



**ACCEPTANCE OF SHARIA COMPLIANCE IMPLEMENTATION
AMONG HOTELIERS IN THE KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA**

By

ADIB BIN MOHD

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science**

January 2021

FPAS 2021 29

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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Tourism is a sector that the Government of Malaysia has recognized as an economic catalyst for the country. Islamic hospitality has become one of the attractive segments of the world's tourism industry, and, for many Islamic countries, it is a crucial income earner, especially for those providing services to Muslim travelers. Sharia Compliance Hotel has been created to cater to Muslim guests as demand and awareness for Islamic products and services has increased. There are three objectives in this research, (a) to evaluate the influence of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control on the acceptance of SCH implementation, (b) to assess the hoteliers' level of understanding towards SCH attributes and (c) identify their level of awareness about SCH implementation in Malaysia. This research utilizes the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to investigate this issue. The data was collected using questionnaires distributed to 400 respondents working in hotels rated between three (3) to five (5) stars in the Klang Valley. Regression analysis and correlation result reveal a significant relationship between the factor of TPB and acceptance; furthermore, the results indicate that majority of the hoteliers are understood the SCH attributes and aware of SCH implementation in Malaysia.

Keywords: Sharia, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Acceptance, Halal

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**PENERIMAAN KONSEP HOTEL PATUH SHARIAH DIKALANGAN
PEKERJA HOTEL DI LEMBAH KLANG, MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Pelancongan merupakan sektor yang telah diakui oleh Kerajaan Malaysia sebagai pemangkin ekonomi bagi negara ini. Manakala, pelancongan yang berlandaskan nilai-nilai Islam telah menjadi salah satu segmen industri pelancongan dunia yang menarik dan bagi banyak negara Islam, pelancongan ini merupakan penjana pendapatan yang penting terutama bagi mereka yang memberikan perkhidmatan kepada pelancong Muslim. Hotel Patuh Syariah telah dicipta untuk memenuhi permintaan pelancong Muslim. Terdapat tiga objektif dalam penyelidikan ini, (a) untuk menilai pengaruh sikap, norma subjektif dan kawalan tingkah laku yang dirasakan terhadap penerimaan pelaksanaan SCH, (b) untuk menilai tahap pemahaman pengusaha hotel terhadap ciri-ciri SCH dan (c) mengenal pasti tahap kesedaran mereka mengenai pelaksanaan SCH di Malaysia. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan Teori Perilaku Terancang (TPB) untuk menyiasat masalah ini. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan borang soal selidik yang diedarkan kepada 400 responden yang bekerja di hotel yang dinilai antara tiga (3) hingga lima (5) bintang di Lembah Klang. Hasil analisis regresi dan korelasi menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan antara faktor TPB dan penerimaan; selanjutnya, hasil menunjukkan bahawa sebahagian besar pengusaha hotel memahami atribut SCH dan mengetahui pelaksanaan SCH di Malaysia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the present world of competition is a race of existence in which those are having willed to come forward succeed. Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today. With this, I enroll myself to learn more despite of not knowing what the future lays ahead. Alhamdulillah, to the Almighty God that is obviously the one has always guided me to work on the right path of life. Without His Grace, I would not be able to finish what I started earlier. Next to Him, are my parents for their blessing and prayers which I am greatly indebted the most. I am feeling obliged in taking the opportunity to sincerely thanks to my supervisor, Prof Madya Dr. Azlizam Aziz which has been guided me through and along this journey until I succeed. To Dr. Siti Suriawati Isa, Dr. Harisun Yaakob, Dr. Sam Shor Nahar for your guidance and assistance during this journey. Besides that, to all Faculty of Forestry staff member for their generous attitude and friendly behavior. At last, to the most important person in my life, my supporting wife (Dahlia Ya'akob) that always trusts in me and for all your prayers for me to chasing my dream. This thesis I am dedicating to her and my lovely son as a remarks that we had go through a tough journey together.

