

# Customer Perception towards Shariah Compliance Hotel Concept in Pulau Langkawi

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**Abstract:** Shariah Compliant Hotel (SCH) concept can be regarded as a new innovative concept in the hotel industry and received a special interest nowadays. This study aims to identify the customer perception towards SCH concept explained by attributes of customer understanding, attitude and value, and product innovation in Malaysia. A quantitative approach via Google form was used and were analysed using nonparametric analysis. A total of 473 respondents was recorded, dominated by Muslim males. Based on Kruskal Wallis analysis, respondents from Malay Muslims had a high significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) level of understanding to which they are willing to abide the proper attitude with the concept and have good perceptions of customer value and product innovation in SCH concept. To conclude, the respondents in average, are ready to adapt, and have a great expectation of the SCH concept innovation regardless of their cultural background and religion.

**Keywords:** Customer acceptance, Customer expectation, Customer understanding, Islamic tourism, Shariah compliance hotel.

## Introduction

The Shariah Compliance Hotel (SCH) concept is a new unique and creative service established in the hotel business that makes it simple for Muslim travellers to use as supported by Albattat et al. (2018) studies. The number of Muslim tourists has increased and the demand from Muslim travellers are at peak, and they are looking for hotels that meet their needs. The SCH concept is a business that caters and delivers goods and services to Muslims.

## Shariah Compliance Hotels Concept and Practices

Abdullah (2010) defines Shariah as a set of Arabic words that literally mean "route or methods for Muslims," and which guide Islamic lifestyles in a variety of areas, including politics, economics, Islamic finance, business, social issues, hygiene, and sexuality. The SCH according to Jurattanasan & Jaroenwisan (2014), is a new concept hotel that focuses on Islamic ideals in terms of services and financial operations. According to Samori & Rahman (2013) SCH is a hotel that provides products and services while operating and managing according to Shariah principles as per quoted by Yusuf, (2009). The SCH is divided into three parts by Rosenberg & Choufany (2009), focusing on operations, design & interior, and finance, and Henderson (2010) condensed it into twelve SCH qualities.

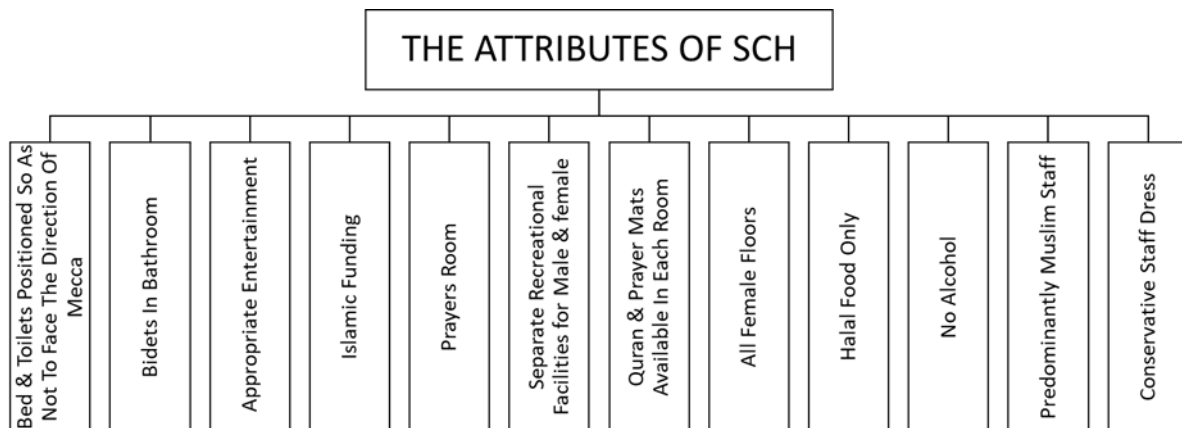


Fig. 1 Shariah Compliance Hotel attributes (Ahmat et al., 2015)

### Customers' Perception Towards Shariah Compliance Hotel

There are several factors that influence customers' perceptions, such as grades, education, age, and psychological characteristics. It should be considered when delivering goods and services. The brand name and the quality of the concept should be precise enough, so the buyer has no doubts. According to Aspors (2010), customers' perception is formed by customers' experiences, including how they perceive service, selection/products, prices, location, and cleanliness. Meanwhile, Zhang (2019) cited Pareek et al., (1981) on the customers' impression of how they pick, organize, and interpret information and stimulus data connected to the products and services they think and how they feel about them. Ahmat et al. (2012) in their study mentioned that customers' satisfaction is determined by their willingness to stay in a Shariah-compliant hotel.

