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# Tourist Satisfaction on Natural Environment within Islamic Built Environment Context in the Shariah Compliant Hotel in Malaysia

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#### **Abstract**

For four years in a row from 2011 to 2014, Malaysia according to Crescent Rating of Singapore has been recognized as the top destination for Muslim travelers across the globe. The recognition perceived by Malaysia Islamic Tourism Centre as an indication towards effort in Halal and Islamic value related accolades. The phenomena leading into massive demand in so called Muslim Friendly Tourism, and one of them through the hotel industry. In order to fully understood as to how the product related to demand of hotel able to sustain according to the MFT attributes, the level of acceptance and customer satisfaction has to be discovered. Within the context of Islamic Built Environment, this perspective is still at it infancy. Thus, this paper attempted to evaluate tourist acceptance and satisfaction on Natural Environment in Shariah Compliant Hotel in Malaysia as address by IBE. The adaptation of Natural Environment as one of the IBE indicators is among the most important criteria to be implemented. The appraisals were prepared through quantitative approach using questionnaire by tourist staying in the hotel and acting as respondents in selected SCH. The appraisal will be tested based on the tangible and intangible aspect within the perimeter of architectural form especially in managing the open space. As a result, the discussion anticipates either the acceptance and satisfaction on the Natural Environment in SCH in Malaysia is congruent with the IBE or it might be a contradiction with the value of Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT). The findings expected to contribute to better understanding of stakeholder such as hotel operators as well as travel agencies towards the needs and expectation on Natural Environment and therefore, boosting Islamic tourism industries in Malaysia.

Keywords: Islamic Built Environment; Natural Environment; Shariah Compliant Hotel; Muslim Friendly Tourism

## 1 Introduction

According to Global Muslim Travel Index 2 (12) 017, Malaysia is leading as Top 20 OIC Destinations with the percentage of 82.5% among 130 countries to benchmark destinations in the Muslim Travel Market leaving Singapore behind at the percentage of 67.3% as the top Non OIC Destinations.

The increasing percentage for Malaysia receiving Muslim tourist showing the growing demands of tourism products based on Islamic religious requirements (8). One of the products that has been recognized as a promising market is hotel conforming to GMTI criteria, tourists are looking for accommodations options other than a safe travel environment, dining options and halal assurance, ease of access to prayer places, airports services, language proficiency and a family-friendly holiday destination (6). With the numbers received

annually, Malaysia are quickly emerging in order to reap the economic benefits of the industry.

Tourist's satisfaction and service quality have proven playing important roles in the battle for competitive differentiation and customer retention (2). These was shown to the professionals in the tourism and hotel industry by the overwhelming customer demand for quality products and services (2). It is believing that hotel able to improve their profits by satisfying customers, and practitioners and academic agreed that customer satisfaction and service quality are prerequisites of loyalty.

This study believes the quality of SCH able to derive from the evaluations that will be conducted throughout the research process.

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Figure 1: Global Muslim Travel Index 2017 (12)

Therefore, in order to boost the Islamic tourism in Malaysia with Shariah Compliance Hotel as one of the component, practitioners; designers, hotel industries' player and travel agencies needs to understand clearly the adaptation of the Islamic Built Environment in Shariah Compliance Hotel in a way to accommodate the demands. Now, apparently, demand of Shariah Compliant Hotel (SCH) is a big thing after Shariah Compliant Banking. Among Muslim nation; halal knowledge, awareness, purchasing power and changes in life style influence the concept in hospitality services industry to pay attention more than just halal food and beverages. Emirates Business 24/7 claims that Muslim business travellers are now demanding for SCH, and SCH should be created more than just not serving alcohol. Being a top destination for Muslim tourist, the growing number of Islamic theme hotel also rising in Malaysia; a Muslim country. There are few concepts of Islamic theme hotel in world including Dry Hotel, Halal Hotel, Muslim Friendly Hotel and Shariah Compiant Hotel. Focusing on Shariah Compliant Hotel, the aim of this study is to evaluate the tourist's satisfaction towards Shariah Compliant Hotel within the context of Islamic Built Environment (24) to indicate positive disconfirmation or negative disconfirmation due to the performance of the SCH with the adaptation of IBE. Tangible and intangible aspect will be derived from this chapter and describes the correlation of the relevant of IBE implementation in Shariah Compliant Hotel to the tourist's satisfaction (21).

