

Muslim Friendly Tourism Management from The Perspective of Malaysian Standard MS 2610: An Overview

Noriah Binti Ramli*

* Associate Professor, Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws (AIKOL), International Islamic University, Malaysia

KEYWORDS

Tourism
Muslim friendly
definition
MS2610
Muslim friendly
atmosphere

ABSTRACT

Tourist management is vital in tourism management. It is important to note that tourist plays an important role in ensuring the sustainability of tourism segments or products. To ensure the success of tourism industry, whether Muslim friendly tourism or conventional tourism, tourism services provider including the travel and tour operators, tour guide and relevant tourism agencies of the country should ensure tourist welfare, interest and objectives of coming to any particular country are fulfilled. In light of these points, this study will elaborate the concept of Muslim friendly atmosphere, the need of Muslim tourist, tour guide, travel and tour package. The main purpose of this paper is to raise awareness about the growing Muslim friendly tourism market segment and identify the fundamental characteristics that surrounds this segment. Moreover, this research will also provide an answer to several questions including what is tourism? what is Muslim friendly tourism? what are the components of Muslim friendly atmosphere? what is Malaysian Standard MS 2610 and its objective? The methodology is largely reliant on secondary information. The study will proceed by analysing the existing literature on Muslim friendly tourism, the Malaysian Standard on Muslim friendly Hospitality Services Requirements MS 2610, published journal articles, online references and materials, the role of Muslim friendly tour guide, and the do's and don't's in Muslim friendly tourism. This study will then discuss the findings of the research, and lastly to make a proposal and recommendations for improvements in Muslim friendly tourism in general.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is perceived to be the largest industry in the world, providing more employment than any other industry. Tourism is the generic term used to cover both demand and supply that has been adopted in a variety of forms and used throughout the world. This includes activities that are directly related to the tourist, such as staying in a hotel, ordering a meal or visiting a tourist attraction. It also includes indirect activities, such as the transport company which delivers the food to the restaurant in which the tourist eats or the laundry company that has a contract with the hotel for cleaning bed sheets. Tourism essentially refers to the activities undertaken by visitors, also known as the visitor economy. The tourism industry encompasses all activity that takes place within the visitor

economy. Tourism comes in many different shapes and sizes and there are many different types of tourism. There is mass tourism, niche tourism and special interest tourism. There is domestic tourism and international tourism. There is inbound tourism and outbound tourism (Tourismteacher, 2023). Interestingly, with the advancement in lifestyle, adherence to one's religious belief, the increase in demand and purchasing power amongst the world population in general, it sparks the new concept of tourism, i.e. Muslim friendly tourism. In certain countries, the term Muslim friendly tourism is used interchangeably with Halal tourism or Shariah compliant tourism. Nonetheless, in Malaysia it is known as Muslim friendly Hospitality Services. A Malaysian standard (MS) 2610 was developed and published in February 2016 under the purview of Department of Standard Malaysia

(DSM). In particular, this was the first standard governing Muslim friendly hospitality in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Malaysian Standard (MS 2610 Muslim friendly hospitality services-Requirements)

The Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services (MFHS) standard is Malaysia's first standard dedicated for the Islamic tourism sector. The International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) recognizes MFT as an integral part of the overall Malaysian Halal industry, a National Key Economic Area (NKEA) of the Economic Transformation Plan (ETP), and as an important factor in terms of its impact on the national GDP. IIUM has approached the Ministry of Education by submitting a proposal for developing the infrastructure for Muslim-friendly Hospitality services in Malaysia. Under the Niche Research Grant Scheme (NRGS), IIUM has been awarded a grant to develop a legal and administrative framework for Muslim-friendly Hospitality Services in Malaysia. This project has been awarded for five years (2012 to October 2018) resulting in a Technical Report and White Paper presentation to the government of Malaysia. This project is planned to be accomplished in three phases and has been divided into four project groups Initiated and led by NRGS130010001 Research Team of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), the original submission to develop the standard was made in December 2012 to the Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM) (COMCEC Coordination Office, 2016). Later followed by the appointment of SIRIM as the standard's secretariat by DSM and the formation of draft committee by the Technical Committee (TC) on Management

