

The Standard Elements for Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Premises

Siti Syahirah Saffinee¹, Khairusy Syakirin Has-Yun Hashim², Lukman Hakim Mahamod³, Mohd Aizat Jamaludin⁴, Betania Kartika Muflih⁵, Rashidi Othman^{6*}

^{1,2,3,4,5,6}International Institute for Halal Research & Training (INHART),
Kulliyah of Architecture & Environmental Design (KAED),
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM),
Jalan Gombak, 53100 Kuala Lumpur

*Corresponding Author
rashidi@iium.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Muslim-friendly hotels are targeted to provide shariah-complaint and comfortable rooms especially for the Muslim guests. This is in line with the encouragement of good hospitality in Islam. However, even though there are nearly 3000 hotels in Malaysia, only less than 10% are considered as Muslim friendly. Therefore, this study investigates the elements that constitute a Muslim-friendly hotel. Based on the discovered elements, this study proposes a standard and comprehensive Muslim-friendly hotel audit checklist which is significant as a guidance for players of the industry as well as the relevant authorities such as the government, municipals, religious authority including the certification bodies. The checklist is important to avoid the misconspetion among the consumers.

Keywords: Tourism Accommodation Premises, Muslim Friendly Hotel, Rating Tool, Shariah Compliant

1. Introduction

Tourism in Malaysia is noted as one of the top five contributions to the national economy with the contribution of RM36.9 billion of gross national income in 2009, and it is targeted that the industry would receive 38 million tourists that worth RM168 billion by the year 2020

(Razalli, Abdullah, & Hassan, 2009). By providing various tourism themes including eco-tourism, agro-tourism, culture tourism and others for commercial hospitality industry, one of the most significant current discussions in tourism industry is a hotel. As Malaysia received millions of visitors from many Muslim countries, therefore it is important to design and maintain the tourism accommodation premises (TAP) according to the *Shariah*.

Shariah refers to the Islamic rulings and guidelines that the Muslims should follow (Doi, 1998). In the context of the present halal industry, the requirement for compliance to *shariah* does not only cover activities related to banking, finance, investment, stock and securities and as such. It also covers other aspects of life including hospitality and tourism industry. Thus Muslim-friendly hotels which provide halal food, non alcohol bar and space for praying are believed to be highly demanded.

Nevertheless, even though Malaysia has around 3,000 hotels that provide up to 200,000 rooms, only about 10 percent of them are considered *Shariah* compliant (Musa, et al., 2013). Yet, the country is expected to have Muslim tourists which are projected to contribute more than RM100 billion by 2018 (Report on State of the Global Islamic Economy, 2013).

Many studies have discussed the elements Muslim-friendly hotel concepts (Sahida, et al., 2011; Ahmat, et al., 2012; Hidayat, et al., 2011; Musa, et. al., 2013; Razalli et. al., 2009; Saad, 2014; Zakiah, 2013; Razalli, 2015). However, the existing studies limitedly focus on the conceptual description of Muslim-friendly elements, and a comprehensive and standard checklist could not be located. Hence, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth study on every element to formulate the checklist. This study proposes an auditing checklist for Muslim-friendly hotel rooms, which will contribute to the understanding of the required facilities and services. For that purpose, prior to development of the checklist, this research identifies the elements of Muslim-friendly hotels from relevant literatures. The outcome of the study is expected to build up the commitment to implement the standard elements of

Muslim-friendly hotels. Thus, as a result, Muslim-friendly hotels will be visible and identifiable, especially for the Muslim-tourists.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Muslim-friendly Hotel

Hotel refers to temporary homes for the visitors (Din, 1989). Hotels are expected to serve good hospitality for their long-term sustainability. Hospitality in entertaining guests is not new in Islamic teaching. At the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, warm welcoming of guests was promoted and becomes a tradition. It is indeed a Sunnah and implementing it shall be rewarded. The hijrah (migration) of Muslims from Makkah to Medinah was in fact a significant proof of hospitality to the extent of many *Ansar* (the people of Medina) offered their only houses to be occupied by the *Muhajirin* (migrated people of Makkah) (Safiur-Rahman, 2002).

Hospitality includes friendly and generous reception to guests by providing them with food, beverages and accommodation. Entertainment is also a part of warm welcome thus a sign of hospitality, which is indeed very much promoted in Islam. The prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h has said,

The people who believe in God and the Day of Judgement should show hospitality to their guests.

(Imam Bukhari & Muslim 1:75)

Hospitality concept was further institutionalised when, in the era of Caliph Umar al-Khattab, guesthouses (*Dar al-Dhiyafah*) were set up to provide convenient transit to travelers. It was indeed one of the social contributions ever introduced during that period. Today, this guesthouse model is upgraded and commercialised in the forms of hotels, resorts, inns, home-stays and many more. These guest houses, hotels in particular, are providing hospitality to people who are away from home (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012).

