

An Analysis of Halal Hotel Attributes in Brunei

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ABSTRACT

The exponential expansion of halal tourism has heightened the demand for tourist locations to provide halal items as a service to cater to the Muslim market. Halal hotels were subsequently introduced because of the explosive growth of halal tourism. It presents the prospect of having a lodging facility that complies with Shariah criteria. Hence, this study aims to examine the attributes of hotels in Brunei. To categorise a hotel as a halal hotel, it must meet features outlined by Shariah principles, including the prohibition of alcohol, the provision of halal food only, the availability of prayer mats, clearly marked qibla directions, and the avoidance of inappropriate entertainment. The study used a web-based research method to examine the features of halal hotels on hotel websites. It also applied a qualitative method by conducting open-ended interviews with hotel managers of two hotels selected from the web-based research in Brunei to evaluate their perspectives on halal hotel attributes. The analysis of hotel websites and hotel managers' perspectives on Halal hotel attributes in Brunei revealed that the hotels meet the features or attributes of Halal hotels. As Brunei Darussalam continues to position itself as a critical player in the Halal tourism market, the research findings have a dual impact on academic discussions and practical applications for improving halal hotel management techniques. Ultimately, the study is a valuable foundation for future research endeavours to refine further and expand our understanding of the dynamic interplay between Halal tourism concepts and hotel management practices.

Keywords: Brunei, Halal Hotel Attributes, Halal Tourism, Hotel Managers

INTRODUCTION

The number of Muslims is increasing, which raises the market's demand for Muslim goods and services (Razali et al., 2015). According to the (PEW Forum on Religion and Personal Life (2011), by 2030, the Muslim population is projected to reach 2.2 billion, up from 1.6 in 2010, or 23.4 percent to 26.4 percent of the world's population. Omar, Islam, and Adaha, 2013, cited in Razali et al., 2015, stated that the tourism industry is anticipated to be significantly impacted by the demand for Muslim-friendly products due to the increasing trend of the Muslim population and inherent encouragement of Islam in terms of travelling. A novel idea like

Islamic tourism and halal hospitality, comparable to the concept of halal foods, which has gained popularity in many nations, including the Middle East, is gaining popularity (Samori & Sabtu, 2014; Battour et al., 2011).

As the number of Muslim tourists continues to rise, destination marketers are increasingly tasked with developing tourism products that align with Islamic religious requirements. This is a direct response to the growing influence of the Muslim consumer market, which is shaped by their unwavering commitment to the Islamic religion and its principles (Henderson, 2003). Muslims must abide by the halal and haram rules in all

aspects of their daily lives, even while travelling. Regarding Muslim consumers, adherence to religious principles is paramount while travelling (Haque et al., 2019).

The hospitality industry, including hotels, is undergoing transformative shifts to cater to the needs of Muslim travellers. The emergence of Halal tourism is a significant phenomenon, reshaping the landscape of hotel management. Battour and Ismail (2016) assert that the global tourism sector is witnessing a notable rise in the popularity of Islamic-friendly services. Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2019 data shows that by 2026, the number of Muslim tourists is projected to reach 230 million worldwide (MasterCard & CrescentRating, 2019). Additionally, it is projected that Muslim travellers will allocate a total of USD 180 billion towards online travel expenditures by the year 2026 (Shafa et al., 2020). Hence, halal tourism is a growing segment of the global tourism industry, with Muslim travellers seeking accommodations and services that cater to their religious and cultural needs (Sim & Abdullah, 2023; Sulaiman & Hashim, 2023).

Brunei's government has made tourism one of its primary areas of concentration to promote economic diversification in several high-value tourism markets. Although Brunei has traditionally drawn tourists to its Islamic past, there is currently a determined effort to market the Sultanate and its distinctive MIB ethic as an Islamic tourism destination. The expansion of Islamic tourism provides Brunei Darussalam with a significant potential to advance Islam and enhance its standing internationally (Oxford Business Group, 2016). To capitalise on these markets, hoteliers in Brunei must improve their infrastructure further to meet Muslim aspirations and wants. Hotels in Brunei must, therefore, operate and align with Shariah-Compliant practices.

