muslim friendly hotel websites. Muslim visitors would like to travel the place with the accommodation services that provide facilities and safeguard the interest of Muslim tourists (Henderson: 2016). In line with this, some tourism service provider specifically reveals the Muslim friendly accommodation attributes online. These accommodation attributes may encourage more Muslim tourists, whereas Muslim travelers would like to choose sharia-compliant traveling destination sites and stay at hotels with Muslim friendly accommodation attributes. Thus, attributes of accommodation with Muslim friendly criteria such as praying facilities, halal food facilities, and no alcohol at minibar should attract more Muslim travelers. As Muslim has to perform the prayer, it is necessary to provide places or facilities such as providing praying direction (Qibla) and praying mat or praying room or mosque for Muslim tourist. Al-Hamarneh & Steiner (2004) reported that a prayer room and house of prayer as an important place for the Muslims. Thus, in the hotel room, it provides the prayer direction and praying mat for the assistance of worship for Muslims and next, the availability of halal food in the accommodation. This attribute is very significant in the tourism industry. Halal food means Muslim friendly accommodation provider offers the travelers the food facilities followed by Islamic sharia. This is an essential factor in encouraging Muslim visitors to their hotel choice (Samori & Sabtu: 2014).

2. METHODS

Muslim friendly accommodation attributes determine the Islamic entertainment channels at their accommodations. It is one way to attract Muslim hotel guests to relax and enjoy their holidays. The hoteliers should be alert that both genders have to be separated at the swimming pool and cover up their aura in their hotel facilities. As gender, mixing at the swimming pool is allowable in many hotels. Muslim women's guests will not enjoy such activity because the standard rules require them to wear modest attires in front of both men and women. Muslim friendly Hoteliers should be aware not to allow their guests to drink alcohol and gambling. It has been clearly stated in Al-Quran that alcohol is the mother of the evil deed; thus, it should not be consumed by Muslims (Al-Qaradawi: 1999).

On the other hand, important accommodation attributes should take good care of the cleanliness of the hotel room. A good cleanroom will be suitable for Muslim reading the Al-Quran and perform their prayer. The bathroom is one of the places that is essential for Muslims to take a bath and prepare for the prayer. Besides that, toiletries such as soap are also significant to ensure that this is halal. Another attribute of accommodation services for Muslims is the importance of Islamic finance. The financial operations that set up for serving Muslim tourists must adhere to the Islamic concept. It means that the funds to set up must be from halal sources and not from sources that are prohibited in Islam. For instance, the fund from bank loans with interest is not a Muslim friendly criterion. Besides, no transactions must have any interest, which is strictly against Islamic Shariah. According to Stephenson (2014), hotel management must ensure that Zakat has been paid from the hotel's revenue to the people who are poor and in need. Thus, paying Zakat is a Muslim friendly accommodation attribute. Lastly, customer satisfaction is vital for the Muslim friendly accommodation attributes in order to evaluate the expectations and perceived performance of the product and services. As customer, pleasure is influenced by the attainable of customer services and their satisfaction became one of the concerns of all business.

3. RESULTS

Service encounter is the interaction between the service provider and customer-relevant to a core service offering. Facilitating the service encounter and create interactions with customers, can be done via online platforms, telephone, physical environments, and catalog or through other media. It is also very essential in Muslim friendly hospitality and accommodation attributes. The staff should know their Muslim customer's cultures or norms to fulfill their needs. The knowledge about customer's cultural, religious views or norms is valuable when dealing with customers from different cultures and religious backgrounds. For example, the staff should serve halal food to Muslim tourists in terms of culinary demands. The excellent staff service among the customers can make the tourist satisfied. Most of the Muslim tourists will concern whether the facility, hospitality, food and beverage, services along with the traveling destination site following the Islamic concept or not. In the hospitality or tourism industry, services may determine the success or failure of the business's destinations (Kamarudin & Ismail: 2017).

The current customer's decision-making process is encouraged by the available online information (Díaz & Koutra: 2013). Hence the content analysis was conducted using smart windows for two popular tourist destinations in Malaysia (Kedah and Penang). The data were obtained from December 2018 to March 2019 using the different online platforms, namely, booking.com, tripfez.com, and crescent.com. Thus about 122 hotels were analyzed from Kedah and 80 from Penang with common and Muslim friendly accommodation attributes.

