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Bahaaeddin Alareeni
Allam Hamdan *Editors*

Impact of Artificial Intelligence, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution on Business Success

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Halal Tourism: A Debate Between Its Religious Values and Business Interest; A Case of Malaysia



Azizah Musa, Zuhairah Ariff Abd Ghadas, and Suhalla Abdul Kadir

Abstract Tourism industry plays a critical role in propelling a country's economy. It is undeniable that most countries targeted to accelerate their revenue through the tourism industry and hotel sector. It is undeniable that halal tourism has become among the top agendas in worldwide tourism due to the growing number of Muslim travellers. This situation resulted in significant foreign earnings. As a Muslim-majority country in the world, Malaysia is striving very hard to be the best in this industry. In this vein, this paper is dedicated to study the real intention behind the acceptance of this market by the industry players and the public authorities who are responsible for the establishment and implementation of the policies and standards of this industry. Two main concerns are the surrender of religious obligation or business profit-making strategy. A qualitative study by way of interviewing public authorities' officials and hoteliers was employed to have a clear reaction in answering this doubt. A doctrinal analysis was also employed as a main research methodology by referring to reliable authoritative sources such as government policies and standards to strengthen the analysis done. The findings showed that Malaysia enjoys a great Halal tourism potential. Unfortunately, it is still far-reaching agenda, and much more to be exploited. Analysis of the data also seems to suggest a contradictory intention between the public authorities and the industry players. The former inclines towards promoting Islam as a way of life as to uphold the slogan of Malaysia as leader in Halal hub whereas for the latter, their utmost concern is equally divided between religious obligation and business interest. Hence, this paper opens new research avenues by making significant contributions in giving clear ideas to the more practicable framework, policies, and standards given consideration of balancing the industry players' religious obligation and business interest.

Keywords Halal tourism · Malaysia · Religious obligation · Business interest

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1 Introduction

According to a report issued by Thomson Reuters and Dubai-based growth strategy and advisory firm Dinar Standard, “Digital Islamic Economy Report”, in 2014 Muslim travellers spent US\$ 107 billion globally and it grew to US\$ 151 billion in 2015 (*Thomson Reuters Digital Islamic Economy Report* Thomson Reuters 2015). This figure of Muslim spending is estimated to raise more in the next coming years. This does not include expenditures made during religious pilgrimages to Mecca. Meanwhile, Nada El Sawy (2019), in her report, stated that worldwide spending in Islam-inspired ethical consumption sectors is set to increase 45 per cent by 2024, reaching \$3.2 trillion (Sawy 2019).

In addition, the Muslim travel industry was found to be the second largest in terms of worldwide travel spending, trailing only the Chinese market (US\$ 168 billion in spending). It is proudly to note that the so-called “Muslim-friendly” tourism industry brought in US\$ 24 billion in 2015, and the “Global Muslim Travel Index 2018” report forecasted that expenditure in the global Muslim travel segment will reach US\$ 220 billion by 2020. According to this report, the Muslim travel market is on track to maintain its rapid expansion, with an additional US\$80 billion predicted to be added by 2026, bringing the total to US\$300 billion. (MasterCard and CrescentRating 2018). In addition, there were an estimated 131 million Muslim visitor arrivals worldwide in 2017, up from 121 million in 2016, and this number is expected to rise to 156 million by 2020, representing for 10% of the travel market (Belopilskaya et al. 2017). However, all these cited reports and predictions could not be realised as everyone is aware of the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and the tourism industry is badly affected by this unprecedented virus on top of all the precaution and safety measures taken by all countries around the globe. According to Fazal Bahardeen, the founder of CrescentRating, 2020 began with destinations caught off guard against COVID-19. Although people still facing many uncertainties in the battle to overcome the pandemic, 2021 started with positive news of the successful development and approval of vaccines by various destinations. Given that the pandemic has dragged along, the new plausible path is to recover to 80% of 2019 levels by the middle of 2023 (Mastercard and CrescentRating 2021).

Still, several scholars have emphasized the importance of halal product and service development in the hospitality industry. In order to penetrate the halal market, it was agreed that hospitality organisations, notably hotels and residence practitioners, should be aggressive in acquiring Muslim clientele. Malaysia has been named as the best top halal friendly holiday destination among the ten Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries for the past nine years, except for 2019, when Malaysia shared the top spot with Indonesia (Mastercard and CrescentRating 2019). According to the most recent data from 2019, 130 countries have become halal tourism destinations. There were 46 Muslim country destinations and 82 non-Muslim country destinations, with Malaysia leading the Muslim country category and Singapore and Thailand leading the non-Muslim category (Mastercard and CrescentRating 2019; Musa 2021).

1.1 Halal: Is It an Obligatory Responsibility of a Muslim?

Muslim lives today which are served with various food items, beverages, and consumer goods demand that Muslims be vigilant and careful in using such things mainly due to the Halal, safety, and hygiene problems. Hygiene and quality are factors that must be considered when ensuring that the food is halal and suitable. Muslims believe that dietary factors influence acts of worship, health, and life. Among the most significant factors that make a Muslims' acts of worship excellent and acceptable by Allah S.W.T. is that his diet is halal, pure and clean. Muslims see the question of halal and haram as the foundation of understanding Islam for faith application. To determine the stance according to Islamic law, a Muslim should avoid matters of suspicion and anything in the grey area (syubuhah) (Nafis 2019).

The terms halal and haram are used throughout the Qur'an and Sunnah to refer to moral and material acts, respectively. In Muslim societies, the terms "halal" and "haram" are frequently used. Even to a degree, in some cases in multi-religious cultures, the word halal is the first thing non-Muslims notice about Islam.

Allah stressed this in the Holy Quran Surah Al Baqarah Verse 168:

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ كُلُّوْا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوٰتِ
الشَّيْطٰنِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٦٨﴾

O humanity! Eat from what is lawful and good on the earth, and do not follow Satan's footsteps. He is truly your sworn enemy.