According to Salleh et al. (2014), there is still a vague understanding of the SCH concepts in the past literature, which has resulted in suspicion among customers. In Shaharuddin et al. (2018) studied, most customers lacked on the knowledge about SCH, which creates misleading and does not meet their expectations. Shaharuddin, too mentioned, it is essential to understand the customers' perception towards the provision of services in SCH that will develop customers' acceptance and help increase positive customers' perception which in return is helpful for the customer giving the benefits towards SCH.

### Customer Attributes

Customer attributes give the necessary data to help with order processing, fulfilment, and customer management. The first characteristic is closely related to religious activities namely prayer recitals, fasting, Az-zakah, and hajj results. The second characteristic is dealing with basic needs like food, the separation of men and women's areas without an entertainment area, and offering Islamic tourist packages. The third set of characteristic pertains to management procedures, hotel standards, no riba', dress code, male and female separate floors, and toilets that do not face the Kaaba. This study comprises of 4 attributes in SCH which is customer understanding, customer attitude, customer value and product innovation towards SCH concept.

According to Huang et al, (2006) customers' understanding are influenced by knowledge and information regarding the SCH idea. In previous studies Briz & Ward (2009) mentioned, to create a better image, guests should be exposed to SCH concept because customers may be unaware of the SCH or have different opinions about it, and hotel operators should finish the idea in order to avoid misinterpretation. According to Shaharuddin et al. (2018) , behavioural purpose can be anticipated by a customer's attitude, subjective norms, and perceived control over their actions. Attitude towards activities becomes the best intention predictor (Afsari et al., 2017; Yakasai and Jusoh, 2015). People's opinions on the objects shape their attitudes towards actions. Individual acquired beliefs on comparing the item to certain properties, such as other objects, events, or object attributes, were clarified by Krasniqi & Krasniqi (2014). As a result, Vegirawati & Ningsih (2019) found that customers'

expectations about hotel quality and amenities can shape Shariah Compliance Hotel customers' attitudes.

According to Maharani et al. (2021), the benefits customers gain when they use or consume the product, are the most significant aspect of customer value. This is supported by Lusch et al. (2007) which explain that customer value refers to the additional benefits that arise when goods or services are consumed. Rogers (2003) defines innovation as any new behaviour, idea, or object introduced into an organization and have found it is important to adapt it to the service industry, such as hotels. As a result, SCH is a game-changer since it introduces new concepts and practices to the Malaysia hospitality industry. Hotels adapt and execute innovation to be competitive and maintain market share in today's globally competitive tourism industry. Previous research by (Ziyae et al., 2021) has demonstrated that in the hospitality industry, innovation can help improve service quality, hotel reputation, and competitive advantage.

The role of religious and cultural background in facilitating customer desire for the SCH concept is unclear (Rahmiati & Fajarsari, 2020). Until now, there is some confusion among Malaysian hotel customers about the difference between traditional Muslim-friendly hotel concepts and SCH concepts. As a matter of fact, Malaysia is onset to establish SCH concept in order to expand Islamic tourism more seriously and widely in order to cater the demand of Islamic market. Tourism activities among Muslim countries should be promoted, and Muslim countries should collaborate in terms of economic, social, and cultural growth in the interim. Thus, this study will focus to investigate the customers' acceptance and analyse the customers' perception towards the SCH concept.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

Gender, race, age, religion, education, and occupation were among the six factors in Section A, which represented the respondents' demographic background. Section B1 had five questions that covered the key theme of customers' understanding of Shariah Compliance Hotel concepts from their perspective. In the conceptual framework that rooted from the dependent variable (Customers Perceptions), the Section B(i) described the respondents' level of understanding while the respondents' attitude toward Shariah Compliance Hotels was described in Section B(ii), which comprised of six sub-questions particularly. The respondents' value towards Shariah Compliance Hotel ideas was described in Section B(iii), which comprised of five sub-questions. Finally, Section B(iv) included five sub questions that addressed the respondents' product innovation in relation to Shariah Compliance Hotels.