System from Islamic Perspectives. The drafting committee of the standard comprises main representatives of tourism industry players including Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC), Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia Association of Hotel Owners (MAHO), Malaysia Association of Hotel (MAH), Malaysia Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA), Bumiputera Travel and Tour Agents Association of Malaysia (Bumitra) and Malaysian Tourist Guides Council (MTGC). After months of developing, drafting and revising the document was released as "Draft Malaysian Standard : Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services – Requirements" for a two-month public comment commencing 1 August 2014 until 30 September 2014. The MS2610:2015 was published in February 2015 (COMCEC Coordination Office, 2016).

Malaysian Standards (MS) are developed through consensus by committees which comprise balanced representation of producers, users, consumers and others with relevant interests, as may be appropriate to the subject at hand. To the greatest extent possible, Malaysian Standards are aligned to or are adoption of international standards. Approval of a standard as a Malaysian Standard is governed by the Standards of Malaysia Act 1996 [Act 549]. Malaysian Standards are reviewed periodically. The use of Malaysian Standards is voluntary except in so far as they are made mandatory by regulatory authorities by means of regulations, local bylaws or any other similar ways.

This Malaysian Standard (MS 2610) is developed with the aim to ensure that products and services provided for Muslim travelers are in accordance to the Shariah principles. The MS2610 provides guidelines and requirements for managing tourism

facilities, products and services for Muslim travellers in accommodation premises, tour packages and tourist guides. Nonetheless, all requirements in this standard are generic and are intended to be applicable to all organisations and individuals managing Muslim friendly tourism products and services relating to accommodation premises, tour packages and tourist guides only. This standard is not applicable for health and beauty facilities such as spa and massage or any balneotherapy facilities, products and services. The objectives of this standard are:

- a) to enhance the ability of an organisation/individual to produce and/or manage Muslim friendly tourism products and services that meet the Shariah principles;
- b) to preserve and protect the integrity of Muslim friendly tourism products and services through effective application of the standard; and
- c) to enhance customer satisfaction by meeting customer requirements.

This standard is not applicable for health and beauty facilities such as spa and massage or any balneotherapy facilities, products and services.



MS 2610:2015

ii © STANDARDS MALAYSIA 2015 - All rights reserved

THIS WHAT IS MUSLIM FRIENDLY?

The Muslim friendly hospitality services are Shariah guided requirement for tourism industry players in setting up an assurance system to preserve the integrity of products and services provided for Muslim travelers. (MS2610, Department of Standard Malaysia, 2015). In general, the term Muslim friendly when used to refer to a service, a facility, or destination, it means that it has taken into account some faith-based needs of Muslim travelers but not all their needs. Although Halal-friendly may also convey the same meaning, the term Muslim-friendly service/facility is more appropriate (CrescentRating, 2016). Muslim friendly tourism shares in common the idea, meaning and concept with halal tourism, Islamic tourism and Shari's compliant tourism. On the other hand, in the Malaysian context, the term Muslim friendly hospitality services refer to products or services in the travel and tourism industry guided by Shariah requirements that cater to or provide facilities suitable for Muslim travelers. (MS2610, Department of Standard Malaysia).

MUSLIM FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

Islam is not just a religion but a way of life. As defined in the above paragraph, it is understood that Muslim friendly tourism must contains several components or elements which are in line with the Muslim tourist belief system. Islam does not forbid its followers from enjoying themselves. In fact, Islam encourages its followers to travel and to see the beauty of the creation, which this

will bring one soul closer to the Almighty. In the Quran Allah says,

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ

يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا (Q.22:46)

Have they not travelled in the land so that they should have hearts with which to understand, or ears with which to hear?