In Brunei Darussalam (herein called Brunei), a predominantly Muslim country, the halal tourism market presents significant opportunities for hotels to attract and serve this niche. Therefore,

as Brunei strives to broaden its economy and decrease its reliance on oil exports, the halal tourist market offers a favourable prospect for the nation's Islamic travel sector (Sim & Abdullah, 2023). Brunei possesses inherent advantages as a Muslim-Friendly Tourism (MFT) destination due to its predominantly Islamic character, shared religious values with potential target markets like the United States and Australia, a safe environment (Darussalam – Abode of Peace), and common use of the English language (Sim & Abdullah, 2023). Therefore, hoteliers need to pay attention to the attributes of halal-friendly hotels to be offered to tourists because later, it will be the focus and attention in shaping consumers' preferences for staying at their hotels (Shafa et al., 2020).

As of 2024, the study discussing the analysis of halal hotel attributes in Brunei still needs to be explored. Therefore, this research endeavours to delve into the nuanced realm of hotel management by investigating hotel managers' perspectives on the concept of Halal hotels, with a specific focus on Brunei's unique context. As the global tourism sector witnesses a growing interest in catering to the preferences and needs of Muslim travellers, understanding the perspectives and challenges hotel managers face in implementing Halal hotel concepts becomes crucial. By exploring their views, experiences, and strategies, this study aims to contribute valuable insights to both academic discourse and the practical aspects of hospitality management in the context of Brunei's evolving tourism industry.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent studies have explored the prospects of halal green tourism in Brunei, which combines the principles of halal tourism with eco-friendly practices (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2023). Furthermore, research has been conducted to assess the level of awareness and understanding among hotel authorities in Brunei regarding the consumption of halal foods in hotel restaurants (Nordin, 2021). However, according to Alam et al. (2024), Brunei, known for its majority Muslim population, has

limited visibility in publishing halal labels on halal tourism. Hence, this paper seeks to investigate the halal attributes in hotel operations from web-content analysis and further online interviews, leading to Brunei hotels being classified as halal.

HALAL TOURISM

World Travel Market explains halal tourism as religious tourism that conforms with Islamic teachings regarding behaviourism, dress, conduct, and diet (World Travel Market, 2007). So, halal tourism can be interpreted as tourism that is allowed, according to Islamic teachings, to be done by Muslims (Battour & Ismail, 2016). To sum up, halal tourism is any object or action permissible according to Islamic teachings to be used or engaged by Muslims in the tourism industry (Battour & Ismail, 2016).

Halal tourism aims to provide more excellent convenience for Muslim tourists so that they can still carry out their worship while travelling (Putra & Tucunan, 2021; Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2020; Battour & Ismail, 2016) and avoid all Allah's prohibitions (Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2020). Both concepts consider Shariah law the basis for delivering halal tourism products and services to tourists, such as tourist attractions, lodging accommodations, food restaurants, and so on (Putra & Tucunan, 2021).

A significant paradigm must be understood in halal tourism development: Halal tourism does not seek to alienate Muslim tourists from conventional tourist activities or exclude non-Muslim travellers from specific travel destinations (Putra & Tucunan, 2021). Its development aims to provide greater convenience for Muslim tourists to carry out their worship while travelling (Putra & Tucunan, 2021).

Furthermore, the fundamental requirements given priority in halal tourism are directly linked to their religious practices. At least six fundamental needs are needed in Muslims' daily lives, including when doing tourist activities (Bahardeen, 2016; CrescentRating, 2019). The essential requirements encompass the provision

of water purification facilities, facilities for religious prayer (salat), halal cuisine, and tourism activities that adhere to Islamic principles and are devoid of any immoral or malevolent elements. Additionally, there should be services catering to Ramadan and recreational facilities or services that offer privacy (Bahardeen, 2016).