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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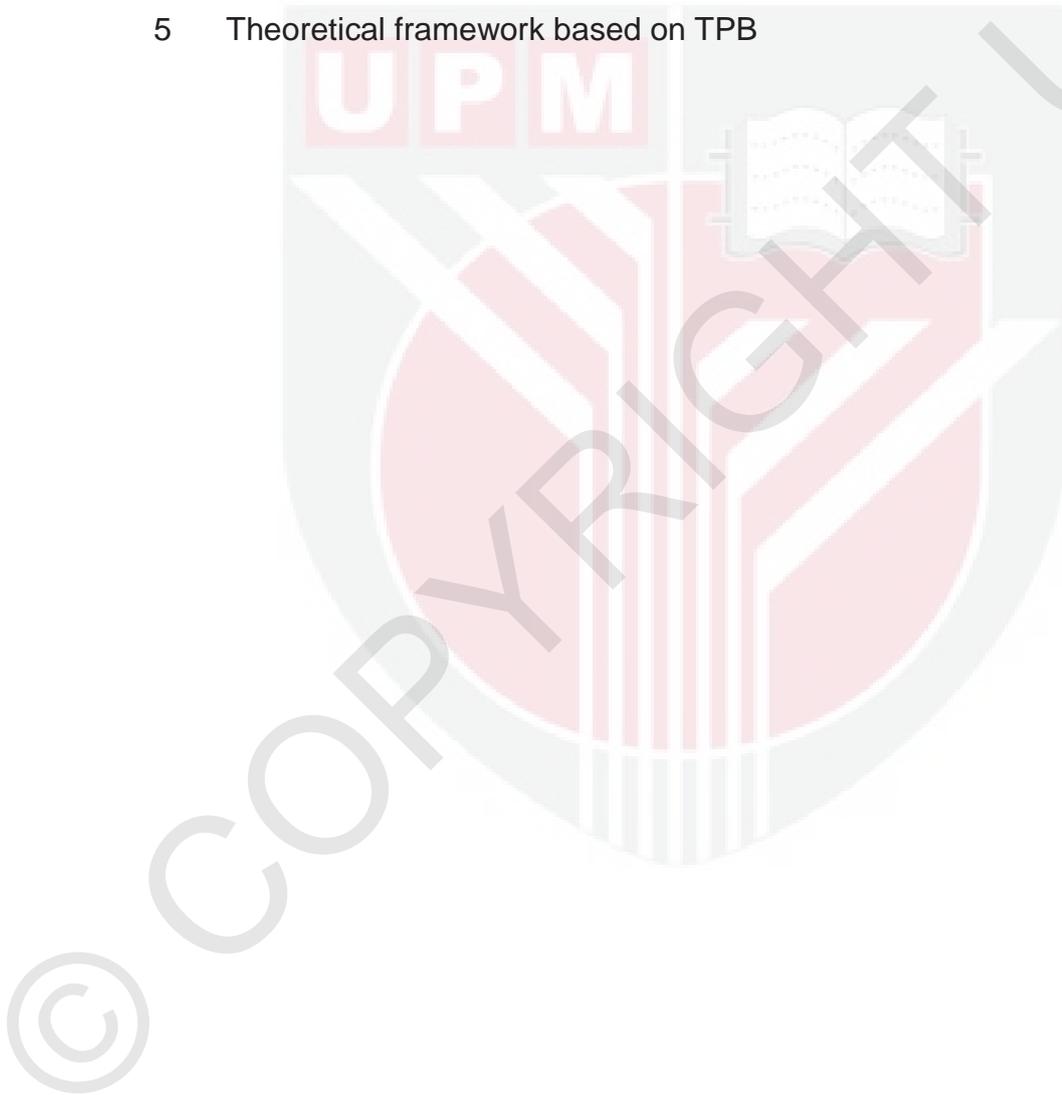
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| SCH | Sharia Compliance Hotel |
| TPB | Theory of Planned Behaviour |
| SN | Subjective Norm |
| PBC | Perceived Behavioral Control |
| UNWTO | United Nations World Tourism Organization |
| MOTAC | Ministry of Tourism and Culture |
| ETP | Economic Transformation Program |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| WTTC | World Travel and Tourism Council |
| JAKIM | Department of Islamic Development |
| JAIN | State Islamic Religious Council |
| GMTI | Global Muslim Travel Index |
| OIC | Organization of Islamic Country |
| TRA | Theory of Reasoned Action |

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background on tourism

The tourism industry is one of the leading service industries and is considered a key source of economic growth in the world economy. A developed and established tourism sector is catalyzing national and regional development helps establish the foreign exchange rate, creates more employment opportunities, boosts global prosperity, and contributes to social development that will benefit the local communities and tourists.