This verse clearly indicates the obligation towards looking for good things as their food. Except for what God has banned — which will be mentioned later in the surah — the verses allow all of mankind to enjoy the food that God has given on earth. People are also told that they should only listen to God when it comes to determining what is or is not permissible to eat. They should not listen to Satan's opinions on these issues since, as their sworn foe, he will not provide them with sound advice. He will simply lead them astray and urge them to make their own decisions about what is and is not legal.

These instructions demonstrate how realistic and practical Islam is, as well as how sensitive to man's nature and requirements it is. Except for a few items specifically mentioned in the Qur'an, everything is legal.

On top of the above verse, there are few relevant verses from the Holy Quran concerning Halal and Haram. Allah commands Muslims and all of mankind to consume only what is good and halal (lawful). According to Quran: "This day all things good and pure have been made lawful to you" (Surah Al-Maidah: 5).

And then again, "O ye who believe! Forbid not the good things that Allah has made Halal for you" (Surah Al-Maidah: 87).

In addition, the saying from The Messenger Muhammad P.B.U.H. is clear evidence to support the concept of Halal and Haram in Islam.

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ النَّعْمَانِ بْنِ بَشِيرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا
 قَالَ : سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ : إِنَّ
 الْحَلَالَ بَيِّنٌ وَإِنَّ الْحَرَامَ بَيِّنٌ وَبَيْنَهُمَا أُمُورٌ مُشْتَبِهَاتٌ
 لَا يَعْلَمُهُنَّ كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَمَنْ اتَّقَى الشُّبُهَاتِ فَقَدِ
 اسْتَبْرَأَ لِدِينِهِ وَعِزِّهِ وَمَنْ وَقَعَ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ وَقَعَ فِي
 الْحَرَامِ كَالرَّاعِي يَرَعَى حَوْلَ الْحِمَى يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَرْتَعَ فِيهِ
 أَلَا وَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ مَلِكٍ حِمًى أَلَا وَإِنَّ حِمَى اللَّهِ مُحَارِمَةٌ أَلَا وَإِنَّ
 فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ وَإِذَا
 فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ - رَوَاهُ
 الْبُخَارِيُّ وَمُسْلِمٌ .

The above hadith recorded by Ibnu Majah, from a narration by An-Nu'man bin Basyir R.A where Rasulullah S.A.W. was reported to have said: Which means: "That which is lawful is clear and that which is unlawful is clear and between the two of them are doubtful [or ambiguous] matters about which not many people are knowledgeable.

Thus, he who avoids these doubtful matters certainly clears himself regarding his religion and his honour. But he who falls into the doubtful matters falls into that which is unlawful like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Verily every king has a sanctuary and Allah's sanctuary is His prohibition. In the body there is a morsel of flesh which, if it be sound, all the body is sound and, if it be diseased, all the body is diseased. This part of the body is the heart".

1.2 Travel in Religion and Islam

Travelling is about gaining perspective, which is sometimes only possible when people leave their everyday surroundings. It can be a wonderful experience as it teaches people to be humble. It can often provide that much-needed spiritual refreshment. It's easy to miss the Divine beauty and lose touch and sight of His creation when work, errands, and surviving become entire being. So, travel is the way seek all these beautiful creations (*Reasons To Travel, According To Islam*, n.d.)

According to Din (1989) few studies have provided ample evidence to suggest that the religious factor plays an important motivating role for travelling. Besides pilgrimage practices, missionary travels since the Crusade, and more recently, visits such as those to Palestine are often strongly inspired by religious considerations (Din 1989). People should meditate on Allah's creation and admire the grandeur of this wide cosmos while travelling. Then there's rest, which is required for the human soul to develop a strong belief in the oneness of all things (Suid et al. 2017).

In Islam, the primary goal of travel is to instil a sense of man's insignificance compared to Allah's magnificence (Salleh et al. 2019).

This word journey or travel can refer to both spiritual and physical travel. The word 'saiyr,' which meaning 'to journey or migrate,' appears 27 times in the Quran in various forms. Many of its applications can be found in the phrases 'Do travel,' 'Tell them to travel,' or 'Do they not travel?' (Siraj Islam 2015).

In conclusion, according to Siraj Islam (2015), while encouraging travel in general the Quran also strongly urges travel with a specific, beneficial goal, e.g.:

- Travel to 'read' divine messages (31:31, 12:105, 22:46);
- Travel for trade and commerce (17:66, 2:164, 62:10);
- Travel to explore new horizons (16:14, 35:12, 45:12);
- Travel for recreation (10:22, 5:96, 30:46);
- Travel to learn from visiting new places (22:46, 31:31);
- Travel to immigrate (4:97, 16:41);
- Travel to study evolutionary science, palaeontology and anthropology (29:19–20);
- Travel to study archaeology and history (47:10, 40:82, 35:44, 40:21); and
- Travel to learn from the past (6:11, 3:137, 16:36, 27:69, 30:41–43).

The Quran has various verses that encourage travel and tourism. Allah S.W.T. declares.: Travel across the earth and see how Allah S.W.T. created it: thus, will Allah produce a later creation: because Allah has power over all things" (20 Surah al-Ankabut) (Samori and Rahman 2013).

Allah S.W.T. continues to mention in Quran: "Travel over the earth and witness what was the end of those before you: most of them worshipped others except Allah," (Surah al-Rum, verse 42).

Allah S.W.T. emphasises in another Surah: "Travel over the earth and observe what was the outcome of those who rejected truth," (Surah al-Anam, verse 11). Touring and travelling are encouraged in this context, and they generally go hand in hand with hospitality (Samori and Rahman 2013).

The concept of 'ilm (knowledge) is a major tenet of Islam, and it is still at the forefront of Islamic education. All Muslims, men, and women, have an Islamic obligation to pursue knowledge "*from cradle to grave,*" even if it means "*travelling as far as China*" (Abbas 2018).