Hence, the halal tourism industry has created a niche that allows many countries to offer specially packaged Muslim-friendly products. The demand for Islamic hospitality is high due to the increasing number of tourists from the Middle East and Europe, hence opportunities for destination marketers to develop tourism products based on Islamic requirements (Battour et al., 2010).

Brunei is located on the island of Borneo and is bordered by Indonesia and Malaysia, which are well ahead in tourism development (Kassim, 2003). The Brunei government has granted various facilities to develop Shariah-compliant concepts that align with this growth trend. The destination features a variety of distinctive infrastructures, notably exquisite mosques that provide convenient facilities for Muslim travellers to pray. Brunei is also recognised as an Islamic country, and it is simple for them to obtain halal-certified food (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2023). Thus, Brunei is considered a safe destination for Muslim travellers, mainly due to the ubiquitous availability of mosques, halal food restaurants and business transactions in Islamic banking, making it easy for travellers to fulfil their basic and special needs. This speciality is excellent for showcasing Brunei to tourists as a halal location (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2023). Therefore, this study will delve into the attributes of hotels in Brunei and whether they could be classified as halal or not.

HALAL HOTEL ATTRIBUTES

Extensive research has been conducted on the characteristics determining halal hotels due to the increasing interest in halal tourism. Hanjaya et al. (2019) asserted that attribute is one element that leads to consumer identification of possible responses to a need. Hotel attributes influence consumers' minds, especially when choosing accommodation options. Hotels with superior attributes can better win the competition by influencing all critical aspects consumers consider when choosing hotels (Baniya & Thapa, 2017).

According to Shafa et al. (2020), a halal hotel is a facility that aims to meet consumers' religious needs. A halal hotel has four attributes: halal services, halal food and beverages, halal facilities, and halal privacy. Additional religious services and provisions at the hotel will result in the withdrawal of new markets and increased hotel rates.

There still need to be written formal requirements or classifications for Sharia-compliant hotels (Saad, Ali, & Abdel-Ati, 2014). However, a ministerial regulation issued by the Minister of Tourism of Indonesia regulates the Sharia Hotel in Indonesia. The criteria for a Sharia-compliant hotel involve the establishment of qualifications and classifications that encompass aspects of products, services, and management. Sharia hotels are categorised into two classes: Hilal 1 and Hilal 2. Hilal 1 refers to Sharia hotels that exhibit some flexibility in implementing Sharia law, such as allowing the presence of alcoholic beverages like wine. In contrast, Hilal 2 represents Sharia hotels that fully embrace Sharia law in their services, operations, and management (Menteri Pariwisata, 2014). However, the number of Sharia-compliant hotels in Indonesia still needs to grow.

Shariah-compliant hotels are first being implemented in the Middle East because local customs should not conflict with Islamic law (Saad, Ali, & Abdel-Ati, 2014). Experts believe the Shariah-compliant hotel concept has a promising future despite its sluggish development. Furthermore, some claim that applying a dry or

Shariah-compliant hotel concept will undoubtedly drive away some Western guests and reduce the market's potential (Ahmat, Ridzuan, & Zahari, 2012). The biggest obstacle to implementing a Shariah-compliant hotel is the loss of revenue from alcohol sales, which will eventually impact the profits from food and beverages.

As one of the ASEAN nations, Singapore is home to a majority non-Muslim population and is governed by a non-Muslim government. As such, Shariah-compliant hotels there may eventually encounter difficulties competing with more traditional, mainstream lodging options. The decrease in revenue is one issue that could result from the prohibition of alcohol (Samori & Rahman, 2013). For many hotels, alcohol sales make up a sizable portion of their revenue because they are so profitable. Since they believe that their guests anticipate alcohol to be available, international hotel management companies in Singapore are hesitant to run Islamic hotels because they are unable to tolerate the loss of revenue.