The guests anticipated at least a satisfactory stay. Hence, hospitality service provider should provide a cosy and comfort environment together with tranquil and serene ambience. This is indeed the responsibility of the hotels to meet the need of the guests. On top of that, hospitality should not just aimed for the sake of virtue but also directed towards the mercy of the Almighty Allah (Lumbard, 2011), as He said in the Quran,

The mercy of God is ever nigh unto the virtuous.

(al-Quran, 7:156)

There are etiquettes that service provider need to observe in providing accommodation. As Spahic (2015) highlights, they should implement the principles, teaching and values of Islam. The author further adds that the provided infrastructure and amenities should be at the advantage of the guests. Muslim guests in particular, should be provided with prayer mat in the hotel room, qiblah direction and a copy of the Quran. This is because every moment of the Muslims is a form of worship (*ibadah*) to the Almighty Allah. Hence, providing such amenities constitutes a warm welcoming of the guests and should be placed among the top priority in the list (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012).

In order to attain this goal, hotel management should be clearly specified on the requirements to incorporate the existing facilities and services with the Islamic hospitality concept (Sahida et al., 2011). Facility in this context refers to the hotel building, equipments and services provided inside and outside the premise to accommodate the guests comfortably during their stay. Anything that cause harm or danger to visitors, and any inappropriate conducts or behaviour should of course be disregarded in order to provide positive environment (Sofyan, 2011). Services in this regard is providing the basic things that the hotel guests need including bedrooms, food, toileteries and other amenities, which may deliver comfortness, peace and safety during their stay. These basic needs should therefore be prioritize for the *maslahah* (well-being) of the guests (Al-Qaradawi 1999; Al-Sheha, 2007). In addition, hotel guests also should be well-informed on any rules including the banning of alcoholic drink, information on the availability of halal restaurants,

mosques and groceries nearby (Razalli et al., 2015).

It is interesting to note that there are hotels around Klang Valley area which promote the Muslim-friendly facilities and services that cater the Muslim tourists needs. These hotels are identified to offer courtesy and friendliness of hotel receptionists, apart from a constant housekeeping service and security system that would make the guests feel secure and safe (Abdullah, 2012).

2.2 Elements of Muslim-friendly Hotels

There have been several studies in the literature reporting the elements Muslim-friendly hotel (Rizal et al., 2015; Stephenson, 2014; Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009; Henderson, 2010 and Solomon et al., 2008). They listed the elements of bedrooms, private rooms, general guidelines, operation, design & interior, core and actual service and the basic Muslims' need. Additionally, Muslim-friendly hotel should include prayer amenities (e.g adequate praying space, kiblah direction, a copy of the Quran with translation, prayer mat, female prayer garment, information on prayer times and toilets fitted with a bidet shower), Islamic entertainment (e.g TV channel), environment (e.g cleanliness, Islamic decoration, bed and toilet in proper position, halal toiletries, and halal food and beverages in mini bar) and the interior infrastructure (e.g thick curtains and other appliances).

Apart from the above physical elements that should be complied, any unfair treatment and wrongdoings that could cause harm and injustice should be eliminated. Staying in a hotel would mean purchasing the services of the hotel. As purchasers, the guests have the right of equivalent consideration in return for the purchase. As Muslim guests for example, getting the shariah-compliant services and amenities is indeed their very deserving rights. Hence, hotel management should uphold the sanctity of the contract with full commitment thereby the welfare and wellbeing of the people could be preserved (Sofyan, 2011).

2.3 The Audit Checklist for Muslim Friendly Hotel (AC-MFHR)

Audit Checklist is a tool needed by the auditors. It is an important tool to ensure the depth and continuity of an assessment. One of the important aspects in auditing is examining the procedures used (Hock, 2004). In the context of Muslim-friendly hotels, however, the main objective of the audit is to identify the compliance or non-compliance of the hotels' services and amenities to the specific criteria or guidelines (Boritz & Timoshenko, 2014). Apart from that, auditing assist in determining the extent to which the audit criteria are fulfilled (The Religious Council Brunei Darussalam, 2007). Auditing also provide an opportunity for the auditees to improve the system (Houssemeddine, 2012).

Bourcier (2007) states that the audit requirements should follow certain guidelines, if applicable. For instance in Malaysia, there are two applicable standards; the MS1500:2009 (Malaysian Standard: Halal Food-Production, Preparation and Storage-General Guidelines) and the MS1900:2015 (Shariah-based Quality Management System). The description for the AC-MFHR checklist design is illustrated in table 1. Meanwhile, table 2 is proposed columns for AC-MFHR.

Table 1: Required designation criteria for AC-MFHR (adapted from Bourcier (2007))

No.	Designation	Description
1.	The source of reference (Reference number)	Able to reveal reliable sources, for example, the Malaysian Standards.
2.	Element Description	Able to standardize the auditing activities.
3.	Requirements	Able to control the criteria and findings of audit.
4.	Evidence reviewed	Able to give fact and validity of the required items in the auditing process.
5.	Finding	Able to give the report of auditing output, including the necessary corrective actions.