Review from past literature, Muslims engage in two sorts of tourism practises. First, the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage tourism activities are undertaken in a specified geographical zone between Mecca and Medina. The second sort of tourism activity that Muslims could engage in is a more 'touristic' version of pilgrimage that combines religious and leisure tourism and is presented as an alternative to mass tourism's hedonic conception. Muslims are encouraged to engage in such tourism activities for historical, social, and cultural experiences, as well as to obtain information, connect with others, promote God's message, and enjoy and appreciate God's creation (Suid et al. 2018).

Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said which means: "Three things that can please the sights: See the green thing, look at the flowing water and look at the green object, the flowing water, and the pleasant face. Maintain and renew your body's health by engaging in physical activities such as sightseeing, recreation, and leisure (Amir Abdullah et al. 2020).

Also noteworthy is that the current literature found it challenging to differentiate among religious pilgrims, secular pilgrims, dark tourists, heritage tourists, and pilgrimage. They all are recognised as part of the growing phenomenon of tourist interest in sites that add meaning to life. (Collins-kreiner 2020).

In short, according to Timothy and Olsen (2006) Religion and spirituality are still among the most common motivations for travel - many major tourism destinations have mainly developed because of their connections to sacred people, places, and events (Timothy and Olsen 2006).

2 The Influence of Religion in Business

The fundamental belief in Islam is that God (Allah) is one, and Muhamad is the last of God's divinely given prophets. The core pillars of the Muslim faith are that the Quran is God's final word and holds it in all spheres of lives, including business.

Indeed, several surah in the Quran portray trading as a righteous and beneficial activity, with the primary goal being to control markets in order to remove fraudulent transactions and exploit monopoly power, rather than to outlaw market trading entirely. In Islam, trade should be done by mutual consent, with a focus on contractual certainty to avoid *gharar*, or ambiguity, which might be exploited. In the Quran, *riba* is explicitly forbidden, and most Islamic economists link *riba* with all forms of interest. In the last 50 years, alternative financial institutions have emerged, trying to provide a similar range of services to regular banks while adopting financing mechanisms deemed acceptable with Muslim religious teaching by shariah scholars (Wilson 2005).

The Quran gives a realistic portrayal of human motivation, acknowledging man's desire of riches and proclivity for greed and selfishness: To whom I granted resources in abundance and sons to be by his side! To whom I made life smooth and comfortable! Yet he is greedy that I should add yet more (Sura 74:12–15).

The guiding concept of business philosophy is *tawhid*, or the unity of God, His universe, and His people. God is the universe's single creator, and His people should work together to carry out His will (Rice 1999).

Quran stresses the virtue of altruism "And those in whose wealth is a recognised right for the needy who asks and him who is prevented for some reason from asking. (Sura 70:24–25). It is narrated that Ali, a Prophet follower, recorded the Prophet saying, "Allah has levied upon the wealthiest among Muslims, in their wealth, an amount sufficient for the needy among them. "It is because of what the wealthy do that the poor go hungry or without clothing. Zakat is a method of providing for the destitute and needy. This could be considered a sort of almsgiving (Wilson 2005).

The slave-master connection is a powerful emblem in Islam of a believer's relationship with God. Based on the Quran and Sunnah (Prophet Muhammad's sayings, practises, and approvals), an individual must behave in a specific ethical manner. (Al Quran 31:77) (Haron et al. 2020).

Furthermore, Islamic ethics is a right-and-wrong principle that demonstrates what humans should do according to the Quran and Sunnah. The term "ethics" refers to the set of rules that govern what a person should do. It also discusses the individual's and society's virtues, responsibilities, and attitudes (Hashi 2011). It views work as ways to promote self-interest economically, socially, and psychologically to sustain social prestige, to improve societal welfare and reaffirm faith (Haron et al. 2020).

Therefore, in all spheres of human life, Islam places the most significant emphasis on ethical ideals. Ethics regulates all elements of life in Islam. The verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith contain numerous, far-reaching, and comprehensive ethical ideas and moral precepts. The importance of Islamic business ethics in the small-medium enterprises (S.M.E.) industry cannot be overstated. For example, The Islamic perspective concerning S.M.E. business code of ethics has been presented by a sample from the Quran and Hadith related to the 5 axioms: trust, justice, sincerity, truthfulness, and benevolence (Muhammad et al. 2020).

Hence, to be a true Muslim, one must adhere to these values. In all aspects of life, including business, justice and equity, honesty, integrity, veracity, leniency, compassion, tolerance, selflessness, benevolence, collaboration, mutual consideration, sacrifice, and harmlessness are the guiding values. Muslims are expected to uphold these ideals regardless of their position, whether they are an employer or an employee, a landowner or a peasant, a trader or a consumer, a king or a subject, and many more. (*Islam and Business Ethics*|*Islamic-Banking.Com*, n.d.)

3 Interchangeably Terms of usage among Halal Tourism, Islamic Tourism, Shariah Compliant and Muslim Friendly Tourism

There is a non-consensus opinion among the academician and practitioners for these terminologies even though the research connected and concerning these Islamic, Halal, Shariah Compliant as well as Muslims Friendly tourism was being done almost a decade ago and despite of its attraction for many visitors around the globe. There are ongoing debates and contradictory concepts in these types of tourism. They lack a universal definition and the existence of contradictions between them are factors to consider.

All these terms are used interchangeably, and this led to confusion by people. Hence, it is a matter to be solved by academics as it may help the business operator market their product and have a clear understanding of the theoretical definitions and practical activities.

The detailed explanation should begin with a definition of the root term "halal." According to Al Jallad (2008), the term Halal refers to anything that is regarded permitted and lawful under religion by Arabs and Muslims, whereas Haram refers to what is forbidden and penalised under Islamic law. The word Halal comes from

the Arabic verb *Halla*, which means “to be or become lawful, legal, licit, legitimate, permissible, permitted, allowable, admitted, un-prohibited, unforbidden.” (J.A.L.L.A.D. 2008).

According to Irama and Abror (2019) referring to a book written by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the term Halal is defined as “what is permitted, and what is permitted by the lawgiver, Allah” (Al-Qaradawi 2013; p. XXV). From an Islamic perspective, halal is defined as Al-Qaradawi refers to any practise or activity that is ‘permitted’ according to Islamic teachings (Irama and Abror 2019).