One key aspect of halal hotels is ensuring halal certification for food and beverages. Research, such as that by Battour et al. (2024), underscores the vital role of halal certification in catering to the needs of Muslim travellers. This certification guarantees compliance with Islamic dietary laws, a crucial factor for Muslim consumers. Food quality, including its preparation and sourcing, is also a significant attribute influencing consumer preferences in halal-friendly hotels (Shafa et al., 2020).

For Muslim clients and consumers, the assurance of halal certification is paramount. It signifies that the product satisfies Islamic religious requirements and reassures them of its quality and authenticity. Products that have received halal certification from an authorised body indicate that the halal principle has been followed throughout the manufacturing process, instilling confidence in Muslim consumers. This emphasis on halal certification is not limited to products but also extends to services, with certain hotels and tourist

destinations in non-Muslim nations beginning to serve halal food, including The Intercontinental Hotel in Prague, Hilton Glasgow, and The Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary in Australia (Harith et al., 2022).

In Malaysia, the application for the Halal logo certificate from JAKIM, with 101 hotels participating nationwide, underscores a growing trend in certifying their restaurants and cafes. Notably, some traditional hotels are proactively repositioning themselves as Muslim-friendly establishments, a development highlighted by Karim et al. (2014). While the concept of Islamic or Shariah-compliant hotels is familiar in Malaysia, there is a recognised need to enhance compliance (Razalli et al., 2012). Consequently, the branding of Islamic Hotels in Malaysia is classified as an outbound Islamic brand, targeting both Muslim and non-Muslim markets globally (Alserhan, 2010a; Samori & Sabtu, 2014). The marketing strategies for these establishments focus on values such as purity and humanity (Alserhan, 2010b).

Compared to Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore, there is less research regarding Halal hotels in Brunei as there is less awareness of this aspect of Halal Tourism. As Muslim Malays comprise most of the population, Brunei's offerings (including food and drink, lodging, dining options, and public spaces) would undoubtedly satisfy halal standards and draw in perspective Muslim tourists. To guarantee that food and dining establishments in the nation are halal, food makers and outlets are now required by law to receive halal certification. The country's hotels are halal-friendly since it is illegal to sell alcohol, and it does not provide any of the goods or services that are forbidden by Islam, such as adult television channels and gambling (Muhamad et al., 2019).

In addition to providing halal food, hotels could support Muslim travellers by hanging qibla direction on the ceiling of each room and providing adequate prayer facilities. Research consistently points to the importance of giving sufficient prayer facilities. Hotels offering dedicated prayer

rooms and resources such as prayer mats and qibla direction indicators appeal more to Muslim guests. For instance, a systematic review indicated that the availability of such facilities significantly enhances guest satisfaction and loyalty (Alam et al., 2024; Battour et al., 2024).

A hotel that complies with Shariah law accommodates Muslim guests' needs and typically follows specific laws or standards to verify the conditions met to achieve Shariah compliance. Recognising Islamic characteristics in the hospitality sector, a Shariah-compliant hotel prioritises meeting the religious needs of its guests and emphasises the environment, safety, health, and economic well-being of all people, regardless of their culture, religion, or race (Stephenson, 2014; Salleh et al., 2014). According to Suci et al., (2020), Shariah guidelines or Islamic law should serve as the foundation for all hotel operations to comply with the law.

Regarding room concept, facilities provided, kitchen, food and beverage, housekeeping, and employee dress code, Shariah-Compliant Hotel differs from other hotels (Jaehang et al., 2020). A hotel's social environment, including its ambience and community engagement, plays a significant role in attracting Muslim tourists. Hotels that foster a family-friendly atmosphere and respect Islamic customs, such as avoiding alcohol and providing family-oriented amenities, tend to receive higher satisfaction ratings from Muslim guests (Shafa et al., 2020).