Tourism industry development has been disrupted on a range of crucial stages in its history, including World War I, the Great Depression and World War II. International developments have pushed world travel into recession at the beginning of this century, including on 11 September 2001, the attack on New York City World Trade Centre, the Iraq war, and the perceived threat of terrorist activity threats and health scares SARS, BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), and West Nile virus (Government of Canada, 2006).

At the same occurrences, the industry started a major digital transformation as internet utilization pioneered travel services. Throughout the 2000s, online travel bookings increased rapidly, and by 2014, regional Expedia pioneer grew to include brands such as Hotels.com, Hotwire Group, Trivago and Expedia CruiseShip Center, earning revenues of over \$4.7 million (Expedia Inc., 2013).

Tourism worldwide is now worth more than \$1 trillion annually, and it is a growing industry almost everywhere. The regions with the highest growth in tourism dollars earned are the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa. There was also a 5 per cent increase in tourist arrivals in the Middle East and a 4 per cent increase in tourism revenues of USD 73 billion (UNWTO, 2019).

Based on the report, in 2018, Europe represents almost 40% of international tourism receipt followed by Asia and the Pacific at 30%, Americas (23%), Middle East (5%), and Africa at 3%. Driven by a relatively robust global economy, a growing middle class in emerging economies, technological advances, new business models, affordable travel cost and visa facilitation, international tourist arrivals grew 5% in 2018 reach the 1.4 billion mark.

At the same time, export earnings from tourism have increased to USD 1.7 trillion, indicating that this sector is a truly global force for economic growth and development, driving more and better jobs and acting as a catalyst for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Growth in international tourist arrivals and receipts continues to outpace the world economy, and both emerging and advanced economies are benefiting from rising tourism incomes. Most destinations in South East Asia have seen strong growth, particularly in Vietnam. Increase in tourist arrivals by 7% and increase in tourist receipts by 5%.

According to Puah, Jong, Ayob, & Ismail (2018), the Malaysian tourism industry has received serious attention from the government since the 1980s, as Malaysia was overly dependent on the primary and secondary sectors after it gained independence in 1957. Malaysia was previously dependent on trading in commodities such as rubber, cocoa and palm oil until the mid-1990s when the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was established in 1987 to diversify the economic risk by emphasizing the comparative advantage of the tourism industry. In 2013, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism transformed the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC), intending to promote Malaysia as a top-of-the-line tourist destination.

Malaysia tourism industry has been ranked third largest in the country's gross domestic product contribution in 2017. The tourism industry is one of the industries that the government underscores in the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) to strengthen and diversify economic risk. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017), the total contribution of travel and tourism to the gross domestic product (GDP) amounted to MYR 181.4 billion (USD 41.9 billion) or 13.4% of GDP in 2017 and is projected to increase by 4.3% in 2018. Malaysian tourism is believed to have contributed significantly to the generation of national income. The total contribution of Malaysian tourism amounted to MYR182.4 billion or 14.8% of the national income (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017). Malaysia tourism is the third-largest foreign income earner in the Malaysian manufacturing and palm oil industry, accounting for more than 7.0% of the country's economy in 2016 (Misachi, 2017).

The tourist receipt earned by the government in 2017 was MYR82.1 billion, with total arrival of 25.9 million tourists (Tourism Malaysia, 2018). Compared to 2016, Malaysian tourism has received a total of MYR82.1 billion but with 26.76 million tourist arrivals which dropped by 3% of tourist arrivals.

The latest data indicate that in 2018 tourist arrival is decreased by 3.02%, at 25.83 million tourists compared to 2017. However, the tourist receipts increased by 2.4% or by MYR 84.14 billion compared to 2017.