### **Data Collection Method**

The data was collected via online survey platform [www.googleform.com](http://www.googleform.com), which was emailed to respondents. The participants who have visited Langkawi previously were selected randomly from the distributed google form link for. Customer perceptions of Shariah Compliance Hotels were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

### **Population Sampling**

Due to the pandemic factor, non-probability sampling is used to access respondents easily, quickly, convenient, and less expensive. The questionnaires were distributed through an online Google survey and the link sent to various persons who have visited Langkawi earlier. An unlimited number of samplings was distributed to get a wider target from the various religions and citizenships. Additionally, to ensure that the sample comprises the mass tourism travellers, the following methodology was used; demographic factors including age and occupation. This study does not focus on the Muslim travellers solely, but responses from non-Muslim were also taken into consideration. Domestic and other travellers who are potential SCH customer were also considered in this study.

## Statistical Analysis

A normality assumption test has been carried out using SPSS version 26 software (Ghasemi and Zahediasl, 2012). The significance value ( $p < 0.05$ ) of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk proved that all of the data differs significantly from a normal distribution (Table 1). Thus, the null hypothesis can be rejected showing the data in this study were non-normally distributed.

**Table 1.** Two statistical test of normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Understanding	0.186	473	0.000	0.810	473	0.000
Attitude	0.170	473	0.000	0.830	473	0.000
Value	0.251	473	0.000	0.702	473	0.000
Innovation	0.181	473	0.000	0.842	473	0.000

Non-parametric test in this study was based on the normality test. SPSS version 26 software (Cronk, 2016) was used to fully utilise the data. The data was tested with Spearman correlation coefficient analysis to know the relationship between each variable that was included in this study (de Winter et al., 2016). The Kruskal-Wallis H test, commonly known as the one-way ANOVA on ranks that can be used to see if more than two groups of an independent variable on dependent variable have statistically significant differences (Matulova and Rejentova, 2021). The Kruskal-Wallis test is considered suitable for non-parametric data because the outcome is not measured on a continuous scale. It is a nonparametric alternative to the one-way ANOVA that allowed comparison of more than two groups.

## Demographic Profile of Respondents

The total number of respondents in this survey was 473, with 244 males (51.6%) and 229 females (48.4%) participating (Table 2). The variables are 22, while the number of respondents is multiplied by 20 the number of variables. According to Hair et al. (2012), the number of respondents must be roughly 5-10 times the number of respondents' variables. Most of the respondents, 404 Malay (85.4%), 24 Chinese (5.1%), 23 Indian (4.9%), while the other races were 22 (4.7%) of the respondents. The highest respondents fell into the age group between 21-30 years old, with 326 (68.9 %) respondents, while the lowest age recorded is between 51-60 years old. A majority of Muslim respondents were observed with a total of 410 (86.7%) respondents, followed by Christian, Hindu and Buddha with numbers of respondents, 24 (5.1%), 22 (4.7%) and 16 (3.4%), respectively. Only 0.2% of the respondents with others religion.

**Table 2.** Descriptive analysis of demographic profile

Demographic	Variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	244	51.6
	Female	229	48.4
Race	Malay	404	85.4
	Indian	23	4.9
	Chinese	24	5.1

	Others	22	4.7
Age	< 20	31	6.6
	21-30	326	68.9
	31-40	93	19.7
	41-50	19	4.0
	51-60	4	0.8
Religion	Islam	410	86.7
	Buddha	16	3.4
	Christian	24	5.1
	Hindu	22	4.7
	Others	1	0.2
Education	Primary School	2	0.4
	Secondary School	83	17.5
	University	388	82.0
Occupation	Student	118	24.9
	Government	158	33.4
	Own Business	56	11.8
	Corporate/ Private	133	28.1
	Retired	4	0.8
	Others	4	0.8

The respondents were mainly university graduates, which marked 82% (388) of the total respondents, while 83 secondary school respondents and two from primary school. On top of that, in this study, 158 respondents were government servants, while 133 worked in the corporate or private sector. Students made up roughly 24.9% of all respondents, and the least number of respondents were either retired or working in another industry, which marks only four respondents in each category.