Table 2: Proposed Columns in AC-MFHR (adapted from Bourcier (2007))

	Element	Requirement	Ref. No	Compliance (Evidence Reviewed)	Finding/ Remarks

3. Method

This study adopts the qualitative research methodology where relevant literatures were reviewed. The Muslim-friendly hotel elements were identified and inductively analysed into specific themes.

4. Result and Discussion

Based on the literature review, there are 12 elements of Muslim-friendly hotels. These elements were listed in a checklist. The list of elements may result in a significant improvement and encourage a systematic approach in auditing hotels (Brace & Ekman, 2014). Table 3 shows the frequency of repetition of each element in the literature. The more frequent reflects the higher degree of significance of the element, as it is being consistently highlighted in the literatures. Based on Table 3, this article proposes 12 elements that are required in order for a hotel to be Muslim-friendly hotel.

Table 3: The Repetition Frequency of Elements for Muslim-friendly Hotels

No	Element	Frequency of Repetition	Percentage
1	Prayer mat	7	14%
2	Kiblah Pointing Signage	7	14%
3	Mini Bar	6	12%
4	Halal Toiletries	5	10%

5	Al-Quran with translation	5	10%
6	Information on prayer times	3	6%
7	Religious TV channel programs	3	6%
8	Islamic Decoration	3	6%
9	Hygiene and cleanliness	3	6%
10	Beds and toilets position	2	4%
11	Adequate praying space	1	2%
12	Female prayer garment	1	2%
	Grand Total	51	100%

Based on the suggested elements, this article proposes an audit checklist as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Proposed Audit Checklist for Muslim Friendly hotel room (AC-MFHR) (revised version)

Organization audited:.....						
Auditor :.....						
Audit date :.....						
	ELEMENT	REQUIREMENT	REF. NO	COMPLIANCE (EVIDENCE REVIEWED)		FINDING/REMARK
				Yes	No	
Prayer Amenities						
1.	Adequate praying space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assure that the space is enough for a Muslim guest to perform prayer Location (where) provided to ensure convenience to pray? 	MS2610:2015 (5.2.1.1.c)			

2.	<i>Kiblat</i> pointing signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show the evidence of the signage • Assure the position is verified by a competent authority. 	MS2610:2015 (5.2.1.1.b)			
3.	Qur'an with translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the service for Qur'an, is it available in room or upon request. • Identify the type of the Qur'an either in translation or not 	MS2610:2015 (5.2.1.2.d)			
4.	Prayer mat (Sajjada)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the service for praying mat, is it available in room or upon request. 	MS2610:2015 (5.2.1.2.a)			
5.	Female prayer garment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the service for female prayer garment, is it available in room or upon request. 	MS2610:2015 (5.2.1.2.b)			
6.	Information on prayer times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the service for information on prayer times, is it available in room or upon request. 	MS2610:2015 (5.2.1.2.c)			

Entertainment						
1.	TV channel/ programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the channels provided in the room • Assure that the TV channels are Muslim-friendly 	MS2610:2015 (5.3.3.2.c, 5.3.3.d)			
Environment						
1.	Hygiene and cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assure that the room is cleaned and well maintained 	MS2610:2015 (5.2.1.1.a)			
2.	Decoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the decoration to ensure it does not contradict to Islam • Assure it is not sensitive to Islamic religion. 	MS2610:2015 (5.3.3.2.f)			
3.	Bed & toilets positioned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the position of the toilet, is it facing the <i>Kiblat</i> or not. • Describe the position of the bed, is it facing the <i>Kiblat</i> or not. 	Sahih Bukhari 1:8:388 Ihya 'Ulumuddin: 1/448			
4.	Halal toiletries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assure that toiletries provided suitable for Muslim intake 	MS2610:2015 (5.2.1.1.f)			

5.	Mini Bar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assure that intoxicating beverages are not stored in the hotel room's refrigerator Review and verify all the beverages and food have Halal logo 	MS2610:2015 (5.2.1.1.g)			
6.	No consumption of non-halal food and beverages in the room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assure the contaminated with najs Mughallazah should perform ritual cleaning accordance to MS 1500 	MS2610:2015 (5.2)			
Interior Infrastructure						
1.	The day and night curtain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assure the curtain is thick Assure the barrier outside the window (if necessary) 	-			
2.	The system workable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assure sound proofing Assure the light is enough Assure the system is in working condition. 	-			

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, there are 12 elements to constitute a Muslim-friendly hotel. As the key objective of this study is to standardize the elements of Muslim-friendly hotels, this study proposes Table 4 as a standard checklist which can be utilised by the relevant authorities in verifying the status of a Muslim-friendly hotel. The checklist, abbreviated as the AC-MFHR was developed following a comprehensive literature review. The checklist can be further use to elaborate on its scientific reliability and validity, as well as comparing the extent of shariah-compliance among the existing Muslim-friendly hotels.

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