




The Experience of Using a Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation Facility Service in Sabah: From The Perspective of a Tourist or Guest

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Abstract

This research aimed to explore the experience of using Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation services in Sabah from the perspective of tourists or guests. The analysis results established that tourists or guests who stayed at Shariah-compliant homestays in Sabah encountered a distinct and worthwhile experience compared to conventional accommodation. The experience was about an environment that reflects Islamic values and is free from practices contrary to moral and religious principles. Social and cultural interactions between tourists, guests, and hosts strengthened friendly relations while presenting the same religious values. This research utilised an online questionnaire distribution method to 260 random respondents. This paper researched two vital aspects: travel information for tourists or guests and shared experiences obtaining Shariah-compliant accommodation services, especially in Sabah. The study data verified that, tourists or overnight guests chose homestay accommodation of the single house or bungalow type, with 150 respondents (57.7%) and 200 respondents (76.9%), respectively. They commented that they have experienced staying in accommodation that offers Shariah-compliant services. Furthermore, this study aimed to analyse the accommodation experience of tourists or those staying at Shariah-compliant homestays in Sabah, exploring aspects such as the accommodation environment, hospitality, facilities, and interaction with the host from the user's perspective. Hopefully, this investigation will disclose essential aspects of constructing a memorable and momentous experience for the guests by understanding their needs and expectations as a measuring tool to advance in the future for the development of Shariah-compliant accommodation.

Keywords: *Experience, Lodging Facilities Services, Tourists And Guests, Shariah-Compliant Homestay, Sabah*

1.0 Introduction

Malaysia has attracted 10 million foreign tourists and generated RM28.2 billion in tourism revenue in 2022 by implementing the Tourism Recovery Framework (TRF) 2.0. TRF 2.0 holds five central strategic foundations sustaining the recovery of tourism and cultural businesses, restoring confidence in tourism, and smoothing international and intraregional travel (Bernama, 21 March 2023). According to data, 2.12 million Muslim tourists came to Malaysia in 2022, with a total expenditure of RM5.37 billion. Furthermore, Malaysia has been awarded the 'Best Muslim-Friendly Destination' by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the Global Muslim

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Tourism Index (GMTI) 2023 report. Thus, these achievements further strengthen Malaysia's position and branding as a local and international leader in the Islamic Tourism and Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality (MFTH) segment.

Islamic tourism is one of the new products that have existed and been introduced in Malaysia and most Islamic countries worldwide (Haliza, 2018). Several other countries are competitors to Malaysia, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Egypt. Islamic Tourism Center (ITC) (2009) defines Islamic tourism as any activity, event, experience, or unwind carried out in a travel condition that complies with Islamic teachings, striving to experience the Islamic way of life and explore history, art, Islamic culture and heritage. Md Fauzi (2023) noted that the government and local industrialists need to propose tourism products and Muslim-friendly infrastructure as an added value to empower the Muslim tourism industry in Malaysia. One of the critical facets in empowering Malaysia as a Muslim-friendly destination is to further expand Muslim-friendly facilities by satisfying all the needs of Muslim tourists, including those that need to be provided by operators in the tourism industry in hospitality services that are complete and comply with Shariah, such as accommodation premises, halal food and top-notch quality service (Hisham et al., 2022).

Travelling is a form of worship and a healthy activity Islam promotes. Islam firmly encourages its followers to travel to appreciate Allah S.W.T.'s creation, strengthen friendships, and gain knowledge, as communicated in the Quran.

Translation: *Say, O Prophet, "Travel throughout the land and see how He originated the creation, then Allah will bring it into being one more time."*

(Al-Ankabut, 29:20)

Tourism activities are part of human life's routine. People continuously want to experience peace, pleasure, and enjoyment and witness the beauty of Allah S.W.T.'s creation (Norazlinam Norafifah and Siti Nurul Izza, 2019). In addition to feeling and building a variety of new experiences, a Muslim deserves some benefits and relief when travelling, such as being allowed to perform jama' and qasar prayers and breaking one's fast and replacing on another day. Nonetheless, this travelling activity must be accompanied by good intentions and purpose and practise enjoining right and forbidding wrong (amar makruf nahi munkar).

Allah S.W.T. mentioned:

وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَنْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ

Translation: *Establish prayer, encourage what is good and, forbid what is evil, and endure patiently whatever befalls you.*

2.0 Research Problems

The problems that may arise in the experience of Shariah-compliant homestay among the users can be identified based on breakdowns and reviews in various destinations. Several indicators can be described as a measuring tool to evaluate issues during the stay as follows:

Facility Suitability:

- Issue: Some homestay guests may need help with the suitability of homestay facilities to their needs and expectations.
- Example: Issues in the room comfortability, cleanliness, and basic facilities such as prayer places and bathrooms that comply with Shariah principles.