## 1.1 Muslim Tourism in Malaysia

Malaysia Islamic Tourism Centre, claims Malaysia as top destination for Muslim travellers across the globe after Malaysia has been named as number one destination for Muslim travellers for four years in a row; 2011 – 2014 by Crescent Rating of Singapore and numerous recognitions received by Malaysia towards Halal and Islamic related accolades. The launched of Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) on 16 March 2009 to assist Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia in undertaking strategic tourism research and market intelligence in relation to Islamic tourism is a prove that Malaysia is taking Islamic tourism as a serious business in a way to ensure that Malaysia is always at the forefront of Islamic tourism. As stated, one of the ITC's future initiative is to develop standard and guidelines for Malaysia's Islamic tourism sector in a bid to improve the country's tourism products and services (16,17).

Travelling in Islam is encouraged various verses in Al-Quran acknowledge travelling and tourism. From the Al Quran;

'Travel thought the earth and see how Allah SWT did originate creation; so will Allah produce a later creation; for Allah has power over all things.' Surah Al Ankabut:20

'Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those before you; most of them worshipped others besides Allah' Surah al-Rum:42

'Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected truth' Surah al-An'am:11

Understanding the encouragement, Muslim inspire to travel, intercountry or in the country. From the statistic, it shows the growing number of foreign tourist in Malaysia region especially tourist from Arab countries. They identified as visitors for various aspects such as medical treatment, studying, shopping and experiencing the multicultural fiestas (4).

#### 2 Literature Review

#### 2.1 Islamic Built Environment in Malaysia

Islamic Built Environment basically is Built Environment with Islamic principle approach. There are four interrelated characteristics to define Built Environment. Number one, environment is boundless and provides context with all human endeavors. Character number two, is the creation of human minds and the results of human purposes; to serve human needs, wants and values. Next, is their creation is to help us deal with and to protect us from the overall environment by changing the environment for our comfort and well-being. Finally, every component of built environment will result to positive or negative to the overall environment; both man-made and natural, as well as human-environment relationship. The Built environment scopes are organized into seven interrelated components: (1) Products, (2) Interiors, (3) Structures, (4) Landscape, (5) Cities, (6) Regions and (7) Earth.

In the context of truly Islamic built environment, the combination of created elements (spaces, places and structures) to serve human needs and value basically reflects the insights from Islamic teachings and values. Study from Dr Norliza Mohd Isa contributed 10 indicators of Islamic Built Environment (24) in Malaysia. The indicators consist of (1) Natural Environment; emphasized and embedded the aspect of natural environment in built environment, (2) Social and Human Comfort; setting that concerns the social need and bring human comfort, (3) Religious Identity; religious identity that suits local culture, (4) Order; setting and planning with order that imposes Islamic vibe, (5) Economic; executing honest and worthy economic system based on Islamic value, (6) Intellectual and Knowledge; expression of intellectual and knowledge aspect in Islam, (7) Hygiene; emphasis on hygiene and cleanliness, (8) Element of Jannah; the translation elements of Jannah (Paradise) which are intelligence, beauty and tranquility, (9) Safety; safety setting to the built environment and (10, 11) Tolerance; able to brings spirit of tolerant and liberty among community.