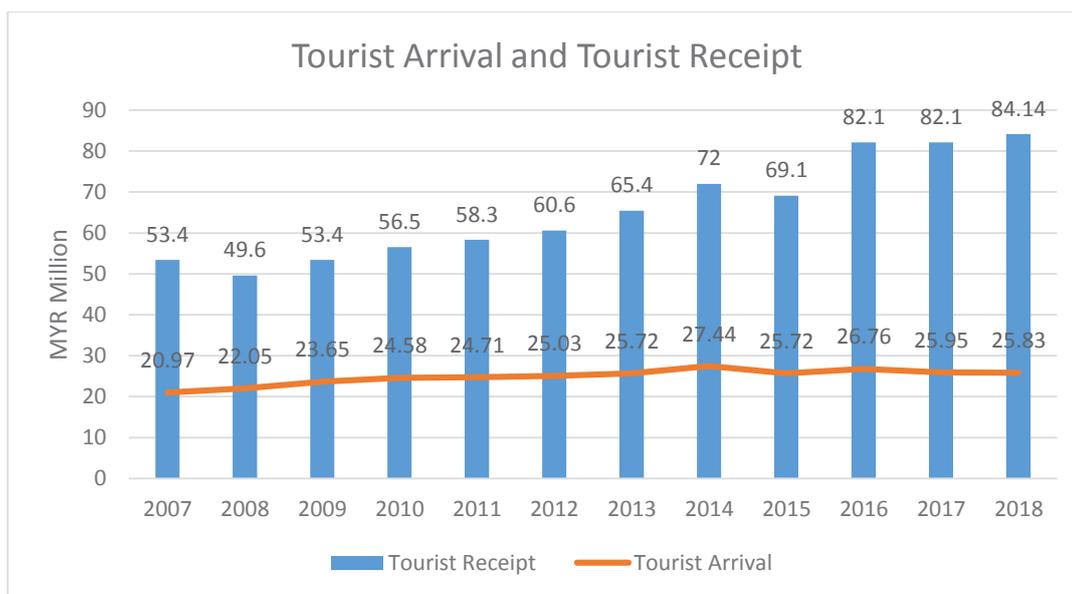


Figure 1 : Tourist receipt vs. tourist arrival, 2007-2018
 (Adapted from <https://www.tourism.gov.my/statistics>)

Figure 1 shows the total tourist receipt and arrival in Malaysia between 2007 and 2018. The contribution of the tourism industry has steadily increased over time. However, there have been few drops in 2008 and 2015 at the latest. These drops are due to the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), the global financial crisis and local events such as the two airway incidents and security issues in Malaysia.

One part of the tourism industry is the accommodation business or the hotel industry. The hotel industry in Malaysia has increased with all the newly developed hotel brands that have been seen in any tourist attraction area. As reported by Tourism Malaysia (2016), there have been approximately 4,961 hotels and resorts in Malaysia, contributing 321,972 rooms.

Recently, several renowned hotel brands have entered the local scene. From the first time in 2017 until the first quarter of 2018, several established hotel brands have ventured into Malaysia, some poised to enter the market soon. Despite the lack of an initial target of 31 million tourist arrivals and a yield of MYR114 billion for 2017, Malaysia's tourism sector remained up to 25.9 million tourist arrivals last year and a total of MYR82.2 billion. The expected growth of tourist arrivals in Malaysia has been and will continue to be an imperative factor in attracting new hoteliers to venture into Malaysia with their respective brands to capitalize on the growing demand for quality hotels, thereby ensuring the influx of new hotel brands into Malaysia's hospitality market.

According to the Malaysia Tourism Portal, the latest inventory as of 2018 of hotel and rooms supply in Malaysia, most are in Sabah with 590 hotels with 27181 rooms. Meanwhile, Kuala Lumpur recorded 435 hotels but with the most rooms, 57,286 units. Putrajaya recorded the lowest number of hotels which only seven and 1333 room units.