For non-Arabic speakers, the phrase Halal mainly refers to food that is permissible according to Islam. In Arabic, however, it relates to acceptable behaviour, speech, attire, conduct, demeanour, and eating habits. In Western countries, the word is typically applied to only Muslim food rules, particularly when it comes to meat and fowl. Shariah governs every aspect of a Muslim’s life (J.A.L.L.A.D. 2008).

Fisher (2011) claimed that many European people also presumed that the term halal primarily relates to food and dietary rules. Its definition, however, is far broader, referring to anything in Islamic civilization that is lawful under Islamic law as determined by Allah, the lawgiver. Halal is an Arabic word that means “authorised and permissible” and is expressly mentioned in the Qur’an. In its broadest sense, the word halal means “permitted” or “allowable.” Every Muslim’s belief is based on a fundamental acceptance and comprehension of what is Halal, which falls under the scope of what is believed to be information that is understood by need (Wilson and Liu 2010).

Therefore, many people agreed that halal literally means ‘permitted’ or ‘lawful.’ Industrial players, businessmen, and some Muslim scholars active in halal trade and standardisation have based their halal food decisions on verses from the Qur’an such as:

Allah makes good things lawful to them and bad things unlawful. (7: 157).

You who believe, eat the good things We have provided for you and be grateful to God, if it is Him that you worship. (2: 172).

He has only forbidden you what dies of itself and blood and flesh of swine and that over which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked, but whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring nor exceeding the limit, then indeed Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (2: 173).

Hence, halal is defined as anything which is beneficial to Muslims rather than harmful (Fisher and Lever 2021).

According to Amir Abdullah et al. (2020), human needs and spirituality must be served holistically. This strategy serves as a focal point for integrating ethical and moral concepts into all human demands, activities, and behaviours, especially those related to Islamic tourism. Islamic tourism is expanding in a holistic and comprehensive way, focusing on spiritual aspects while not overlooking the material (Amir Abdullah et al. 2020).

In 2015, J.A.K.I.M. stated in the Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification that Halal includes several criteria, including animal welfare (slaughtering aspects), free from najis (impurity), free from any adulteration or intoxication,

hygienic and not poisonous or harmful to health (i.e. healthy), and Shariah law compliance (i.e. lawful). The definition also incorporates Trade Description order 2011 and 2012 order of Malaysia, indicating that it follows its laws (Azam et al. 2019).

To sum up, until now, there seems to be no clear understanding of what the term Islamic branding or Halal means. According to Mohd Yusof and Wan Juso (2014), several scholars analysed the term Islamic branding to avoid such confusion and reduce the likelihood of improper use. According to her research, the true Islamic brands are Halal produced in an Islamic country and meant for Muslim consumers. Meanwhile traditional Islamic brands originating in Islamic countries and targeting Muslim consumers, assumed to be Halal, the third one is inbound Islamic brands that is Halal brands that target Muslim consumers but originate from non-Islamic countries and outbound Islamic brands that is Halal brands that originate from Islamic countries but not necessarily targeting Muslim consumers.

Obviously, halal is an Arabic term that refers to what is allowed or legal in Islam. It is the Shari'ah-mandated Islamic dietary guideline for food (Islamic Law).

Rasulullah (p.b.u.h) said: *"Halal is clear and the Haram (unlawful) is clear. Between the two there are doubtful matters concerning which people do not know. One who avoids them in order to safeguard his deen (religion) and his honour are safe, while if some one indulges in it, he may be indulging in the unlawful....."* (Bukhari).

General Qur'anic guidance dictates that all foods are Halal except those that are specifically mentioned as Haram (unlawful or prohibited). The Glorious Qur'an reads:

"O ye who believes! Eat of the good things wherewith we have provided you, and render thanks to Allah, if it is He whom ye worship. (chapter II, Verse 172)".

4 Islamic Tourism, Halal Tourism and Muslim Friendly Tourism as the Most used Terms in Business Context

As the global Muslim population continues to grow, marketers have begun to target Muslims as a niche market. This is indicated by the growing awareness of halal certification and regulations, both service providers and producers have begun to address the wants and needs of Muslims.

According to a research prepared by Abu Hassan Makmun Abdul Qadir (2017), Scholars can be divided into two groups when it comes to distinguishing between halal and Islamic tourism: those who discriminate and those who do not. The first group recognises that both terms have diverse meanings and convey different impressions; the second, on the other hand, considers both to be among the many terms that imply Shariahcompliant tourism.

Eid and El-Gohary (2015) believed that halal and Islamic tourism should not be understood as synonymous, since using the term 'Islamic' could imply that such tourism is for Muslims only, and that the activities carried out or products used during the travel are all fully-compliant to Shari'ah. Halal tourism meanwhile is travel for religious purposes (Abdul Qadir 2017; Eid and El-Gohary 2015).

However, Battour and Ismail (2016) did not agree to the idea of halal tourism which meant for religious purpose. According to them, Halal tourism is Islamically permitted tourism object or action used or engaged by Muslims in the tourism industry and see that halal tourism is more suitable for branding purposes and business context. (Battour and Ismail 2016) The authors introduce five dimensions that must be considered when defining halal tourism: (1) Islamic law, (2) target customers, (3) products and services offered, (4) location of activity, and (5) purpose of travel (Abdul Qadir 2017; Battour and Ismail 2016).

The same goes to the view from Duman (2011) whereby he already claimed Islamic tourism represents the demand side, based on travellers' motivation to choose an Islamic lifestyle while on vacation, and Halal tourism to describe the economy and sector where halal goods and services are offered to the market for consumption (supply side) (Duman 2011).

Similarly, Hassan (2007) claims that in its broadest meaning, Islamic tourism is a type of tourism that follows Islamic precepts in its fullest sense. Despite this, the term "Islamic tourism" still has a connotation associated with its original meaning, namely, travelling for Islamic activities and/or visiting Islamic places. Hassan (2007) argues that in the sternest sense, Islamic tourism might refer to religious travel (Hassan 2007).