Samori and Sabtu (2014) also have outlined a few traits of a "friendly Muslim hotel," including the prohibition of serving any food or drink that is forbidden in the hotel room, the division of male and female rooms, the presence of a prayer mat, the qibla direction, and Quran translation in each room. Studies and data indicate that the market for hotels adhering to Shariah has excellent potential, given that Muslims make up approximately 24% of the world's population (Papastathopoulos et al., 2020; Shnnyrkova & Predvoditeleva, 2022)

Moreover, Saad et al. (2014) describe a Shariah-

compliant hotel as providing services according to the Shariah principles, such as Halal food, alcohol-free beverages, a copy of the Qur'an in each room, prayer rooms with qibla direction, Islamic funding, and appropriate entertainment (Saad et al., 2014; Battour & Ismail, 2016). To be considered a fully Shariah-compliant hotel, the hotel's operation, design, and financial system must comply with Shariah rules and principles (Ahmat et al., 2012; Saad et al., 2014).

Over the years, the development of Shariah-compliant characteristics has evolved from basic needs in halal food and beverages, as well as Muslim praying facilities, into operations, ambience and surroundings, types of entertainment, and provision of the necessary information to Muslim travellers on the availability of facilities and services offered at their premises (Sailan & Rahim, 2018).

Based on the literature, the characteristics of Shariah compliance can be classified as having halal-certified food and beverages, no-serve alcohol, and qibla direction. Sajadda is provided in the room, and staff are aware of halal tourism. These characteristics or attributes are aligned as portrayed with OIC/SMIIC 9: 2021 - Halal Tourism Services – General Requirements on the accommodation premises with Halal tourism

No	Services	Shall Have	Shall not have	Recommended
1	Halal food options upon request (Halal certified kitchen or providing halal food or list of local Halal restaurants)	×		
2	Remove alcohol from the minibar upon request	×		
3	Marked qibla direction	×		
4	Directions to local mosques			×
5	Sajadas (prayer mats) and prayer schedule upon request	×		
6	Trained staff on awareness of Halal Tourism Services Principles	×		

Source: (The Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries, 2019)

basic scale services for category C shall have the following services tabulated in Table 1.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, whereby information is derived from various types of sources such as articles, journals, official websites, internet sources, and mainstream media (newspapers and official social media sites/platforms) to produce a good and fruitful outcome for our area of research and discussions, as well as

to get the current information to contribute to the development of these particular articles, despite the difficult task of looking up for the materials to have an extensive betterment of research and development.

Then, the data collected were analysed using thematic analysis to uncover the theme of the Shariah-compliant hotel concepts in the pertinent literature obtained. The study area was focused mainly on the framework that portrays various Shariah-compliant and Islamic identities in hotels, such as halal food, no alcohol, prayer room, and qibla sign. Moreover, it also aimed to provide a source of example for the observers or industry players as a start-up point to have Muslim-friendly or Shariah-based / compliant hotels in the current tourism industry.

To gather data and generate ample information to understand our topic, the study conducted a web-based research method to examine the features of halal hotels on hotel websites. The study collected data from six hotels in Brunei through their main website page. Then, the study also applied a qualitative method by conducting open-ended online interviews with hotel managers of two hotels selected from the web-based research to evaluate their perspectives on halal hotel attributes. The

Table 1. Online Interview Questions

Item	Question
1	What do you understand about the Halal Hotel?
2	What do you think are Halal hotel roles in Halal tourism?
3	Have you or your team received any training or information related to Halal hospitality?
4	Do you think there is a demand for Halal accommodations among guests in Brunei Darussalam?
5	Do you believe incorporating Halal practices can be a competitive advantage for hotels in Brunei Darussalam in the future? Please explain the advantages.
6	If there were a halal certification body for hotels, would your hotel be granted certification if you applied for it?

Source: Constructed for this study

questions were emailed to the hotel managers for the interview and have been tabulated in Table 1.