Verse 46 talks about traveling and learning from the history of the past. Those who travel on the land and think about the places they travel through will gain insight and understanding. Historical sites can be compared to books with a lot of thought-provoking material. Those who delve into them emerge with new perspectives on the bigger questions of life.

It is God who has subjected to you the sea that the ships may run thereon by His command, that you may seek of his Bounty, and that you may be thankful.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلُكُ فِيهِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا

مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (Q.45:12)

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ

لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (Q.45:13)

Although travel and getting involve in leisure activities is not prohibited in Islam, nevertheless, it is to be noted here that the activities must be done in accordance to Shariah requirements. Activity done, the outfit, places visited must not contravene the Shariah principles. In other words, it is subjected to certain conditions and requirements. Hence, the Malaysian Standard MS 2610 provided certain guidelines and practices need to be complied with as elaborated in the subsequent paragraphs.

Itinerary

- The itinerary shall have an allocated scheduled time for prayers, *sahur* and *iftar* during Ramadan

Food and beverage

- The travel agent shall ensure that all food and beverages included in the package are certified halal by competent authority;
- If the package does not include food and beverages, upon request, the tour company should provide a list of halal certified restaurants within the vicinity

Tourism product

- The travel agent shall ensure that the selected tourism products have the appropriate facilities such as *musalla* (prayer room), washroom, or easy access to the facilities, and the travel agent should ensure the facilities are generally clean and in good condition;
- The selection of tourism products included in the package shall reflect the Islamic values experience;
- The tourism product selection shall not include the premises with activities which contravene the shariah principles, such as manufacturing of non-halal products or related products, for example selling of liquor and pork; gambling and gaming; pornography; entertainment activities that are non-permissible according to Shariah; non-Muslim worship places; and other activities deemed non-permissible according to Shariah.

Tour Guide

Tour guide plays a very important in ensuring the tourist are well guided during their visit in that particular destination. Hence tour guide must possess certain skill, knowledge of the tourism products. Most importantly, tour guide must act in a professional and courteous manner (Noriah Ramli, Majdah Zawawi, 2019). In light of the Muslim friendly tourism, the MS2610 specify the criteria for tour guide as follows:

- Licensed tourist guide shall dress a modest and professional dress code as imposed by relevant authority. For female Muslim personnel, wearing a headscarf is highly recommended.
- The licensed tourist guide shall act in courteous manner in accordance with Islamic values.
- Licensed tourist guide shall follow the code of conduct and ethics as imposed by relevant authority.
- At any point of time, tour guide shall be able to provide Muslim friendly services to the customers which among others (a) having basic knowledge on the requirements for Muslim travelers; (b) keep the guests informed on their prayer time; (c) facilitate ample time for guests to perform their prayer; (d) ensure restaurants and eateries are certified halal by competent authority; and (e) in the absence of halal food, the tour guide shall be able to provide the guests a list of halal certified eateries.

Accommodation

In the Muslim friendly tourism, accommodation is another component which requires special attention. To the Muslim

travelers or tourist, it is important to have an accommodation with certain specific requirements. Among others the hotel rooms shall have a clearly marked *kiblat* Direction, the rooms shall have adequate space for a Muslim guest to perform *solah* in the room, the washroom shall be equipped with bidet, hand shower or water hose, the personal care amenities and/or products provided in the washroom are suitable for Muslim use. It is preferable if the hotel could provide halal personal care with certified halal logo, and if it is not possible, it would be sufficient to provide plant-based products. In addition, alcoholic beverages and intoxicants shall not be stored in the room's refrigerator (MS2610:2015). In short, attribute of Muslim friendly accommodation can be summarised as follows:

No	Element
1	Availability of halal food/drinks
2	If there is no halal food available, the hotel management is able to give adequate information on the nearest halal restaurant
3	Prayer mat (available upon request)
4	Prayer Time in the hotel room
5	Qiblah pointing sinage/Direction
6	Wash room with bidet/Hand shower
7	Availability of halal certified personal care products
8	No alcoholic drinks in the mini bar
9	Adequate floor space to perform prayer in the room
10	Availability of Iftar and sahur during Ramadhan