Muslim-friendly meanwhile is mostly promoted by industry professionals and the media. (Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (C.O.M.C.E.C. 2016) For instance, a hotel that appeals to Muslim travellers by providing halal food and praying area can be labelled as Muslim friendly hotel. It caters to Muslims' demands and religious needs, but not in a full and comprehensive scale. The same case can be said for other service providers and producers within the tourism ecosystem. C.O.M.C.E.C. (2016) raises the issue that the degree of Muslim-friendliness cannot be measured due to the absence of a unified standard.

According to this report, Muslim Friendly Tourism or Halal Tourism refers "Muslim travellers who do not wish to compromise their basic faith-based needs while traveling for a purpose, which is permissible" or it can be described as "Halal conscious travellers, traveling for any purpose, which is Halal (permissible)".

The word Muslim-friendly is used to describe a service, a facility, or a location. It signifies that it has considered some, but not all, of Muslim visitors' faith-based needs, and while Halal-friendly may have the same meaning, the term Muslim-friendly service/facility is more applicable to be used in business context (<https://www.crescentrating.com/magazine/2016>) (Fig. 1).

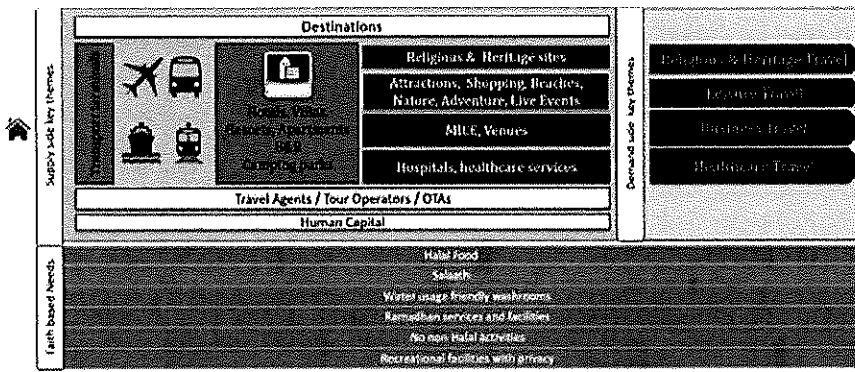


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework for muslim friendly tourism Source: CrescentRating (2015)

Currently a few nations have policies or initiatives on M.F.T. at the national level. Following is a brief overview of activities by some N.T.O.s. Malaysia is now the most advanced country in terms of a tourism ministry-led campaign to promote M.F.T. Through cabinet legislation, it established the Islamic Tourism Centre (I.T.C.) under the Ministry of Tourism in 2009. I.T.C. has played a key role in teaching local service providers about the M.F.T. market as well as marketing Malaysia as a Muslim-friendly destination. The M.F.H.S. standard is the first in the country for the M.F.T. sector. Some hotels, dubbed “Muslim friendly hotels,” provide the most common amenities to meet the demands of Muslim tourists (Samori and Sabtu 2014). Among the hotels are Grand Bluewave Hotel in Shah Alam, PNB Darby Park Hotel and Putra Hotel in Kuala Lumpur, Perdana Hotel in and Tabung Haji Hotel in Terengganu (Musa et al. 2019). Shariah Compliant Hotels and Muslim-Friendly Hotels and Services was compared by Jais in 2016. According to him, unlike S.C.H., the application or adoption of Shariah law is very limited in Muslim-Friendly Hotel and Services (Ahmad et al. 2016) July 2019 marked a watershed moment for Malaysia tourism industry in a first-of-itskind in the world, Malaysia has launched the Muslim Friendly Accommodation Recognition, which the government backs. and on 3 September 2020, an official launch of logo for this distinguished recognition through Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (*LAUNCH OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION RECOGNITION – Islamic Tourism Centre of Malaysia | I.T.C. n.d.*) Amusingly, in a year, in 2020, the list of hotels getting this recognition was increase to 42 lists of hotel due to the good support from the Malaysian Association of Hotels (M.A.H.), the Malaysian Association of Hotel Owners (M.A.H.O.) and the Malaysia Budget Hotel Association (MyBHA) (Santaichannel 2020).

Another location aiming to build a tourism ministry-driven policy to position itself in the Muslim market is Indonesia. Several documents on Shariah hotel standards and other associated services, such as spas, have been drafted.

Both Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates have launched efforts aimed at Muslim tourists. Family travel has been recognised as a priority sector to work on through the “Dubai – the Capital of Islamic Economy” (D.C.I.E.) project. The term “family travel” is applied to both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists. Abu Dhabi has been working on an N.T.O.-led plan to establish itself as a “hub” for Halal tourism and travel (C.O.M.C.E.C. 2016).

However, despite the potential and bright prospect of halal tourism to the economy and to the hotel industry in particular, this sector faces numerous issues and challenges. Halal tourism is extensive in its aspect, including Halal activities, Halal airlines, Halal food, and Halal/Shariah-compliant hotels (Razalli et al. 2012). This is agreed by Waehama et al. (2018) which claimed that competition is one of the biggest factors affecting the halal hotel industry in Malaysia. Muslim tourists visiting Malaysia have many options to choose from and it is also difficult for halal hotels to find and keep staff. The issues such as increased costs, non-compliance by Halal certified suppliers and strict compliance audits to meet Halal certificate requirements arose in relation to Halal certification were also being the main challenges in this industry (Salleh et al. 2019).

5 Methodology

A qualitative research method was adopted aiming to explore the real view of hoteliers and public authorities on the real reason and intentions in adopting this highly demand of halal industry especially in hotel sectors. Few challenges of the implementation are also being discussed and revealed to give the real idea of challenges they face. Few hotel managers were involved in designing the Islamic services at their hotels in Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kuala Lumpur. In-depth interviews were conducted in at least 45 min every session with the hotel managers. It was recorded and transcribed based on thematic analysis. The interview transcripts were coded until several themes emerged and concluded as key themes.

6 Analysis of Data/Results

The analysis of the interview data was done separately for each hotel.