Customer Service:

- Issue: Unsatisfactory experience in terms of customer service, such as incompetence of homestay staff, difficulties during the check-in/check-out, or lack of response to user complaints or inquiries.
- Example: Long waiting time during check-in requires more response to customer inquiries.

Shariah Compliance:

- Issue: For users looking for Shariah-compliant homestays, adherence to Shariah principles in homestay management is indispensable.

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- Examples: The quality of halal food, separation between men and women, and compliance with other aspects of Shariah.

Food Quality:

- Issue: The quality and variety of food that meets halal and healthy criteria may become problematic if not managed well.
- Example: Lack of halal food options and difficulties in preparing food that complies with Shariah standards.

Prayer Room Facilities:

- Issue: The absence or lack of clean and comfortable prayer facilities.
- Example: Lack of a suitable prayer room or facilities that need better maintenance.

Rules and Policies:

- Issue: Tourists may feel restricted or uncomfortable with the strict rules and policies in Shariah-compliant homestays.
- Example: Strict policies related to particular activities need more flexibility in some aspects.

Price and Value:

- Issue: High prices without providing worthy value can be a problem.
- Example: Feeling that the price could be more consistent with the quality or convenience offered.

Therefore, the accommodation options still need to be enhanced. This is because Shariah-compliant homestay services may still develop in some Sabah areas. Thus, accommodation options that comply with Shariah principles may be limited compared to more expansive conventional accommodation. Consequently, it is essential to pay due attention to creating Shariah-compliant homestay models that are recognised and hold licenses and halal certifications in all tourism areas that are the principal focus. Hence, some Shariah-compliant homestays may need help providing the logistics and facilities required to meet the needs of tourists. One must take immediate action to overcome issues and problems. This includes halal food services, rooms for prayer, and facilities that comply with Shariah regulations. In addition, international tourists may have to adapt to a distinct social climate, especially if they are not Muslims. Shariah regulations and local customs may affect the activities and lifestyle that can be done during the stay.

Although the suitability of the needs and requirements of tourists may vary, some prefer flexible accommodation with religious rules. On the contrary, others strongly prioritise it. Therefore, Shariah-compliant homestay may not be suitable for all travellers, especially those who desire a more flexible experience. Nevertheless, there is a potential need to work with stricter controls in Shariah-compliant homestays to ensure that the application of religious principles continues to be adhered to. This may involve constraints on specific activities, such as entertainment, incompatible with Islamic values. For some tourists, this may impact their sense of privacy and freedom during their stay.

3.0 Research Objectives

- To study the detailed description of the experiences experienced by tourists or guests when using the Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation services in Sabah, including environmental aspects, service facilities, and interaction with the host.
- To analyse the impact of an approach based on Islamic values on the experience of staying in a Shariah-compliant homestay that can affect the perception of customer comfort and satisfaction during the stay.
- To identify the form of challenges and potential improvement of the development such as facilities, hospitality, and interaction of the guests with the host to improve the pleasant experience throughout the trip.

4.0 Research Questions

- What is the detailed description of the experience experienced by tourists or guests when using the Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation service in Sabah, including environmental aspects, service facilities, and interaction with the host?
- To what extent is the impact of an approach based on Islamic values on the experience of staying in a Shariah-compliant homestay that can affect the perception of customer comfort and satisfaction during the stay?

- iii. What are the challenges and potential improvements of development such as facilities, hospitality, and interaction of the guests with the host to improve the pleasant experience throughout the trip?

5.0 Background Research

The tourism industry in Malaysia has oriented eclectic types of Shariah-compliant hotel products to guarantee the quality and satisfaction of the tourist experience. For example, a Shariah-compliant hotel is a hotel that furnishes services pursuing Islamic religious principles (Muhammad Iqbal and Mohd Azam, 2021). Therefore, the Islamic Shariah also details the permissible or impermissible acts and syubhah (questionable) for Muslims' guidance.

Abu Abdullah an-Nu'man bin Bashir RA stated: "I heard the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said: "Unquestionably what is permissible is clear and what is forbidden is also clear, and between the two there are syubhah components, many of the people do not know about it. Whoever guards himself against syubhah matters has preserved his religion and honour. And whoever engages in syubhah matters will commit haram acts— like a shepherd who grazes around a restricted area, worried that the herd will feed on the food (not supposed to be theirs). Know that for every king, there is a forbidden area, and Allah's forbidden area is what He has forbidden. Know that there is a piece of meat in the human body; if it is fine, the whole body is fine. When it is damaged, the whole body is damaged; know that the piece of meat is the heart ”.

(Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim)

Homestay accommodation is a small business managed by most of the locals. Most of the big countries in the world encourage homestay business as one of the ways to expand the tourism industry in a destination. The homestay program has the potential to grow and develop rural communities from a socioeconomic aspect (Rosazman and Velan, 2014). According to the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism (MOTAC), the word Homestay refers to the host staying with the guest in the homestay. Homestay allows domestic and foreign tourists to visit an accommodation premise to experience and learn the local culture (Askiah, 2019). A homestay is a house or room rented by tourists from families or residents called homestay operators. When travelling, the most crucial element that tourists underscore is accommodation. Apart from hotels, another type of accommodation suggested is homestay. A homestay is where the owner rents out their place for tourists to stay while they are on vacation. These homestays are typically rented by tourists with extended families or anyone who needs privacy during their break (Nor Khairun and Nor Bahiah, 2017).

Siti Fatma and Rosmawati (2015) clarified that determining success in the tourism industry involves stressing five primary aspects: attractiveness, community promotion, satisfactory accommodation, and great hospitality. The notion of Muslim-friendly refers to a halal lifestyle practised by an individual based on the requirements of Shariah law following the Quran and Sunnah. This includes thoughts, morals, attitudes, behaviour, daily activities, work and ownership of a person's property. Besides, Suhailah et al. (2022) noted that no specific standard is issued as a policy or certification that explains Shariah-compliant accommodation or homestays in Malaysia. Nevertheless, Islam furnishes a complete compass in the form of proof that can be applied to various issues in life, including matters of accommodation and Islamic tourism.

Datuk Ahmad Marzuk Shaary, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, explained that Malaysia's position as an Islamic country must prioritise Shariah compliance in all aspects (Berita Harian, 31 May 2022). Shariah compliance goes beyond consuming and drinking halal or haram ingredients, but also from the point of view of muamalah and our daily affairs. Therefore, this establishes that the essence of Shariah-compliant elements is evident and needs to be prioritised in life. Obeying Shariah's laws in a Muslim's everyday life, especially in muamalat activities, has merits and importance. This significance can be divided into two parts: as a condition for Allah's reward, and Him accepting the prayers, receiving Allah's mercy, obtaining glory in the afterlife, enjoying Allah's love, saving oneself from hell, protecting oneself from being cursed and getting a blessing. Meanwhile, by following Shariah's laws, the community is creating a blessed society, forming a loving organisation, eliminating oppression and tyranny, circumventing enmity and hatred and avoiding the punishment and wrath of Allah (Hamidi and Nasron, 2021).

Most accommodation operators and managers, such as hotels, are competing to meet the requirements and characteristics of Shariah-compliant hotels to grab the opportunity to generate revenue for these hotels from Muslim tourists who come to Malaysia (Abdul Rahman and Hairunnizam, 2018). Middle Eastern tourists such as Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates are always interested and trying to find hotels that render Shariah-compliant services, such as 'hijab pools' or separate bathing pools for Muslim women. Islam also prohibits entering a public bath where one's private parts will be visible except covered by wearing clothes.

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Similarly, one is forbidden to allow his wife or daughter to enter a public bath unless it is free from the sight and view of others. Jabir RA narrated the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلَا يَدْخُلُ حَلِيلَتَهُ الْحَمَّامَ

Translation: “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, then a man should not enter a public bathroom except by wearing a cloth. Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, then he should not allow his wife to enter a public bath.”

Narrated by Ahmad (14706), al-Tirmizi (2953),
al-Baihaqi in Shu'ab al-Iman (5596)
and al-Hakim in al-Mustadrak (7779)

Consequently, this paper endeavoured to review the experience of tourists or guests when using the services of Shariah-compliant accommodation facilities provided, especially in Sabah. Rosmalina (2015) expressed that every description or image of Sabah is an impression created due to the information and experience visitors gain. Sharing this experience can substantially move tourists' decision-making more than the destination description on the official website (Syarifah Emiwati and Jusang, 2021).

6.0 Research Methodology

The study conducted was a quantitative descriptive research. Meanwhile, the technique chosen to complete the survey was to use a questionnaire distributed online (Google Forms). This survey study was reasonable for examining an individual's opinion and perception regarding a topic highlighted (Kariya et al., 2020). This survey design was used appropriately to survey the experience of tourists or guests when using the services of Shariah-compliant accommodation facilities, especially in Sabah. This investigation involved 260 respondents, and sample selection was made based on random sampling, where all samples in this population had an equal chance to be selected as respondents (Nur Akalili and Nurfaradilla, 2021).