Table 3 measures the responses and the details for the means and standard deviation based on the design of the dependent variable for customer perception towards the SCH concept. This was based on the mean for each question within the variables. Findings reveal, the mean for the overall variables is high, customer understand mean 4.347, customer attitude 4.267, customer value 4.501, and product innovation 4.212.

**Table 3.** Descriptive analysis of the dependent variables

Variables	Number of question (s)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Understanding	6	4.35	0.73
Attitude	6	4.27	0.75
Value	5	4.50	0.74
Innovation	5	4.21	0.86

### **Spearman Correlation Analysis**

Correlation analysis was also performed for independent and dependent variables to determine the relationship. Only four independent variables, gender, race, age, and religion, show a significant

relationship with dependent variables in Table 4. While education and occupation have no correlation with the dependent variables, the p-value is insignificant ( $p>0.05$ ). However, the correlation between independent and dependent variables was very low compared to the correlation between dependent-to-dependent variables, with scores ranging from -0.310 to 0.215. The analysis demonstrates a negative correlation trend for race, religion, and education. While gender exhibits the same negative correlation pattern with all dependent variables except customer attitude with a significant p-value ( $p>0.05$ ), however age and occupation, on the other hand, indicates a positive correlation relationship with all dependent variables.

**Table 4.** Spearman correlation analysis between the dependent variables

	Gender	Race	Age	Religion	Education	Occupation
Gender		0.056	0.008	0.023	0.497	0.229
Race	0.088		0.112	0.000	0.084	0.805
Age	-.122**	0.073		0.209	0.314	0.000
Religion	.105*	.928**	0.058		0.057	0.878
Education	-0.031	0.080	-0.046	0.088		0.000
Occupation	-0.055	-0.011	.288**	0.007	-.192**	

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Below diagonal: Correlation coefficient value. Above the diagonal: Significant value (2 Tailed)

### Kruskal Wallis Analysis

Kruskal Wallis examined the dependent variables (customer understanding, customer attitude, customer value, product innovation) and independent variables (demographic profile of respondents) that statistically showed a significant correlation. Chi-square,  $\chi^2(2)$  refer to the H-statistic, H(2) of the Kruskal–Wallis test (McDonald, 2014; Wheelan, 2014). The dependent variable showed significant differences ( $p<0.05$ ) between male and female respondents in terms of customer understanding, customer value, and product innovation, with high  $\chi^2(2)$  scores of 6.61, 5.118, and 11.382, respectively. In this comparison, male respondents had a higher mean rank score than female respondents (Table 5). However, the Kruskal Wallis score between gender and customer attitude was the lowest and insignificant ( $p>0.05$ ), rejecting the null hypothesis that they are difference.

**Table 5.** Kruskal Wallis analysis according to the gender of respondents.

Determination of perception	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square $\chi^2(2)$	p-value
Understanding	Male	244	252.48	6.61	0.010
	Female	229	220.50		
Attitude	Male	244	234.00	0.253	0.615
	Female	229	240.20		
Value	Male	244	249.86	5.118	0.024
	Female	229	223.29		
Innovation	Male	244	257.00	11.382	0.001
	Female	229	215.69		

The test shows a significant difference between the dependent variables and the respondents' race in this study (Table 6). The highest Kruskal Wallis score was observed for the customer attitude with race,  $\chi^2(2) = 47.175, p = 0.000$ , with Malay (253.30) having the highest mean rank, followed by Others (155.16), Chinese (181.54), and Indian having the lowest mean rank of 86.69. The lowest score of  $\chi^2(2)$  is reported between races and the variable of product innovation,  $\chi^2(2) = 25.789, p = 0.000$ . For this dependent variable, Malays continue to dominate with a mean rank of 249.41, while Indians have the lowest mean rank score of 139.39. Overall, Malay respondents has the highest contribution to the mean rank because they marked to be the dominant with 404 respondents out of 473 total respondents, despite the fact that Others have the lowest respondent number, N=22, they came in second for the mean rank score for all dependent variables.