First Hotel:

Researcher: I would like to ask, is this hotel was declared or just self-proclaimed towards this Shariah Compliant hotel?

Respondent: We were born as Shariah complaint originally and not by applying to it afterwards.

Researcher: oh, it is in your memorandum of registration?

Respondent: Yes, definitely

Researcher: oh since you are born under Tabung Haji. Right?

Respondent: yes. It covers for every Tabung Haji hotel. The hotel was built based on shariah-compliance concept. We have pool, but we will make sure there will be a pool for Muslimah, baby or children, and there will be also a pool for an adult. Its not that, we apply for the halal cert after we built it. The same goes to other facilities which we already aim for shariah compliant starting from when we start build it like the room, restaurant, qiblat signage etc. Its already fix with Islamic product.

The analysis of the interview above showed that this specific hotel was originally born as Islamic or better known as Shariah Compliant hotel. This inherently means that their intention from the first day of their incorporation was to be governed by Shariah regulations and they are ready for full obligation towards Shariah principles.

Respondent: But we have to renew it annually.

Researcher: there is an audit?

Respondent: yes, the auditor will come randomly and without any notice given.so we need to be ready to answer any arising issue. That I why if we have made any changes to any facilities especially on food serving and menus. We must update the changes to the authority.

Researcher: "who is that authority you mean?"

Respondent: it is Halal committee from Halal office Kuala Terenggamu. Researcher: By yearly basis? Respondent: Yes

The analysis of the above interview data led to a point of audit and control mechanism. It showed that audit was carried out by the public authority towards those hotels which carry the title of Islamic hotel or Shariah compliant hotel. The authority will make a random checking to ensure the full compliance towards the regulated principles. This authority may come from federal government authority or state authority since Islamic matters also fall under state matters as gazetted by the law in Federal Constitution. Notably, the audit is to be carried out annually to ensure a consistence compliance of the law.

Researcher: How is your operation so far?
Respondent: So far so good. We are operating as Shariah Compliant hotel
Researcher: Is it your guests Muslims only? Or in other words, do non-Muslims guests also be part of your guests?
Respondent: We have Muslims and non-Muslims guests. The non-Muslims also never complain and always gave a good feedback to the hotel services. Researcher: Do the non-Muslims demanded some services which can't be provided by your hotel?
Respondent: Some did request something, but as we explained that we are operating as Islamic hotel, they understood it.

The analysis of the above data showed that the hotel guest consists of both Muslims and Non-Muslims. Even majority portion will be Muslims, but the non-Muslims also did not find it as a problem to stay at this hotel. The Non-Muslims, normally understand the Islamic operational system applied by the hotels and accepted the fact that the hotels do not provide services which is not allowed in Islam.

Researcher: How is the progress of your hotel revenue so far?
Respondent: We are progressing very well. Each year there is an increase in term of our guests and profit.
Researcher: Don't you think that this title and your branding as Islamic or Shariah compliant hotel will to certain extend affect your sales and profit?
Respondent: Hurmm, as far as we are concern, we still survive and have not received any bad response from the guests. What more, the guests list in increasing every year.
Researcher: are you saying that this branding does not affect your sales and profit?
Respondent: Yes, we have no problem in term of sales and profit

The analysis to the above data to a main sought in this paper that is commercial value of this industry. It portrayed that the title and branding of Islamic hotel or shariah compliant hotel does not affects the hotels' sales. Yet, it increases the profit margin of the hotel. By this, it impliedly gives a good sign to this Shariah compliant hotel branding and its potential to be explored and practised by other hotel practitioners. Hence, it is interestingly to construe that the hoteliers chose for this branding because of their religious duty to spread the beauty of Islam and in a meantime, as it does not affect their business and sales, hence the commercial value for the branding is there. Therefore, religious duty and commercial value are equally important as motivations for a business.

Second Hotel:

Researcher: You are originally a conventional hotel, but now you are more famous towards building your brand as shariah compliant hotel. do you agree?

Respondent: Yes, we were long set up as conventional hotel, but now we have received recognition as Shariah compliant hotel as well.

Researcher: can you describe on islamic activities provided by your hotel?

Respondent: On top of the basic islamic activities, the hotel management has appointed 4 permanent imams at the 'surau', and they are paid. They will hold various Islamic activities such as ' tazkirah', 'qiamulla'i and so on. Azan is heard every 5 hours live and 1 hotel can hear the azan. Ustazah was also invited to give talks and tazkirah to the public and customers of the hotel itself. The topics of tazkirah of imam, ustaz and ustazah must be varied and not contain matters related to politics

Analysis of the above interview data showed that this hotel was initially born as a conventional hotel. But they are very much interested to be as Shariah compliance hotel. This inherently means that they have and ready to be governed by Shariah regulations and they are ready for full obligation towards Shariah principles. Interestingly, this hotel provides extensive Islamic activities such as providing space and time for their staff and guests for congregational prayers, 5 times 'adzan' live for the whole building, and 'qiyamullail' time.

Researcher: To maintain your title and this recognition of shariah Complaint hotel, what else the way you control your guest?

Respondent: if we see a couple coming to check in at the hotel and they are behaving strangely, we will not allow the couple to enter, and ask them to show any evidence of marriage certificate or family relationship. this is because we are worried if things happen it can tarnish our reputation.

The data analysis of the above interview directed to the key points of 'control mechanism'. This additional control practices by the hotel, gave a good sign on how Malaysian's hoteliers are ready towards this Halal industry, and it is remarkable to note that all these extra practices such as checking for marriage certificate in case of doubt were initiated by their own without any force by any public authority. This takes to the next point on why they tried very hard to maintain their title as Shariah hotel.

Researcher: You are trying your level best to adhere to the Islamic Principles. As for now, have you been formally declared as Shariah Compliant hotel from any authority?

Respondent: JAKIM, have not recognized our hotel as a Shariah Compliant Hotel, but our hotel was recognized by foreign and international countries as a Shariah compliant hotel. However, we have received recognition from state authority, namely JAIS, they have no problem in recognizing us as we are an entity under state authority.