Figure 4: Attributes of Muslim-Friendly Hotel (MFH)



Toilet with bidet



Toilet with hand shower



Halal certified shampoo



Plant-based products

<https://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;>

TOURIST INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

Tourist management should encompass all level of tourist regardless of their age, background and religion. Hence, it is the duty of the tour guide to plan an activity that suitable for all age group. It should be remembered that different age group requires a different activity. Tourist background information is also important as this will help the tour guide and tour company to plan for their meal (Noriah Ramli, Majdah Zawawi, 2019).

No	Name	Age	Remarks
1	MR A	50	Muslim
2	MR B	60	Muslim
3	MR C	55	Muslim
4	Mrs AB	45	*Non-Muslim/Vegetarian
5	MRs AC	20	*Non-Muslim/Vegetarian
6	MR F	15	*Allergic to nuts
7	Mr K	12	Muslim
8	MR Y	10	*Non-Muslim
9	MISS M	9	Muslim
10	Miss Z	7	Muslim
11	Miss Fry	10	Muslim
12	Miss Elene		Muslim

Figure 4: Tourist background information

WORLD MUSLIM FRIENDLY DESTINATION

Malaysia remained the most Muslim traveller-friendly in the GMTI 2022, closely followed by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia in joint second position, while the UAE came in third. Singapore, in ninth place, is still the only non-OIC country to make it to

the top 20 of the GMTI 2022 rankings. Among non-members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the top four remained the same; Singapore, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and Thailand, while Taiwan at the fifth position (Anis Ramli, 2023).

1	<i>Malaysia</i>
2	<i>Indonesia</i>
3	<i>Arab Saudi</i>
4	<i>Turkey</i>
5	<i>UAE</i>
6	<i>Qatar</i>
7	<i>Iran</i>
8	<i>Jordan</i>
9	<i>Bahrain</i>
10	<i>Singapore</i>
11	<i>Uzbekistan</i>

Figure 1: GMTI 2022 Top 10 Muslim-friendly destinations

1	<i>Singapore</i>
2	<i>Taiwan</i>
3	<i>Thailand</i>
4	<i>United Kingdom</i>
5	<i>Hong Kong</i>
6	<i>Japan</i>
7	<i>South Africa</i>
8	<i>Philippines</i>
9	<i>United States</i>
10	<i>Australia</i>

Figure 2: GMTI 2022 Top 10 Muslim-friendly non-OIC destinations

1	Indonesia (231,000,000)
2	Pakistan (212,300,000)
3	India (200,000,000)
4	Bangladesh (153,700,000)
5	Nigeria (95,000,000–103,000,000)

6	Egypt (85,000,000–90,000,000)
7	Iran (82,500,000)
8	Turkey (74,432,725)
9	Algeria (41,240,913)
10	Sudan (39,585,777)

Figure 3: Top 10 Countries with the Largest Number of Muslims (2021)

METHODOLOGY

This study used a finding from the previous focus group discussion which was part of the NRGs research Grant (2012-2018). The discussion dialogue and statements were transcribed and classified based on the questions that had been brought into the discussion. Basically, the questions used to aid the discussion are based on the Muslim friendly hospitality services as well the document of MS2610:2015. The study also takes into account the outcome of the Internal Muslim friendly conference which was conducted as one of the NRGs research out. Besides, the methodology is largely reliant on secondary information. The study will proceed by analysing the existing literature on Muslim friendly tourism, the Malaysian Standard on Muslim friendly Hospitality Services Requirements MS 2610, published journal articles, online references and materials, the role of Muslim friendly tour guide, and the do's and don't's in Muslim friendly tourism.