Using a large sample in quantitative research produces more accurate statistical calculations than a small sample (Kumar, 1999). When one refers to the sample notion according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and the table of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001), the appropriate sample size for the entire arrival of tourists in Sabah between January and May 2023 is 988,680 which is 384 people. Nonetheless, there are some constraints, such as the large number of questions in the questionnaire set and the limitation of internet use, causing most respondents not to be interested in answering questions online. However, according to Kerlinger and Lee (2002), a total of 30 sample respondents is recommended as the minimum number of samples in quantitative research. Hence, a total of 260 respondents was sufficient.

7.0 Result

This section will display the results of the research carried out on the topic of this paper. The data obtained was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software in a descriptive analysis (frequency).

Table 1
Profile of Respondents

Attributes	Total (N: 260 People)	Percentage (%)
Female		
Male	92	35.4 %
Female	168	64.6 %
Race		
Sabah Bumiputera	160	61.5 %
Malay	60	23.1 %
Others	40	15.4 %
Religion		
Islam	230	88.5 %
Christian	30	11.5 %
Age		

20 to 30 years old	130	50.0 %
31 to 40 years old	90	34.6 %
41 years and above	40	15.4 %
Occupation		
Student	106	40.8 %
Private	82	31.5 %
Government	42	16.2 %
Unemployed	20	7.7 %
Freelance	10	3.8 %
Level of Education		
University	100	38.5 %
Diploma	90	34.6 %
Secondary School	70	26.9 %

Source: The Researchers (2023)

Table 1 shows that the number of male respondents was less than 92 respondents (35.4 %), followed by female respondents of 168 people (64.6 %), making the total number of respondents 260 people involved in this investigation. Sabah Bumiputera respondents dominated the total number of respondents based on race breakdown, 160 people (61.5 %), followed by Malay respondents, 60 people (23.1 %) and other races that were not listed as Sabah Bumiputera and were not Malaysian citizens, which was 40 people (15.4 %). From the point of view of the breakdown of respondents according to religious affiliation, the majority were Muslims, which comprised 230 people (88.5 %), followed by Christian respondents, who were 30 people (11.5 %). In terms of the age of the respondents involved in this study, 130 people (50.0%) were made up of respondents between 20 and 30 years old. Meanwhile, 90 people (34.6 %) were respondents aged between 31 and 40, and another 40 (15.4 %) were 41 and above. Regarding the employment status of the respondents involved in this study, 106 people (40.8%) consisted of respondents who were university students. The second highest number of 82 people (31.5%) was recorded among private employees, followed by respondents who worked in the government sector, which was 42 people (16.2%), 20 unemployed individuals (7.7%) and ten self-employed people (3.8 %). Generally, the respondents involved in this analysis had a level of education at the university level, which was 100 people (38.5 %), and the respondents who had a Diploma were 90 people representing (34.6 %) and 70 secondary school respondents (26.9 %). Thus, it is evident that the respondents involved had access to education from secondary level to university.

Table 2
Background of Tourists/Guests (Purpose)

Attributes	Total (N:260 People)	Percentage (%)
Preferred Homestay Types		
Hotel / Hostel	20	7.7 %
Resort/ Chalet	40	15.4 %
Apartment/ Flat/ Condominium	50	19.2 %
Single House/Bungalow	150	57.7%
Homestay Rental Concept		
Monthly	20	7.7 %
Daily	240	92.3 %
Homestay Payment Method		
Online transactions (Internet banking)	140	53.9 %
Cash	120	46.1 %
Debit / Credit Card	0	0
Homestay Booking Method		
Short Messaging System (SMS)	80	30.7 %
Social media (Whatsapp, Facebook)	120	46.1 %
Phone call	40	15.4 %
Booking on the accommodation portal (internet)	20	7.7 %
Homestay Accommodation Requirements		
Travel or vacations	140	53.8 %
Work-related Affairs	80	30.7 %
Study or school activities	40	15.4 %

Source: The Researchers (2023)

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Table 2 shows the data of the study, showing that the majority of the respondents, 150 (57.7%) tourists or overnight guests, chose the preferred homestay from the type of single house or bungalow. Then, 50 people selected apartments, flat or condominium homestays (19.2%) and 40 (15.4%) chose resort or chalet homestay accommodation. Meanwhile, another 20 people (7.7%) decided to stay at a hotel or hostel. Based on the deconstruction by Abdul Muin et al. (2022), the most typical type of homestay located in the three tourist hotspots in Sabah in Kota Kinabalu, Kundasang and Semporna, was the bungalow or house type (63.3%), followed by the apartment or condominium type of homestay (30%) and hostel with (6.67 %). Most tourists from Indonesia (42%), Malaysia (39%) and Taiwan (38%) were likely to choose rental accommodation that offers additional facilities such as a kitchen or a separate living and sleeping space as provided in a homestay (Norzalina, 2022).