This study will only be focusing to the aspect of IBE indicator, Natural Environment. Natural Environment become the most significant factors underline by the experts. The discussion was held by more than 13 experts listed by the previous study. From the study, the criteria collected under Natural Environment indicator are (1) the hinterland bring back to the nature, the natural Allah creation, (2) more natural environment should be more than modern hardscape, (3) Islamic built environment is religious building with Islamic architecture which supported by the surrounding landscape and natural environment, (4) environmentalism is the key factor including the green concept, recycle and revitalization of natural resources, (5) Islam is respect to nature, respect customs and sustainability, (6) practice good values conform to nature and fitrah, (7) natural environment is an important elements to be embedded in modern built environment, (8) plant lots of trees and preserve the natural resources, (9) develop environment friendly for the people and (10,11) the environment also effects the landscaping, the population and infra-structure (15).

## 2.2 Natural Environment

Health has been defining as a state of complete mental, physical and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease of infirmity by World Health Organization. 2001 Americal Journal of Preventive Medicine claims that contact with nature to find tranquility in soothing, restorative and even

healing sense might be an important component of well-being. The idea is supported by the surveys from 1989 National Gardening Survey to the 2000 numbers of household, among residents of retirement communities, 99% saying that living within pleasant landscapes grounds is essential and 95% saying that having windows facing green are important. Office employee indicate that plants make them feel calmer and more relaxed besides more inviting. Therefore, it is agreed that contact with natural environment contribute to the complete mental, physical and social well-being as per reported in the journal. An environmental psychologist has written that nature matters to people. Some of the important ingredients are big trees and small trees, glistering water, chirping birds, budding bushes and colourful flower (1).

As written by Psychologist Micheal Perlman reported by the journal, trees have psychological power as evidenced by mythology, dreams and self-reported emotional responses. To support the idea, today the concept of 'plants play a role' in therapy is well establish. Even in prisons, observers noted that garden has a 'strangely soothing effect' influence pacifists of potential battlers (1).

In urban setting, gardens are link to the social advantage and added the value of the property.

Literature review provides the idea of natural environment involved with senses in making it works to earn that soothing effect. The relation of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch to the four aspects of nature world includes plants, animal, water, wind and lights. The effect may extend from aesthetic to joy, peacefulness, tranquility and relaxation. Hotel as a place to feel joy apart from home will added the value by embedded natural environment.

Designing a hotel and taking natural environment as part of the design elements not only contribute to the positive vibes in human's health but also giving the return in operations. In general, energy that consumed in building for heating and cooling, lighting & services and equipment. From the total energy consumption, the biggest energy consumption 73% is from electricity (5). Therefore, the consumption can be reduced by introducing passive design techniques as well as considering the elements of natural environment at the architectural building design process (5).

Adapting natural environment as the design element not only significant to reducing the generous amount for operation cost by lower the energy usage, however it helps a lot in reducing greenhouse gas emission (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide). Greenhouse gas emission is a key element harming the world, these days. In Islam, the important to care for the Earth and the environment, and a real need to spread virtue and good deeds, being repeatedly demanded in the Quran (3, 4). Following tawheed in Islam, gives people a special role in trusteeship in the relation with environment, however the privilege is not abusing Earth for her or his own purposes (3).

From the literatures, having Natural Environment embedded as design element in Islamic Built Environment is essential to reflect the ideology of Islam.

## 2.3 Hotel in Malaysia

By general, tourist accommodation premises in Malaysia is controlled by Ministry Of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) and the hoteliers are presented by Malaysian Association of Hotels (20) established since 1974. The establishment of MAH is to enhance the hotel and tourism industry by integrating member hotels throughout Malaysia with their current numbers of registered over 900 members

under 13 chapters and partnership with both the private sectors and Government agencies. As a National Hotel Association, MAH committed to exacting standards of service quality acknowledge by Malaysia and beyond.

With the rise of innovative accommodation premises; hotel in Malaysia, The Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) has introduced the new Malaysia Criteria for Classification of Tourist Accommodation Premises. The new classification launched by Minister of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, YB Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz at Tanah Farrah Soraya Eco Resort in Raub, Pahang on the 25th of May 2017 stated that there are five categories on the classification. Those categories are City Hotels, Highland Hotel, Beach, Island, Lake and River Resorts, Innovative Hotels and Boutique Hotels to be implemented beginning 1 June 2017. The idea of classifying is to improve the diversity of hotel services and product offerings, enhancing hotel service quality and maintenance of facilities as well as including more objective evaluation during the star-rating exercise. However, there is no classification on Shariah Compliant Hotel introduced yet although the demand is there.