The online content analysis of different accommodation providers' is included in Table 1. According to Battouret al. (2011), for Muslim friendly tourist support, several accommodation attributes are required, such as the provision of clear direction of Qibla and prayer mats. Another factor is the interior atmosphere in the room. Rooms must be suitably furnished and fitted with spaces allocated for prayer (Henderson:2010,). About

Qibla direction, 41.25 % of hotels from Penang and 31.97 % from Kedah provide this facility. However, according to the online information, none of the 80 accommodations in Penang provide a praying mat in the room, while there are 15 accommodations in Kedah that provide a praying mat for visitors. Since Malaysia is a Muslim majority country, most hotels should provide a praying mat for Muslim visitors along with the direction of Qibla. This can increase customers' satisfaction with the accommodation. Only 51 hotels from both states say that they serve halal food. There may be the accommodations provider those do not display the information regarding halal food online. Some of the restaurants and cafés served vegetarian food rather than being halal certified. Moreover, about the availability of alcohol at the minibar, most of the accommodations at Kedah (about 65 %) do not provide alcohol, where is in Penang 37.5 % provide no alcohol at the minibar inside the room. Other common attributes of hotel facilities that contribute to customers' satisfaction are cleanliness in the hotel. Thus, some researchers argued that hygiene and cleanliness is one of the vital factors for travelers (Dolnicar: 2002).

2 Here the data in Table 1 is the accommodation attributes provided by hotels from Kedah and Penang based on website content analysis rather than site visits. As Malaysia is promoting it as a Halal hub; therefore, the possibility is very high, there may be more Muslim friendly service offerings available rather than what is online. If the hotels' provider offers more Muslim friendly criteria on the website, it will attract more Muslim tourists not only from Malaysia but also from other countries by providing the positive value of various Muslim hotel's attributes, as stated in Table 1 below.

ATTRIBUTES	POSITIVE	NEUTRAL	NEGATIVE
Muslim Friendly	Availability of halal food	Knowledge staff	Have a minibar with alcohol
	Availability of Prayer room	Family-friendly ...	2. Karaoke
	Prayer mat	Free Wi-Fi	Alcohol onsite
	Qibla marker	Provide DVD players and multilingual TV channels	Allow or proximity to gambling
	The place to take ablution	Free parking	Provide adult TV channels
	Cleanliness, Halal soap	Room service	
	Provide Al-Quran	Delivery food on their rooms	
	Information about places of worship	Variety of food for all	
	Fund from Halal Source	Vegetarian Options	
	Payment of Zakat		
Female Muslim Tourist	Gender separated gym	Sauna onsite	Non separated open man gym
	Gender-specific swimming pool	Day spa onsite	2. Open spa bath
	Woman specific saloon onsite	Indoor swimming pool	Non separated outdoor swimming pool
		Saloon onsite	4. Non separated outdoor swimming pool
Male Muslim Tourist	Gender separated gym	Indoor swimming pool	
	Gender-specific swimming pool	Day spa onsite	
	Man specific saloon onsite	Saloon onsite	
		Sauna onsite	
		Indoor gym onsite	

Note: assumes that onsite facilities are segregated by sex.
 Table 1. Value of accommodation attributes for Muslim friendly tourism.

4. CONCLUSION

Malaysia is a Muslim majority country that has a higher potential in the development of Muslim friendly tourism industry. During 2014, the United Nations World Tourism Organization listed Malaysia as the 12th most visited country among Muslim tourists. Malaysia is seen as a global hub for the production of halal services and goods because of its Islamic history, heritage, and unique culture. These increased the number of Muslim tourists to Malaysia. In Malaysia, the majority of the hotels may serve halal food accordingly to the Islamic concept. However, it is not reflected in the online content analysis. Muslim tourists care about the product or services that allow in Islam Sharia and free from any substances that forbidden in Islam. The tourists will feel confident and satisfied with Muslim friendly tourism services according to the goods and services that fulfill the need of Muslim travelers. Although the Malaysian accommodation provider provide Muslim friendly positive service

Such as the direction of Qibla, halal food, and no alcohol at minibar, but online information service needs to be updated. This will increase the potentiality of Malaysian accommodation providers to promote Muslim friendly tourism services in Malaysia. The aim of Muslim friendly tourism is emphasizing the principles of shariah in tourism management and service among tourists. However, the scope of Muslim friendly tourism industry in Malaysia is not exclusively limited for only Muslims tourists but also for all other travelers to have trips in Malaysia.