As for the homestay rental concept, the majority of the respondents (240)(92.3%) chose the daily rental, while another 20 people (7.7%) chose the monthly rental method. To reduce the cost of expenses, many visitors or tourists choose a homestay as a place to stay when travelling. In Bali, most homestays are offered at reasonable prices, and tourists can save on accommodation costs when on vacation with their families. This accommodation allots many affordable rooms with complete facilities (Solihin and Ida Ayu, 2021). Further, in Ilham's (2021) research in Kampung Maen, North Likupang, Indonesia, the host typically provides a room for a relatively long period, annually or monthly. The informant never rented out his room daily. Homestay management can be carried out daily and is paid based on the number of people (guests) staying.

Next, the preferred method of payment for homestay services by tourists or guests was through online transactions or (internet banking) which comprised 140 people (53.9%), while another 120 people (46.1%) chose the payment method in cash. The study's findings also demonstrated that respondents preferred payment methods other than credit and debit cards. In the accommodation sector, digitisation is used through digital marketing and booking systems, as well as the use of online payment transactions. The use of online facilities indicated the need for industry players to digitise their respective products (Berita Harian, 27 April 2021). Factors such as time, energy, money and security have caused the community to use online banking for various types of transactions and utility payments. Mohd Faisol (2020) expressed that people no longer need to carry large amounts of cash in their wallets. They utilise Financial Technology (FinTech) such as debit cards, credit cards, e-wallets and other online applications such as jom pay, e-zakat, and internet banking for any transaction.

Next, this analysis will cover the research findings for the homestay booking method: the choice of tourists or overnight guests in this study. Most 120 people (46.2%) chose the booking method through social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram. The choice of booking method followed this through the short messaging system (SMS), which comprised 80 people (30.7%). Meanwhile, 40 people (15.4%) chose to book via phone, and another 20 people (7.7%) decided to book through booking applications on internet accommodation portals such as Agoda and booking.com. The use of social media has become a global phenomenon nowadays, and Asia is the largest market in terms of user participation (Che Su et al., 2021). Furthermore, the millennial generation, i.e., those born between 1980 and 2000, often use instant messaging or social media to communicate instead of interacting with someone directly, including when booking accommodation (Tardanico, 2012).

In addressing the needs of tourists or overnight guests to get homestay services, the majority were for travelling or vacationing, with a response of 140 people (53.8%). Next, 80 people (30.8%) travelled for work-related affairs and another 40 (15.4%) for study or school activities. A separate study attended by Nurul Fadhliah, Habibah and Hamzah (2017) on family tourism indicated that the majority of family tourists who travel are for the sole purpose of a vacation, to kill time and relax with a percentage of 20.0, or 60 respondents. However, in choosing accommodation for a hotel or villa, the data recorded a higher number of 40.3 per cent or 121 respondents, while homestay by 9.7 per cent or 29 respondents.