The above interview data led to the point of recognition. Recognition is the vital factor and an essential point to be openly declared themselves as Shariah Compliant hotel. This recognition may come from local authority either Federal or State authority or foreign certification bodies. This linked with an audit system to ensure the full compliance towards the regulated principles was adhered to by the hotel. Again, for this hotel, a state Islamic authority was the one giving the recognition.

Researcher: How is the progress of your hotel revenue so far?

Respondent: its good. We have no problem at all. Each year there is an increase in term of our guests and profit.

Researcher: Don't you think that this title and the branding as Islamic or Shariah compliant hotel will to certain extent affect your sales and profit?

Respondent: The profits we earn since being recognized as shariah compliant are not a problem, in fact, it is more of a blessing and actually, there was unexpected profits. for the payment of staff salaries and other payments there is no problem and never in arrears and we believe these are all blessings available in practicing shariah compliant.

Researcher: are you saying that Shariah compliant hotel recognition gives better future of your business

Respondent: Yes, we have no problem in term of sales and profit, in fact it is increasing.

The analysis of the above data is crucial as it headed to the main point in this paper that is commercial value of this Halal and Shariah industry. It showed that the title and branding of Islamic hotel or shariah-compliant hotel does not affect the hotels' sales. Yet, it increases the profit margin of the hotel. By this, it impliedly gives a good sign to this Shariah-compliant hotel branding and its potential to be explored and practised by other hotel practitioners. What is more interesting was that all the practices and extra control taken by the hotel were voluntary without any force from any authority. This is due to their religious duty to spread the beauty of Islam and in a meantime, as it does not affect their business and sales, hence the commercial value for the branding is there. Therefore, religious duty and commercial value are equally crucial as motivations for a business.

Third Hotel:

Researcher: You are a conventional and now recognized as shariah compliant hotel?
Respondent: Yes, we are
Researcher: Which body or agency has the role of controlling the implementation and certification of shariah -compliant hotels??
Researcher: certification from JAKIM through JAIS. Internally, halal executives are monitoring

Analysis of the above interview data led to the key theme of control body. This authority may come from federal government authority or state authority since Islamic matters also fall under state matters as gazetted by the law in Federal Constitution. The respondent is aware on the power hold by both authorities in managing and monitoring the matters relating to Halal. On top of the monitoring system made by J.A.K.I.M. and J.A.I.S., the hotel is also fully obliged to the requirement of law to have an internal halal executive as a requirement to get recognition from the authorities.

Researcher: can you describe on islamic characteristics of your hotel?
Respondent: in this hotel there are 3 outlets. An outlet in the coffee house section. In the coffee house alone, there are 200 menus. Each menu should list the ingredients. Every ingredient must have a halal certificate. Although there is already a halal certificate. But it still needs to be explained to JAKIM. Hotel needs to send the document to JAKIM. Therefore, when the material does not have a halal certificate, we will reject the material. Spacious place of prayer. The position of the furniture is arranged to facilitate Muslim prayers in the room. The frontliner at the hotel wears a hood all over

Analysis of this data led to the point of observance and compliance towards the outline Islamic principle. It showed that this hotel owner is trying their level best to fully comply with the Islamic characteristics as to maintain their recognition as Shariah Compliant Hotel or Islamic hotel. Any changes made need to be updated to J.A.K.I.M. and hence need to go for an audit again. It started from the food and beverage section up to the other facilities such as room services with spacious praying space and the observance of hotel staff by wearing hood all over.

Researcher: Do you face any challenges to maintain this status of Shariah Compliant hotel?

Respondent: Shariah compliance is not mandatory. However, this hotel chose to implement it and that makes this hotel the number one Shariah Compliance hotel in Malaysia.

However, if a hotel implements Shariah compliance, the hotel's activities will be limited, for example, no entertainment. And there is a possibility of losing tourists.

For example, tourists do not want to come to this hotel due to the absence of liquor which includes Chinese tourists.

Analysis of the above data is crucial as it led to the main point looking for by this paper. It revealed the real problem faced by industry players if a strict characteristic is to be implemented. This brought to the issue of the appropriateness of implementing Shariah Compliant hotel or just Muslim Friendly hotel, which recently spiked a hot discussion among the researcher. This is another issue of concern as Shariah Compliant hotel and Muslims Friendly hotel bring different meanings and weightage. Meanwhile, the profit margin will be their main concern for business-minded people on top of religious obligation. As claimed by this respondent, the strict characteristic to be observed will affect their profit margin and losing their customers including those from China who contribute a major portion to their guest list. Therefore, this need to be investigated by the authorities to attract more participation and commitment of industry players towards the idea of Halal hotel generally. The Strict requirements will hinder the industry from getting involved in this industry at all.

Researcher: How you serve your Muslims and non-Muslims customers?

Respondent: We prepare halal food and pork-based ingredients are totally not allowed, however, alcohol ingredient up to certain extend allowable is allowed because the way the stock arrives is different.

Pork retreat feeding is not allowed at all.

Analysing the above simple data proved that the industry players are looking for some leniency in implementing this halal certificate, including the food ingredients. Alcoholic ingredients to certain extend are allowed as long as it is not to the level of intoxication. This is consistent with the rule made by Malaysian Fatwa Committee of the National Council for Islamic Affairs declared that any food items which were not of alcoholic beverages (arak) would be considered and declared Halal by the authorities if the alcohol content did not exceed 0.01%. This is because, essentially, not all food items with alcohol are alcoholic beverages like liquor or beer. Alcohol sometimes exists naturally in many natural and organic food items such as fruits due to natural fermentation (*Alcohol Content: Many Still Confused as to What Is Haram* | *The Star*, 2012).

Analysis of Interview Conducted to Public Authorities:

Two informants from authoritative bodies were interviewed to get fruitful insight of the Shariah-Compliant hotel practice in Malaysia. The Director for the Department of Research in Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (J.A.K.I.M.) is one participant in the interview session.

The second participant is the Director of the Research Unit from Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Negeri Kelantan (J.A.H.E.A.I.K.), which contribute to the practice of Shariah Compliant Hotel at the state level.