United Nations World Tourism organization, Article 1 under the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, clause 1 mention the foundation and consequence of responsible tourism includes the attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs; stakeholders should observe the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples including minorities to recognize their worth (UNWTO, 2011). It shows that Shariah Compliant Hotel is possible to be realized as another brilliant Islamic product at par with Shariah Compliant Banking product. When there are demands, the Shariah Compliant Hotel believes to be spring everywhere.

#### 2.4 Shariah Compliant Hotel (SCH)

Travel and tourism industry is world's largest industry with a global economic contribution of over 7.6 trillion U.S dollars in 2016 and has direct economic impact of the industry, including accommodation, transportation, entertainment and attractions (14). With the numbers received annually, Malaysia are quickly emerging in order to reap the economic benefits of the industry.

Inherently associated with the tourism industry, a commercial enterprise which contributed seven trillion U.S dollars to the global economy in 2013, the hotel industry is certainly a profitable line (14). First pick for travellers who are on the road for the attire day clearly is a place to sleep and rest no matter what types of lodging across the world to accommodate the demand.

The increasing numbers of occupancy rate since 2014, showing more demands for the industry which the percentage of the occupancy rate is followed by the Asia Pacific region after Europe (14). It is reported that the number of tourist from Middle East to United Kingdom and United States dropped drastically after the case of September Eleven, 2000 shifted to another Muslim country such as Malaysia.

In league with the outlined in the 2006 Malaysia Third Industrial Master Plan (IMP3), the aspirations to become global hub for halal services and products associates with the shortlisted Kuala Lumpur in the 'Worlds' Best Halal Tourism Destination' category in World Halal Travel Awards during World Halal Travel Summit and Exhibition 15, 2015 (22) makes Islamic Tourism widen from the provision of Halal food to the hospitality services that comply with the Islamic Law

(Shariah). The hospitality services refer to hotels, resorts, restaurants and airlines with no serving of alcoholic beverages but only Halal certified meals as well as Islamic Built Environment.

Today, Shariah Compliant Hotel (SCH) is no longer new blood among the hotel concept in the world. 1st International Islamic Tourism Standard Conference (IITSC) was held at the Putra World Trade Center Kuala Lumpur on December 2012. There are writings done by scholars found on this topic since a decade and the concept is already applied globally especially in Middle Eastern Countries. Not even in Islamic countries, non-Islamic countries such as predominately Buddhist Thailand has opened its first halal hotel as hopes to attract more Muslim visitors and boost one of the few bright spots in its economy. The Al Meroz Hotel in Bangkok with four-star recognition, was launched in November 2016 is playing his part together with other hotelier to increase the statistical data of Muslim Tourist in Thailand. In Malaysia, although the numbers of SCH is scanty, but with the encouragement by Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) and the increasing numbers of Muslim Tourist, the number of SCH is growing.

Website mysalaam.com in 2016 has compiled a list of the top 5 Muslim-friendly hotels in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia that venues range from thrifty inns to more mid-scale lodging. PNB Perdana Hotel & Suites on the Park was listed as the most top followed by Traders Hotel nearby KLCC and Grand Blue Wave Hotel, in Shah Alam. At the rank Number 4 is Silka Maytower Hotel and the list ended with De Palma Hotel Ampang. The demand of Muslim Friendly Hotel proved there are access for SCH to be established in Malaysia. According to survey among staying tourist in the pioneer of SCH in Malaysia, 69.1% saying Non-Muslim showing their interest to the halal hotel with 81.8% co-operations from the Non-Muslim to implement the halal management hotel and 78.2% saying halal hotel able to gain users' trust (7).