7.1 Experience Using Shariah-Compliant Accommodation Facilities In Sabah

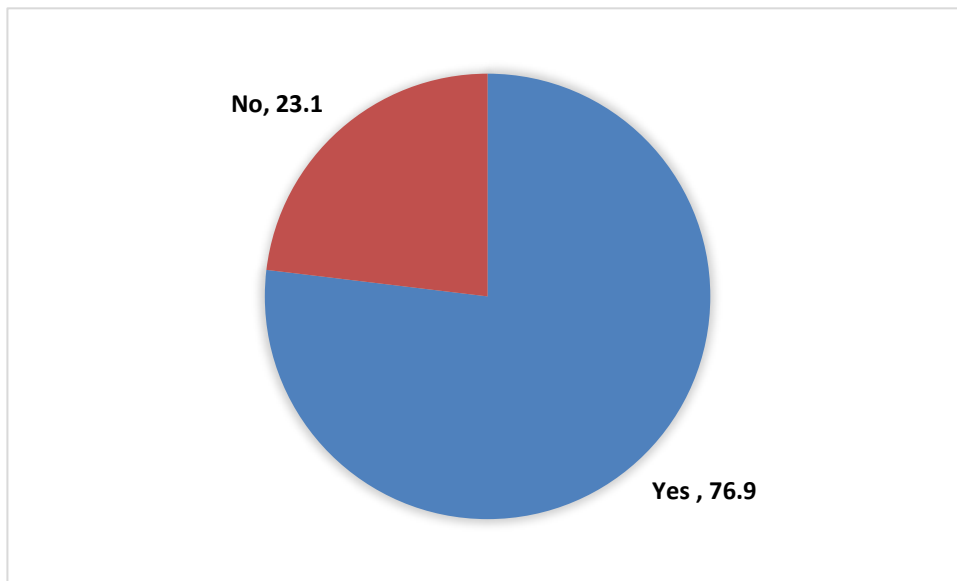


Figure 1: Experience of Staying in Shariah-Compliant Accommodation

Source : Field Study (2023)

Figure 1 shows 200 respondents (76.9 %) who stated that they experienced staying at accommodation that offered Shariah-compliant services. Meanwhile, 60 people (23.1 %) declared they had never experienced staying at a premise that offered Shariah-compliant services. The existence of lodging services such as Shariah-compliant hotels can help Muslim tourists achieve peace from a physical, social and spiritual point of view (Mohd Fadil, 2011). Therefore, homestay operators in Malaysia, especially in Sabah, need to grow the number of accommodation services with a Shariah-compliant concept with service characteristics that are suitable for visiting by Muslim tourists due to the booming trend of tourist arrivals targeted at 1.7 million in 2023 since the opening of borders, post-pandemic. The state government prioritises developing and improving the skills of community-based tourism operators (CoBT) by expanding them throughout Sabah to help more operators in rural areas benefit from the economic opportunity (Bernama, 19 June 2023).

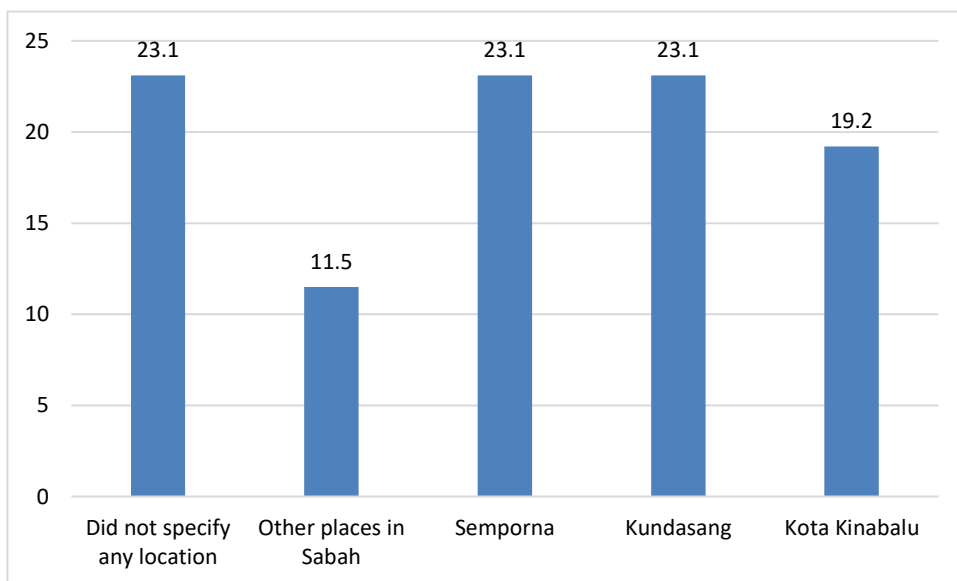


Figure 2: Location of Staying at Shariah-Compliant Accommodation

Source : Field Study (2023)

Based on the respondents' results, most respondents experienced staying at Shariah-compliant accommodation in Kundasang and Semporna Districts with 60 people each (23.1%). Meanwhile, another 60

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respondents (23.1%) did not specify any location. Next, 50 respondents (19.2 %) experienced staying at Shariah-compliant accommodation in Kota Kinabalu, and another 30 people (11.5 %) noted other places in Sabah, including Kudat, Kota Belud and Tawau. Sabah has 57 interesting tourist locations that are nature-oriented, specifically in islands, wildlife conservation centres and National Park areas that offer the beauty of the Borneo wilderness, including Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, Mantanani Island, Langkayan Island, Mount Kinabalu, Cattle Village Kundasang Dairy Farm, Kinabalu National Park, Lok Kawi Wildlife Park, Kota Kinabalu Wetland Center (KKWC), Monsopiad Cultural Village, Sepilok Orang Utan Conservation Center and many more, (Utusan Borneo, 16 September 2019). Consequently, these tourist hotspots, which are centred in five principal parts of Sabah: Tawau, Sandakan, Kudat, West Coast and Pendalam, need to be concocted in terms of providing the needs of tourists, especially premises that comply with Shariah, especially for Muslim tourists.