The study opted for open-ended questions to give leeway towards hotels being sent online questionnaires to provide answers that are free from biases but also, in a way, answer with answers that the researchers expect. According to Yaddanapudi & Yaddanapudi (2019), questionnaires are a valuable tool for gathering data from a community on facts, opinions, behaviours, and knowledge.

Analysed data from the online interviews, along with the literature and hotel web pages research, were used to integrate and classify the hotel in Brunei as meeting the requirements of a halal hotel.

The study used multiple data sources, namely literature, hotel websites, and online interviews with hotel managers, to corroborate the findings. These various sources are called triangulation data collection. With this data collection method, even with a small sample size, integrating different perspectives or data types can strengthen the overall validity of the research (Chetty & Thakur, 2020).

FINDINGS

While there is no strict rule, many qualitative researchers suggest that sample sizes can range from 5 to 30 participants, depending on the study's complexity and the richness of the data required (Omona, 2013). Morse (1994) proposed that a single individual in a case study is enough. Therefore, this study selected six hotels for the hotel website content research and interviewed two critical informants of the chosen hotel online; their general descriptions are tabulated in Table 2. Due to the request for informant confidentiality (Dooly, Moore, & Vallejo, 2017), the hotel name

Table 2. Sampling Detail

No	Hotel Code	Foundation Year	Data Collected Source	Key Informant
1	LH	2018	Hotel Website & Online Interview	Hotel Manager
2	TH	2015	Hotel Website & Online Interview	Hotel Manager
3	CRS	1968	Hotel Website	-
4	Rsh	1981	Hotel Website	-
5	EH	2000	Hotel Website	-
6	RqH	2006	Hotel Website	-

was coded, and the name of the key informant was concealed or secret.

Data collected from selected hotel websites in Table 3 shows the findings of halal tourism services offered by chosen hotels in Brunei. All the six selected hotels provide halal food service, have halal-certified restaurants, have qibla directions in

Table 3 The halal attributes of hotels in Brunei

Halal Hotel Attributes	LH	TH	CRS	Rsh	EH	RqH
Qibla direction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Halal Food Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Halal Certified restaurant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Al-Quran	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stream	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Shariah-Compliant Uniform/Outfit for Employees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender segregated facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Notes: provided
 not provided
 data not available.

Source: Data Analysis

the rooms, and the employee uniform is Shariah-compliant. Three out of six hotels had built-in prayer rooms in the hotel.

According to the responses from the informants

Table 4. Hotel Managers' Perspectives on Halal Hotel

Item	LH	TH
Item 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halal-certified food Gender separation for restroom 	Provide services to their customers by Islamic rules
Item 2	To attract tourists that are more at ease and prefer Halal-certified hotels (whether practicing the Muslim faith or others)	It can guide Muslim guests to find which hotel is suitable for them (which they prefer)
Item 3	Islamic values on customer service	Some only
Item 4	Mostly locals	Yes
Item 5	Personally, I think it might not be an advantage as hotels currently provide similar services, but people are still more interested in travelling overseas.	Yes, because the hotel will be a unique one as they incorporate the halal practice since the people of Brunei will be more comfortable if such practice is implemented as they no longer need to ask where specific hotel get their supply of food
Item 6	No, Not all services can be provided new to conform to halal requirements	Yes. Because some halal practices have been provided, some services, such as separated swimming pool areas, are not applicable.

Source: Data Analysis

in the online interviews, Table 4 below shows that they are aware of and understand the halal hotel concept.

DISCUSSION

According to the MasterCard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), the availability of halal food plays a vital role in deciding on a holiday destination, especially for Muslim travellers (CrescentRating, 2014). Even Battour et al. (2012) stressed that the availability and accessibility of halal food are a plus as they allow Muslim tourists to practise their beliefs with ease.