FINDINGS

Muslim friendly tourism is the fast-emerging component in the world tourism industry. It is the new segment not just in the Islamic countries, but also the non-Islamic countries such as Singapore, Philippines, Australia, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States,

Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, South Africa and Thailand. The previous literature on Muslim friendly tourism highlighted the Muslim friendly atmosphere which must be taken seriously by any service provider wishing to embark on Muslim friendly tourism. These among others emphasized on the need to offer a Muslim friendly tourism product, Muslim friendly tour guide (someone who is knowledgeable in Muslim friendly hospitality services), Muslim friendly accommodation, Muslim friendly itinerary, and Muslim friendly tour package. With the increase in Muslim popular globally, and increase in Muslim purchasing power, it is believed that Muslim friendly tourism can be one of the major market segments in the global tourism industry.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Islam is not just a religion but a way of life. Islam does not forbid its followers from enjoying themselves. In fact, Islam encourages its followers to travel and to see the beauty of the creation, which this will bring one soul closer to the Almighty. Although travel and getting involve in leisure activities is not prohibited in Islam, nevertheless, it is to be noted here that the activities must be done in accordance to Shariah requirements. Activity done, the outfit, places visited must not contravene the Shariah principles. Hence, it is important for the tourism industry to understand the special need of the Muslim tourist. Besides halal food and drinks, tourism service provider such as travel and tour package, tourism accommodation, tour guide must be ready to accommodate Muslim travellers.



Figure 5: Types of Tourism

Title: Muslim Friendly Tourism Management from The Perspective of Malaysian Standard MS 2610.....

Author: Noriah Binti Ramli

References:

Anis, R. (2022, June 16). Where are the world's most Muslim-friendly destinations? Retrieved January 30, 2023, from <https://www.travelweekly-asia.com/Travel-News/Travel-Trends/These-are-the-worlds-most-Muslim-friendly-destinations>

Bidet function toilet. Retrieved 30 January from <https://search.yahoo.com/search?fr=mcafee&type=E211US714G0&p=toilet+with+bidet>

COMCEC Coordination Office. (2016). Muslim friendly tourism: Developing and marketing MFT products and services in the OIC member countries. COMCEC Coordination Office. Retrieved from <http://irep.iium.edu.my/74006/1/COMCEC%202016.pdf>

Crescentrating. (2016). What is a Muslim-friendly service/facility? Retrieved January 30, from www.crescentrating.com/magazine/muslim-travel/3852/defining-what-is-halal-travel-or-muslim-friendly-tourism.html

Department of Standard Malaysia (MS) 2610:2015

Department of Standards Malaysia, or SIRIM Berhad. (2015). Malaysian MS 2610:2015 standard: Muslim friendly hospitality services - Requirements. Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. Retrieved from http://irep.iium.edu.my/74385/1/364001_MS%202610%202014_FULLPDF%20%284%29.pdf

Halal certified shampoo. Retrieved 30 January 2023, from <https://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images>

Norah Ramli, Majdah Zawawi. (2019). Muslim friendly Tour Guide & Tourism Product Selection: A Guide Book. Morement Print Sdn.Bhd, Kuala Lumpur

Norah Ramli, Majdah Zawawi. (2019). Muslim friendly Tour Package. A Guide Book. Morement Print Sdn.Bhd, Kuala Lumpur

Plant base products. Retrieved 30 January 2023, from <https://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images>

The Quran. Surah 45. Al-Jathiya, Ayat 12

The Quran. Surah 45. Al-Jathiyah, Ayat 13

The Quran. Surat al-Hajj, No.22, Āyat 46

Toilet with hand shower. Retrieved 30 January 2023 from, <https://search.yahoo.com/search?fr=mcafee&type=E211US714G0&p=toilet+with+hand+shower>

Top 10 Countries with the Largest Number of Muslims (2021). Retrieved 31 January 2023, from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/muslim-population-by-country>

Title: Muslim Friendly Tourism Management from The Perspective of Malaysian Standard MS 2610.....
Author: Noriah Binti Ramli

Tourismteacher. (2023. January 29). What Is Tourism? A Definition of Tourism. Retrieved January 30, from <https://tourismteacher.com/definition-of-tourism/>