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Attributes noted on accommodation provider's website	Penang	%	Kedah	%	Total	%
Halal food	27	33.75	24	19.67	51	25.25
No alcohol at minibar	30	37.5	35	28.69	65	32.18
List of Halal Restaurant	31	38.75	40	32.79	71	35.15
Qibla direction	33	41.25	39	31.97	72	35.64
Praying Mat	0	0	15	12.30	15	7.43
Standard	25	31.25	20	16.39	45	22.28
Toilet paper	40	50	48	39.34	88	43.56
Towels	54	67.5	54	44.26	108	53.47
Slippers	26	32.5	19	15.57	45	22.28
Private bathroom	55	68.75	72	59.02	127	62.87
Toilet	61	76.25	69	56.56	130	64.36
Free toiletries	51	63.75	72	59.02	123	60.89
Hairdryer	45	56.25	46	37.70	91	45.05
Shower	53	66.25	81	66.39	134	66.34
Terrace	17	21.25	27	22.13	44	21.78
Garden	20	25	38	31.15	58	28.71
BBQ	3	3.75	21	17.21	24	11.88
Electric Kettle	38	47.5	64	52.46	102	50.50
Refrigerator	12	15	17	13.93	29	14.36
Swimming pool	25	31.25	50	40.98	75	37.13
Outdoor pool	26	32.5	45	36.89	71	35.15
Indoor pool	5	6.25	3	2.46	8	3.96
Spa	15	18.75	24	19.67	39	19.31

Attributes noted on accommodation provider's website	Penang	%	Kedah	%	Total	%
Sauna	12	15	9	7.38	21	10.40
Fitness center	23	28.75	21	17.21	44	21.78
Sitting area	19	23.75	31	25.41	50	24.75
Flatt screen TV	58	72.5	72	59.02	130	64.36
Cable channels	19	23.75	16	13.11	35	17.33
Telephone	39	48.75	34	27.87	73	36.14
Room service	36	45	51	41.80	87	43.07
Restaurant	41	51.25	54	44.26	95	47.03
Minibar	20	25	35	28.69	55	27.23
Airport service	24	30	29	23.77	53	26.24
Shuttle service	28	35	28	22.95	56	27.72
Laundry	44	55	46	37.70	90	44.55
Dry cleaning	29	36.25	28	22.95	57	28.22
Air conditioning	66	82.5	90	73.77	156	77.23
Car rental	32	40	42	34.43	74	36.63
Safety	48	60	47	38.52	95	47.03
Family room	46	57.5	51	41.80	97	48.02
Non-smoking room	60	75	77	63.11	137	67.82
Ironing	35	43.75	42	34.43	77	38.12
Wakeup service	33	41.25	25	20.49	58	28.71
Wheelchair accessibility	36	45	25	20.49	61	30.20
24 hours	62	77.5	60	49.18	122	60.40
Conceirage service	33	41.25	25	20.49	58	28.71
Baggage storage	47	58.75	52	42.62	99	49.01
Currency exchange	22	27.5	15	12.30	37	18.32
English	57	71.25	88	72.13	145	71.78
Indonesia	11	13.75	9	7.38	20	9.90
Arabic	3	3.75	2	1.64	5	2.48
Free wifi	67	83.75	93	76.23	160	79.21
Free parking	59	73.75	84	68.85	143	70.79
Living area	21	26.25	34	27.87	55	27.23
Balcony	18	22.5	33	27.05	51	25.25
Kitchen	8	10	6	4.92	14	6.93
View	30	37.5	32	26.23	62	30.69
Children's playground	7	8.75	12	9.84	19	9.41
Water park	0	0	1	0.82	1	0.50
Total	122	100%	80	100%	202	100%

Table 2. Online content analysis of accommodation providers in Penang and Kedah, Malaysia

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