SCH also known as Islamic Hotel in the industry (23). In Arabic, word 'Shariah' means the path that should be followed by Muslim or Islamic Law and 'Compliant' is the act of obeying as the particular rule (9). Therefore, Shariah Compliant Hotel able to be defined as a hotel that provides services that obeying the rules and regulations of Islam. However, the term is different with Muslim Friendly Hotel. Muslim Friendly Hotel concept is more relax and industrial friendly especially in the Non Islamic country whereas Shariah is the governing law. Thus this study is going to focus on Shariah Compliant Hotel to require the implementation of fully SCH in the industry in order to be rated as 'Shariah Compliant Hotel'. It is believed compliance to Islamic values is not an excessive burden on service provider in an Islamic country like Malaysia.

From the previous literature review, it is known that Shariah Compliant Hotel (SCH) industry is growing in the world, so thus in Malaysia. Collaboration of Malaysia's tourism industry players including ITC, Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia Association of Hotel Owners (20), Malaysia Association of Hotel (20), Malaysia Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA), Bumiputera Travel and Tour Agents Association of Malaysia (Bumitra) and Malaysia Tourist Guides Council (MTGC) with SIRIM as the standard's secretariat by Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM) had drafted the first Malaysia's standard dedicated to the Islamic tourism sector. The launch of 'MS2610;2015 – Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services – Requirement' in January 2015 provides guidelines on three critical components of the Islamic

tourism supply chain namely the accommodation premises, tour packages and tourist guides.

ITC is promoting the usage of standards to the industry players as a guide if they are interested to make some operational changes in order capture the lucrative Muslim tourist markets but currently the adoption of standard is solely on voluntary basis with no regulation in Malaysia that governs the Islamic tourism sector.

Currently, Malaysia is leading as the top country to be chosen in Muslim tourism industry. However, the other country is chasing the number. Therefore, have a good brand of Shariah Compliance Hotel is a way to maintain or upgrade the statistic number Muslim tourist in Malaysia.

#### 2.5 Tourist Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction and service quality have attentions to practitioners because of the strong impact on business performance and customer behaviour. The assertation is supported with a number of empirical studies indicate positive relationships between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty as well as between customer satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth (2). In this study, customer satisfaction will be addressed as tourist satisfaction to acclimate with the tourist as respondents in the hospitality industry. The tourist satisfaction is the result of an evaluative process that contrasts pre-purchase expectations with the perceptions of performance during and after the consumption experience with the involvement of post consumption evaluative judgement (2). There are theories of customer satisfaction concept widely accepted in the world.

Attract new customers with the concept is not sufficient in order Shariah Compliant Hotel to maintain and be successful in the market. Managers have to concentrate on retaining existing customers implementing effective policies of tourist satisfaction as in the hotel industry, the satisfaction can improve the loyalty while exploring the importance of Shariah Compliant Hotel attributes in hotel selection is crucial.

#### 3 Research Methodology

## 3.1 Data Collection Method

The principal investigation of this study is to determine the most relevant Shariah Compliant Hotel with an attempt to implement Islamic Built Environment in Malaysia and to evaluate the level of tourist satisfaction on Natural Environment in Shariah Compliant Hotel. The research methodology will be started with the preliminary study process with a combination of (1) reviewing literature, (2) data collection, (3) sampling and (4) data analysis to obtain the (5) research findings.

Quantitative method will be used as the approach of the study. Survey method will be implemented to achieve the strategy of evaluating tourist satisfaction towards Shariah Compliant Hotel. Researcher will develop structural questionnaires as the instrument to carry out during the direct-field survey.

As the research topic revolves around the Shariah Compliant Hotel (SCH) industry in Malaysia, the structural questionnaires will be distributed directly for data and information collection in order to enhance the accuracy of the outcome of the study to the staying tourist in chosen SCH in Malaysia. The respondents will be among local and international tourist to find the correlation between demographic variables and the IBE in SCH variables.