**Table 6.** Kruskal Wallis analysis according to the race of respondents

Determination of perception	Race	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square $\chi^2(2)$	p-value
Understanding	Malay	404	251.30	34.798	0.000
	Indian	23	112.00		
	Chinese	24	188.83		
	Others	22	157.59		
Attitude	Malay	404	253.30	47.175	0.000
	Indian	23	86.89		
	Chinese	24	181.54		
	Others	22	155.16		
Value	Malay	404	249.66	29.807	0.000
	Indian	23	134.52		
	Chinese	24	193.90		
	Others	22	158.70		
Innovation	Malay	404	249.41	25.798	0.000
	Indian	23	139.39		
	Chinese	24	190.15		
	Others	22	162.32		

The  $\chi^2(2)$  score reveals a substantial gap between significant and insignificant variable differences for the respondents' age range. The lowest  $\chi^2(2)$  score demonstrated between age range and the customer attitude,  $\chi^2(2) = 6.250, p = 0.181$ , and product innovation,  $\chi^2(2) = 7.348, p = 0.196$ . The Kruskal Wallis analysis found a significant difference between respondent age range with the dependent variable, customer understanding and customer value with a  $\chi^2(2)$  of  $\chi^2(2) = 11.653, p = 0.020, \chi^2(2) = 30.760, p = 0.000$ , respectively (Table 7). Respondents between age 51 to 60 years old had the highest score of the mean rank score for both variables (understanding= 264.88, value= 356.00), followed by age 31 to 40 years old, 21 to 30, 41 to 50 years old. The respondents with the lowest mean rank was less than 20 years old, with a rank score of 148.63 for customer value and 162.27 for customer understanding.

**Table 7.** Kruskal Wallis analysis according to the age range of respondents

Determination of perception	Age	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square $\chi^2(2)$	p-value
Understanding	<20	31	162.27	11.653	0.020

	21-30	326	237.54		
	31-40	93	255.10		
	41-50	19	255.26		
	51-60	4	264.88		
Attitude	<20	31	191.53	6.250	0.181
	21-30	326	239.43		
	31-40	93	238.39		
	41-50	19	240.16		
	51-60	4	344.00		
Value	<20	31	148.63	30.760	0.000
	21-30	326	231.75		
	31-40	93	282.27		
	41-50	19	224.58		
	51-60	4	356.00		
Innovation	<20	31	163.31	7.348	0.196
	21-30	326	234.71		
	31-40	93	265.41		
	41-50	19	245.89		
	51-60	4	292.25		

Table 8 demonstrates that all variables have a significant difference  $p < 0.05$  between the dependent variables and the respondent religion, with the exception of customer attitude, which has an insignificant value  $p > 0.05$ . The customer value had the highest  $\chi^2(2) = 35.492$ ,  $p = 0.000$ , followed by the product innovation,  $\chi^2(2) = 27.906$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . While customer attitude and religion have the lowest of  $\chi^2(2) = 6.25$ ,  $p = 0.181$ . However, the table also shows a significant disparity between customer value and product innovation and a gap in customer understanding, followed by a gap in customer attitude. In this independent variable, Islam has the greatest mean rank score with total respondent  $N = 410$ , while the 'Others' has the lowest rank with only one respondent.

**Table 8.** Kruskal Wallis analysis according to the religion of respondents

Determination of perception	Religion	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square $\chi^2(2)$	p-value
Understanding	Islam	410	251.15	38.91	0.00
	Buddha	16	203.19		
	Christian	24	141.77		
	Hindu	22	111.75		
	Others	1	17.00		
Attitude	Islam	410	252.84	6.25	0.181
	Buddha	16	185.69		
	Christian	24	145.46		
	Hindu	22	88.43		

Value	Others	1	28.50	35.492	0.000
	Islam	410	249.55		
	Buddha	16	221.03		
	Christian	24	129.42		
	Hindu	22	136.55		
Innovation	Others	1	137.50	27.906	0.000
	Islam	410	248.57		
	Buddha	16	217.34		
	Christian	24	151.29		
	Hindu	22	138.70		
	Others	1	27.00		

## Discussion

This study aims to explore customer perceptions of the Shariah Compliance Hotels concept in Malaysia. The environment and facilities expectation by customer value and product innovation in SCH concept were fit to achieve the objective. This decision was made based on the strong relationship indicated by the correlation coefficient score. According to the Kruskal Wallis results, male respondents between the ages of 51 and 60 are more likely to have high expectations of the SCH concept's ambience. Males aged 21 to 50 years old, on the other hand, have a modest level of expectancy.