HOTEL IN BRUNEI AS A HALAL HOTEL

The findings showed that the operation of a hotel in Brunei met Shariah-compliant criteria. Table 3 illustrates the halal products and services provided by six different hotels in Brunei Darussalam. First, the Table 3 shows that all six hotels have qibla directions in their hotel rooms. This is a vital display for Muslim customers to perform their necessary duties. This is also evident in halal food service, as all hotel management provided excellent service. The availability of Qibla direction indicators in halal hotels is vital for supporting Muslim guests in their religious practices.

Table 3 also shows very little difference in the following category of Halal-certified restaurants. The CRS merely serves a ready-made breakfast

menu rather than a full-course meal. In addition, RsH provides gluten-free and vegetarian options on its meal menu. COMCEC Coordination Office's (2016) finding shows that 95% of respondents stated that the presence of halal food options is very important. The availability of halal food significantly enhances the overall guest experience for Muslim travelers. Research indicates that when hotels offer a variety of halal food options, it contributes to higher satisfaction levels among guests. This satisfaction is linked to the assurance that their dietary needs are respected and catered to, allowing them to enjoy their stay without concern over food choices (Shafa et al., 2020; Eldin & DeMicco, 2023).

Three hotels do not supply the Quran in their hotel rooms, and the authors could not identify any source indicating that the Quran is provided at the other two hotels. According to OIC/SMIIC 9 2019 halal tourism services of category C halal hotels, the availability of the Quran in the rooms is not a requirement. However, the Quran shall be available upon request.

Furthermore, three of the six hotels include a prayer room (surau) in their hotel. The size of the hotel is the main factor, as LH, EH, and RqH are all recognised for being higher-class accommodations with more room and territory. Having a designated prayer area within the hotel ensures that guests can fulfil their religious obligations conveniently without needing to leave the premises. This is particularly beneficial for travellers who may have limited time or access to nearby mosques.

Additionally, all six hotels provide their staff with Shariah-compliant uniforms to wear during business hours. Shariah-compliant uniforms for hotel staff should adhere to the principles of modesty and appropriateness. This typically involves covering the awrah (intimate parts of the body that should be covered) and avoiding tight or revealing clothing. For men, this may include long pants and shirts with sleeves, while for women, it often involves loose, non-transparent clothing that covers the head, arms, and legs.

Finally, as Table 3 illustrates, no hotel has any amenities divided or designated for men and women, such as separate gyms or swimming pools. Halal hotels should provide gender-segregated facilities to cater to the needs and preferences of Muslim guests.

According to Alam A. et al. (2024), the behaviour of visitors choosing a halal hotel is influenced by religiosity. Religion affects attitudes toward making choices because of their religious commitment. The study can infer from the answer to this question that a halal hotel offers services to clients according to Shariah law and that certified halal food and facilities are segregated by gender. It is known that the hotel managers of these two establishments are familiar with what constitutes a halal hotel. In that sense, Alam et al. (2024) indicate that it is a Muslim-friendly hotel that offers qibla direction, halal food, halal places, prayer facilities, and an alcohol-free policy. The halal hotel should carefully outline its offerings, including food and beverage options, furnishings, services, and activities.

Junaidi (2020) and Alam A. et al. (2024) indicated that Halal tourism strongly emphasises permissible movement, an essential part of spiritual travel for God's service. In the context of the tourism sector, halal refers to all elements and characteristics that comply with Islamic law. Halal travel aims to meet the unique needs of Muslim tourists. The responses are nearly identical in emphasising the importance of helping fellow Muslim visitors locate lodging that suits their needs and preferences.