Four hotels have been chosen as case study to evaluate the satisfaction level of the tourist staying in SCH. The four hotels are PNB Perdana Hotel in Kuala Lumpur, Grand Blue Wave Hotel, Shah Alam, De Palma Hotel Ampang, Kuala Lumpur and Adya Hotel in Langkawi. Being in the Muslim Friendly Hotel list by Islamic Tourism Centre of Malaysia is the starting point to select the hotels before identified them as the ideal SCH in Malaysia by having bidet, kiblat marker and halal kitchen base on the SCH characteristic from literature reviews.

Other factors influenced those four hotels to be chose by researcher are PNB Perdana Hotel has carved a name of being the first hotel in Malaysia to hold full halal certification after undergo rigorous approach from its restaurants and kitchens, revised the schedule of recreational facilities for the usage of men and women as well as having shariah law academic to ensures all business operations are compliant with Islamic principles in obtaining the halal certification (18,19). Grand Blue Wave Hotel, Shah Alam is Malaysia's first hotel awarded Islamic Quality Standard for 5-star category, from the report it was awarded the IQS-3 (Islamic Quality Standard for Hotel) by the Universal Crescent Standard Centre (UCSC). De Palma Hotel Ampang, Kuala Lumpur is the pioneer Shariah Compliant Hotel chain in Malaysia and received the IQS-2 Crescent (Islamic Quality Standard for Hotel) by the Universal Crescent Standard Centre (UCSC) also a winner of the Halal Journal Awards for Travel & Hospitality (13). Adya Hotel Langkawi is a receiver for Best 4-star Accommodation in Langkawi during Langkawi Tourism Awards 2015 and also awarded with IQS-4 (Islamic Quality Standard for Hotel) by the Universal Crescent Standard Centre (UCSC) for the Islamic Hotel recognition.

For the data collection, questionnaire survey is undertaken to elicit the research result from the hotel staying tourists as respondent. To start the data collection, variables are identified as below and the perimeter of the study is set within the Natural environment in the Open Spaces in SCH:

Analysis Subject	Dependent Variables	Independent Variables
Satisfaction	Natural Environment - Landscape Planning	Respondents' Demographic Age Gender Locality – categorised Level of Education Religion (Moslem/Non Moslem)

IBE Indicators	Tangible aspect	Intangible aspect
	Garden and	Garden and Trees
	Trees	Maintenance
Natural	Water features	Water qualities
Environment		maintenance
	Natural	Air qualities
<ul> <li>Emphasized and</li> </ul>	Ventilation	
embedded the	Natural Sunlight	Lighting and Visual
aspect of natural		qualities
environment in	Natural	Naturalistic impression
built environment	Materials	
	Natural Living	Sound and Smell
		qualities

The appraisal will be prepared using Natural Environment as indicator. It will be tested based on the tangible and intangible aspect base on the discussions by the experts to the three significant indicators listed.

#### 3.2 Ouestionnaire Instrument

For the development of this questionnaires survey instrument, a structured questionnaire is divided into several part. The first part contained questions about tourists' sociodemographic characteristics that have been listed as Independent Variables. The second part tourist were inquired about their general travel arrangement preferences, such as the travelling party, length of stay and the trip arrangement. The third part, respondents were asked to indicate their opinion to a five point Likert scale. The scale ranged from extremely disagree to extremely agree. The final section asked respondents to indicate their likelihood to make subsequent visits in the future. To ensure the questionnaires content validity a literature review was undertaken and experts were asked to judge if the survey instrument covered the range they would expect via pilot test. The pilot test will be addresses to the experts to ensure the validity of the listed IBE attributes in SCH. Apart of pilot test, pre-test also will be conducted to one SCH in an attempt to ensure a proper and broad flow of questioning. Questionnaire refer to Appendix a.

## 4 Anticipated Findings

This study anticipated the correlation inventory between selected SCH with the IBE indicator in Malaysian and the analysis of findings with regard to Muslim tourist's appraisal regarding IBE implementation on Natural Environment in the SCH in Malaysia. This result will help the designers and hoteliers for better understanding of the needs and expectation of the potential Muslim tourist.

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