Islamic Malays dominated the highest perception on the customer value for surrounding environment geographical location professionalism, and a good quality service must be practised to achieve SCH status. However, other races such as Chinese and other religions also display a moderate level of expectation when using any facility that claims to follow the Shariah Compliance. Furthermore, Samori & Rahman (2013) mention in their study that Islam touches on all aspects of life and encourages safety, hygiene, and an environmentally friendly atmosphere, including facilities of the SCH. As a result, it benefits not only the Muslim population but also all travellers from multiple backgrounds.

Product innovation, such as printed prayers schedule in every room, well-*akhlak* employees (ethical behaviours), offering Quran, etc., can be considered a major component required to meet the SCH criterion. Revealed that a variety of different factors could influence intention Customer attitudes are influenced not only by the characteristics of the Shariah Compliance Hotel concept but also by customer intentions such as price and hotel location. This is supported by Sulaiman et al. (2021) statement that a person's with strong ethical behaviour can influence their intention or expectation of purchasing a product. This was emphasised on the customer's presumption before choosing the SCH facilities. According to the findings of this study, Malays continue to have the strongest perception of product innovation, particularly among those aged 21 to 60 years old.

The thought of such innovation within facilities is generally proposed by the Islamic religious group of respondents who need to practise their faith while using the facilities. The provision of a prayer room and a clearly defined prayer direction (Qibla sticker / direction pointing towards Makkah) and a copy of the Quran in the hotel rooms are considered highly vital for SCH. In a study conducted by Taha & Center (2015), more than 80% of Muslim visitors expected the hotel provider to have the direction of qibla in their rooms. Yusof et al. (2019) discovered that Muslim tourists viewed the availability of prayer facilities to be critical when selecting a vacation destination. However, such innovation has little effect on other races or religions of choosing this facility because these races with diverse religious backgrounds are ineffectual with such innovation within their SCH accommodation.

According to the correlation test, Malay males from an Islamic religious background have higher expectations for SCH's customer value and product innovation. This is because they are more concerned with their needs and desires while acquiring the SCH concept. This can be related to Collins

& Tisdell (2002) and Essoo & Dibb (2004), religion plays a significant role in the decision-making process when it comes to vacation locations, and so Islam influences Muslims' consumer behaviour. Collins & Tisdell (2002) also mention that Shariah teachings significantly influence Muslim consumers' behaviour and preferences, which is likely to apply to hotel selection. As a result, Halal products and services are available wherever Muslim consumers reside. However, this can be seen with respondents who are considered mature enough to make good decisions compared to younger respondents. According to Abdul-Latif & Adnan (2020), the Muslim friendly (MF) or SCH brand image has little influence on Muslim teenagers. They claimed that Muslim youths are not brand loyal, or brand concerned. Quality services must be offered by ensuring good employee performance and maintaining an incredibly high hotel image in order for MF and SC hotels to increase client satisfaction. In conclusion, social variables are the primary factors that affect customers' expectations of the SCH concept in order to satisfy their desire towards purchasing the SCH product.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, potential customers in Langkawi are aware and eager to embrace Shariah Compliance Hotel concept services regardless of their cultural background or religious practice. This was demonstrated when other races beyond Malays, like Indians, Chinese, and others, showed a high level of tolerance for the SCH concept despite not practising Islam as a religion. In addition, it demonstrated a high level of understanding with the concept for SCH, a willingness to abide by the proper attitude in SCH concept, a readiness to adapt with the SCH ambience, and a high expectation on a range of innovation to follow the Shariah Compliance Hotel concept. However, both genders and all age groups trusted the benefits of SCH and were willing to choose this type of hotel despite the availability of alternative conventional hotels.

## **Research Recommendation**

In Malaysia, the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia has recognised 30 rated star hotels in 2020 and 12 hotels in 2019 through the Muslim Friendly Accommodation Recognition (MFAR) (ITC, 2020). Therefore, from this study, the SCH concept should be standardised and focus on rating star hotels and all types of hotels that offer Muslim Friendly accommodation. Furthermore, the Muslim friendly hospitality services requirement (MS 2610:2015) should be followed and implemented in the SCH concept and Muslim-friendly accommodation to ensure all requirements meet customer understanding and avoid misconceptions among hotel owners.

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