The term "halal hospitality" describes the provision of goods and services that respect Islamic law and accommodate the demands of Muslim tourists. As stated by Junaidi (2020), these principles include implementing halal concepts in every travel activity managed, also known as halal or travel tourism. Halal hospitality strives to give Muslim tourists a warm, friendly, and accommodating atmosphere to comfortably and confidently fulfil their religious duties while travelling. Serving guests' needs is another crucial duty of hotel

staff. Regretfully, the hotel management provided training and instruction to a limited number of staff members, imparting only a limited understanding of halal hospitality. To guarantee that other staff members are well-versed in this field of expertise, revisions and improvements must be performed. Realising this, one way to address the issue and make improvements is, where necessary, the government should also form a committee to create, implement, and oversee compliance criteria for Halal and Islamic hospitality (Suban, Madhan, & Shagirbasha, 2023).

That being said, one of the examples that can be taken is from Indonesia, where their government has enacted Act No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance (UU JPH). This obligation applies to food products, beverages, and slaughtered products and services. This was emphasised by the Halal Partnership and Audit Services Director of LPPOM MUI during one of the seminars in 2023 (LPPOM MUI Encourages Halal-Certified Hotels and Restaurants | LPPOM MUI, 2023).

Regarding halal accommodations, it is essential to note that the majority of users and customers will be Muslims, with non-Muslims making up the minority. As an Islamic nation, Brunei Darussalam prioritises Islamic principles and customs, particularly the halal diet. It is reasonable to presume that domestic and foreign visitors need Halal lodgings. Halal lodgings offer an ambience that follows Islamic precepts, guaranteeing that visitors can enjoy Halal cuisine, prayer areas, and an overall Islamic feel. This demand may be driven by Muslim travellers looking for accommodations that align with their Islamic beliefs and practices. Furthermore, halal products and services must be provided to guarantee that the hotel's customers are satisfied with their stay. These hotels must adhere to Shariah rules to meet the ideal criterion for halal accreditation. That said, as taken from an interview session during the International Seminar on Halal Tourism and Hospitality (ISHTaH), Brunei MYCE 2022, the Director of the Halalan Thayyiban Research Centre at Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif

Ali (UNISSA) Pengiran Dr Hajah Norkhariah binti Pengiran Haji Hashim emphasised that the halal tourism sector in the Sultanate needs to be based on Maqasid Syariah to ensure that the services are in place, including an ablution spot and the qibla, to support the industry (Mohamad, 2022).

The findings in Table 4 support the LH's contention that incorporating halal principles would not provide any competitive advantages for hotels in Brunei Darussalam. As indicated, most of the hotels in Table 3 give the same products and services in their accommodations. Given this, the quality of the goods and services will be critical in distinguishing between the accommodations available.

On the other hand, according to TH, implementing halal practices can lead to the hotel developing a distinct identity. If such practices are implemented, customers will be confident that the hotel's products and services are halal and Muslim-friendly. As stated before, LPPOM MUI has implemented regulations for companies offering services to be Halal to ensure assurance and confidence for Muslim consumers.

A potential strategy to address The LH's reply is for authorised management to establish and enforce formal, broadly accepted halal standards for managing Shariah-compliant tourism businesses. This can aid in creating a uniform and appropriate policy to achieve sustainability in their administration. Furthermore, the government must encourage hotels to seek halal certification, influencing hotels' willingness to receive certificates and hold government events since their restaurants are Shariah-compliant (Alam A. et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has shed light by exploring the Halal hotel concept in Brunei Darussalam has shed light on crucial aspects of the evolving hospitality landscape. The insights garnered from this study, coupled with the observations of the increasing popularity of

Islamic-friendly services in the global tourism sector, emphasise the growing significance of addressing the preferences and needs of Muslim travellers. The challenges and strategies elucidated by hotel managers in this study underscore the importance of aligning hospitality services with the principles of Halal tourism. As Brunei Darussalam continues to position itself as a critical player in the Halal tourism market, the findings of this research contribute not only to academic discourse but also offer practical implications for enhancing Halal hotel management strategies. Ultimately, the study is a valuable foundation for future research endeavours to refine further and expand our understanding of the dynamic interplay between Halal tourism concepts and hotel management practices.

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