Several issues were raised by respondents during the interviews, including; public authorities directly involved in this Halal tourism industry:

No	Scope of discussions	JAHEIK	JAKIM
1	Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halal Certification in state level. Consultation • Monitoring • Withdraw Halal • Certification as an action for non-compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halal certification for products from Malaysia, Thailand, Middle East, Australia and New Zealand and etc. Consultation on Shariah-compliant issues to interested companies • Coordinate monitoring process of each state • Periodic ambush to non-compliant companies based on complaint reports
2	Directions and Instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific directions and instructions received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific directions and instructions received
3	Law and Acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Akta Perihal Dalam Negeri/ Trade Description Act</i> on halal and prohibition of abusing the Halal logo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K.P.D.N.K.K. Enactment • Trade Description Act
4	Maqasid Shariah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maqasid Shariah is the basis of this industry particularly in protecting life and lineage by prohibiting cases such as murder, rape and adultery in the hotel is identified as main guide in structuring Shariah-Compliant hotel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -Maqasid Shariah and Islamic principles become the main concern in en-forcing this Halal industry

(continued)

(continued)

No	Scope of discussions	JAHEIK	JAKIM
5	Issues raised by some hotel-iers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some hotels do not agree with the attributes of Shariah-Compliant Hotel • It is impossible for the hotels to obtain Shariah-Compliant status as majority of the hotels are not complying. Difficulties in getting • Halal Food and Halal • Kitchen certifications • Shariah-compliant Hotel certification, if in place, cannot be enforced to all hotels, but only to those that decided to get the certification. Therefore, hotels writing in to obtain Shariah-compliant status, is more suitable There is no law on Halal to enforce • Halal Act has been proposed but received objections from non-Muslim members in the Parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of Shariah compliant hotel is under the jurisdiction of the State Islamic Council • Restricted functionality and authority by J.A.K.I.M. E.g.: Certification on Shariahcompliant movie cannot be awarded as the function falls within states' Islamic councils • For Shariah-compliant hotels, no action can be taken if they do not comply due to no law is provided on this matter
10	Action Plans/Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of Shariahcompliant guidelines for hotels • Official announcement of the guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate with Tourism Ministry to include clauses on Shariah-compliant hotel • To propose the Shariah-compliant hotel implementation to states' Muftis

The analysis of the interview data was simplified in the above table. The first point to highlighted through the table was on the jurisdiction and power of these two authorities namely J.A.K.I.M. and J.A.H.E.I.K. Data showed that both authorities are holding an equal power towards the implementation of this industry. It just that, the former is having jurisdiction in federal level and the latter, in state level. This can be supported by looking to the point of the law referred to by them. Both are referring to the same laws and regulations governed by the federal laws.

The theme for 'intention' in implementing this halal industry towards hotel practitioners was highlighted in the coloured table. The researcher tried to find the idea behind the implementation of this industry. The issue of Maqasid Syariah was asked to the informants from both Federal authority as well as Islamic state authority. J.A.K.I.M. represents the federal government and J.A.H.E.I.K. represents Islamic state authority.

The data revealed that the focal point and the foremost consideration in stressing this industry was on the practice of Maqasid Syariah as the essential foundation of Islamic principle which need to be observed by all Muslims in this country. Both authorities acknowledged this as they claimed that Maqasid Syariah is the basis for this industry. However, this needs to be balanced with the next theme, 'problem faced by industry players' as highlighted in the table. This interview revealed the problems faced by the industry players in fully supporting this demanding industry. These issues were in fact, brought forwards by the hoteliers for the consideration of the authorities.

Among the problems was the difficulties to fully comply with the attributes and characteristics of Shariah Compliant hotels. The strictness of the features might restrain the hotel players from practising this idea. It might relate to their business growth and profit earned. In addition, the procedures are also a bit painstaking. Hence, this led to the idea that the government needs to investigate this matter thoroughly to make sure voluntary compliance by the hoteliers towards this industry. The government need to balance between the Maqasid Syariah principles as the pillars in Islamic teaching and the business interest of the hoteliers. For hoteliers, it can be said that their religious obligation and the idea's economic value are equally important.

7 Conclusion

Islam encompasses every spectrum of Muslim's life. It emphasises life purity by requiring that every activity and undertaking to be in complete accordance with the Shariah rule. As a predominantly Muslim country, Malaysia is doing all possible and its level best to offer its citizens a system that complies with Shariah law and is halal in all its endeavours. This includes striving in promoting for Halal food system and Halal accommodation. Malaysia has been recognised as the No. 1 ranked destination on the Global Muslims Travel Index for nine years in a row up to the year 2020. Therefore, the development of the halal industry has a substantial impact on people and the economy. This halal industry has attracted the participation of various sectors, including those involved in tourism sector.

Previously, halal foods could only be found in the homes of Muslims; however, this is no longer the case. Nowadays, halal cuisine is available at almost all hotels, as consumers prefer halal and hygienic dishes for their daily meals. It is unavoidable that hotel owners adapt to changing trends to continue in business. The issue investigated in this paper was on the real intention of hoteliers in adopting this industry. Some already converted their business to be Shariah Compliant Hotel or at least Muslims friendly hotel in one side, and the purpose of public authorities in seriously upholding this industry in another side. Results showed that many hoteliers opted to go for this branding and were willing to give a commitment to it as long as it does not jeopardise their business. In fact, the result showed that this industry does not affect their business structure and profit so far. Indeed, some claimed that their business grows better with this industry. Hence, the religious obligation and commercial value of the industry

are equally important for them. Their only concern was on the challenges they face if the strict requirement is to be imposed by the authorities. From the authorities' perspective, the result revealed that the main concern is to uphold Islam in all spheres of life, hence stressing the concept of Maqasid Syariah. This is true, but then, it is suggested that the authorities to look into the industry's hard-hitting challenges if the strict requirements and procedures are to be enforced. This might deter them from getting involved in this industry, and as such, it might defeat the idea of upholding Halal tourism in Malaysia.

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