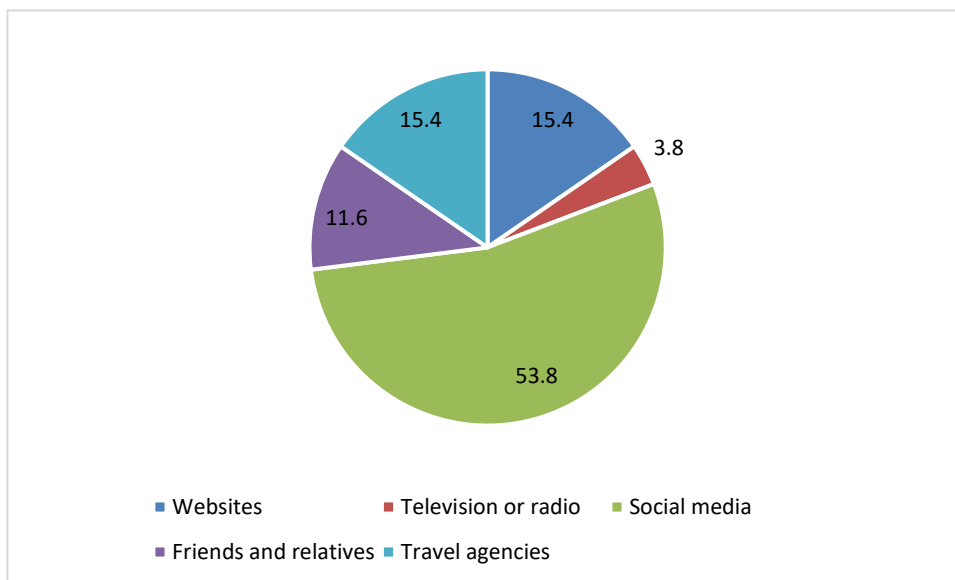


Figure 3: Information channels on Shariah-compliant accommodation
Source: Field Study (2023)

Based on Figure 3, the majority of respondents obtained information regarding Shariah-compliant accommodation services through the use of social media, i.e. 140 people (53.8%), followed by websites (accommodation portals) such as Agoda and booking.com and their respective travel agencies with a response of 40 people (15.4 %). Next, they did it through information channels from friends and relatives, as 30 people (11.6 %) and 10 (3.8 %) stated through television or radio. The study's outcomes by Jabil et al. (2020) established that the homestay promotion medium, social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp, is the most employed medium by all informants.

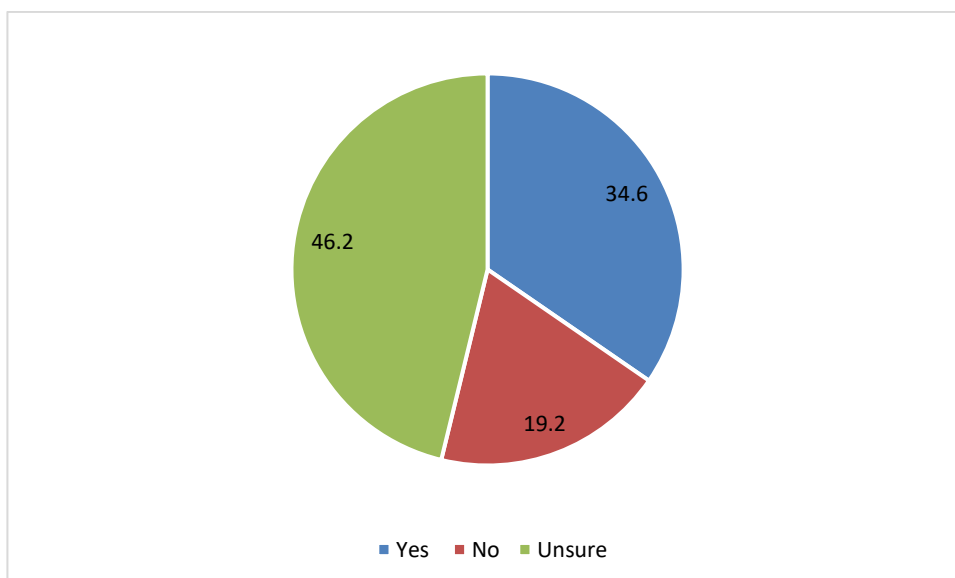


Figure 4: Level of Satisfaction in the Selection of Shariah-Compliant Accommodation

Source : Field Study (2023)

As for the level of satisfaction of the respondents towards the selection of Shariah-compliant accommodation offered, the majority responded with 'unsure,' i.e. 120 people (46.2 %), followed by 'yes,' i.e. satisfied with the Shariah-compliant accommodation offered, i.e. 90 people (34.6 %) and another 50 people (19.2%) stated that they were 'not satisfied' with the Shariah-compliant accommodation provided. Tourist satisfaction refers to hedonistic achievements or satisfying tourists' needs (Nuradila and Habibah, 2019). The level of tourist satisfaction influences products and services from the aspect of demand in the long term. In addition, satisfaction in the context of a tourist destination can encourage them to publicise good things about the destination they visited to their friends and relatives. Thus, it is an informal form of promotion through word-of-mouth (WOM). In fact, WOM is one of the phenomena in the marketing domain nowadays because tourists or consumers usually trust the community's views towards a product (Putu Adriani, 2016).

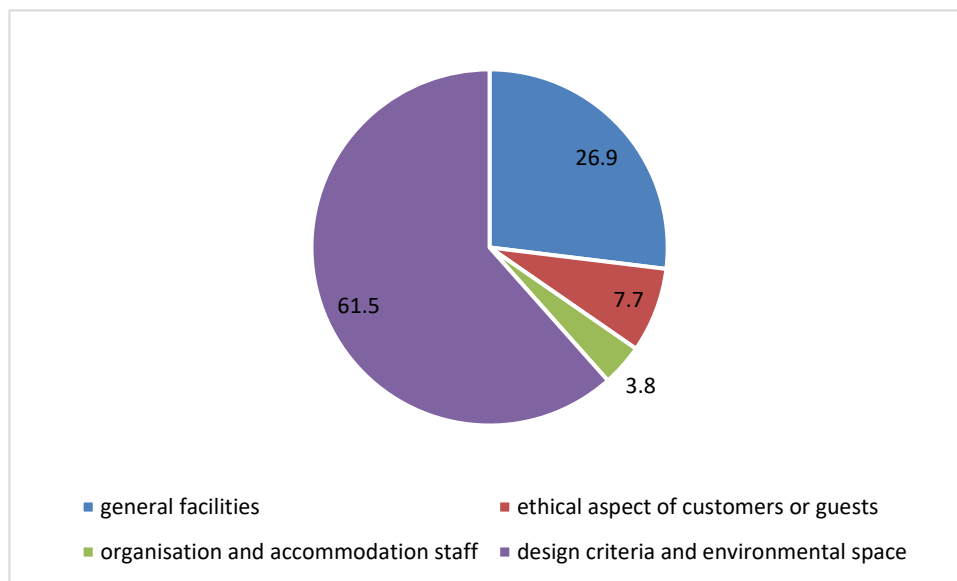


Figure 5: Improvement of Criteria for Provision of Shariah-Compliant Accommodation

Source : Field Study (2023)

As for the findings of the study regarding the main criteria that need to be improved in the provision of Shariah-compliant accommodation provided by homestay operators, it validated that the majority voted for the design criteria and environmental space, such as the room and food and beverage preparation, which included 160 people (61.5%), followed by general facilities with 70 people voted (26.9 %). Meanwhile, criteria for improvement from the ethical aspect of customers or guests recorded a response of 20 people (7.7%) and criteria of organisation and accommodation staff of 10 people (3.8%). Further, a different investigation by Mohd Reduan and Haryati (2017) reported that providing comfortable accommodation facilities could help residents achieve excellence in developing knowledge and personality and improving their quality of life. In actuality, Shariah-compliant accommodation is not limited to halal food and beverage services but involves operations throughout the accommodation premises, which must also be managed based on Shariah principles (Md Hamzaimi, Nasrul and Mohd Azman, 2015).

8.0 Conclusion

Consequently, most tourists or overnight guests in the homestay accommodation services in Sabah enjoyed a Muslim's basic needs. Nevertheless, the ideal Shariah-compliant standards have yet to be fully enjoyed when the study's findings showed that aspects of the design and environment, such as rooms and the provision of food and drinks, still need to be enhanced to secure maximum satisfaction for tourists and guests. Ergo, the most substantial aspect of empowering Malaysia as a Muslim-friendly destination is expanding Muslim-friendly facilities such as mosques, suraus, Islamic cultural centres, and religious and educational institutions. In addition, to boost the Islamic tourism segment in Malaysia, the tourism industry needs to concoct a cooperation network with stakeholders, including tourism associations and local authorities.

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