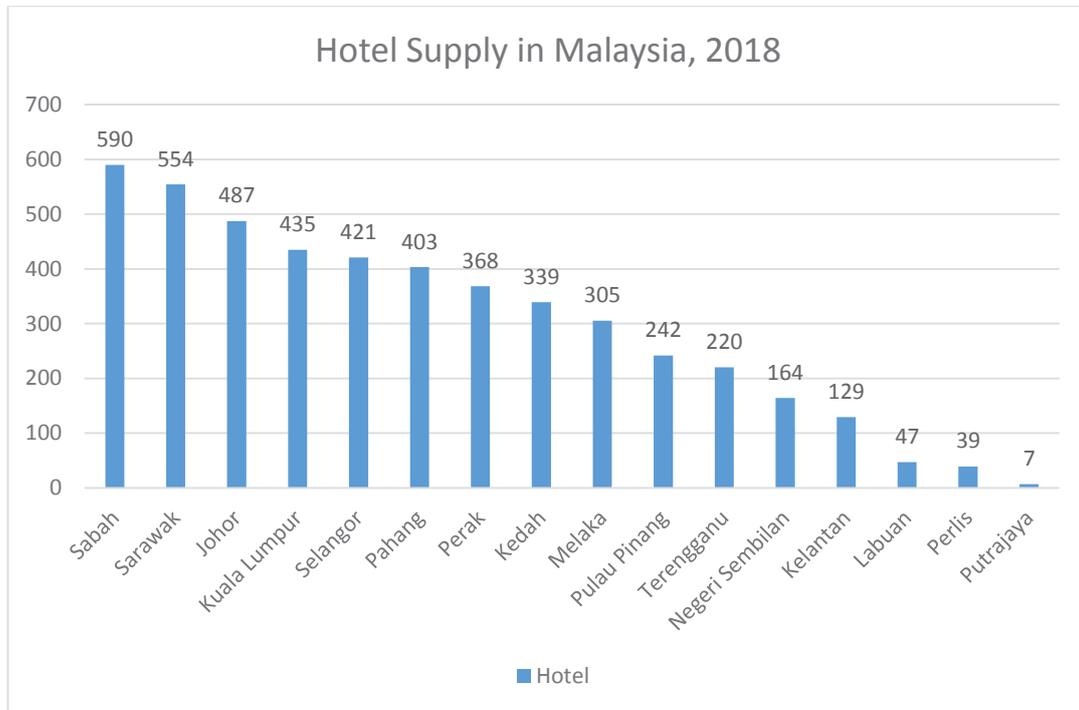


Figure 2 : Hotel supply in Malaysia, 2018
(Adapted from <https://www.tourism.gov.my/statistics>)

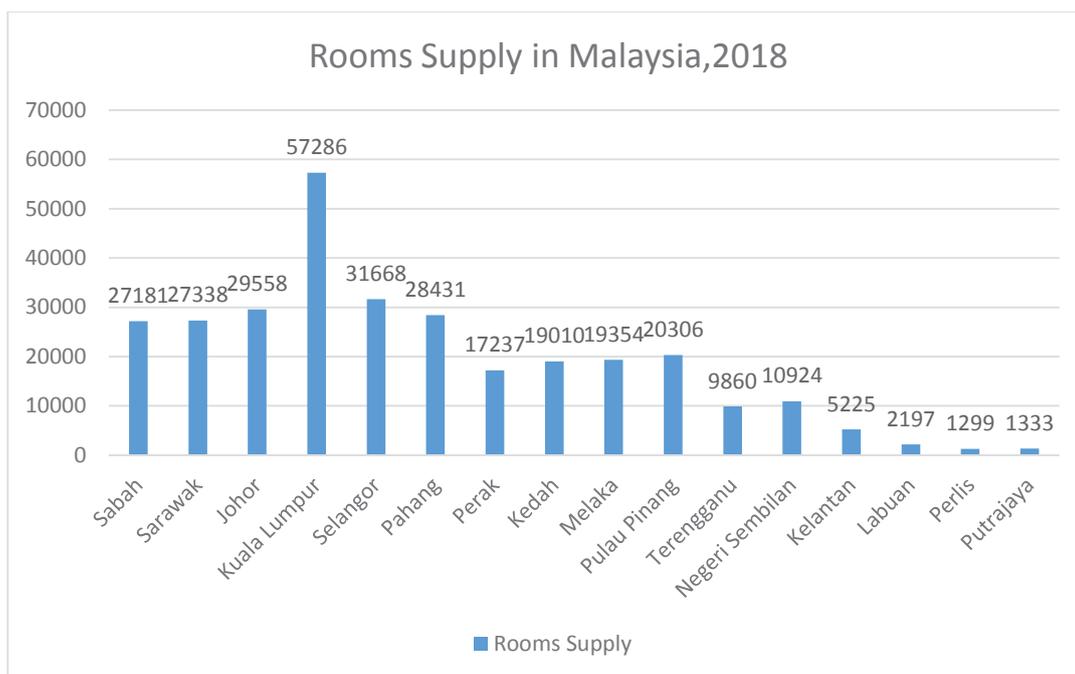


Figure 3 : Rooms supply in Malaysia, 2018
 (Adapted from <https://www.tourism.gov.my/statistics>)

With a diverse religion and multiethnic culture, Malaysia is a moderate Muslim nation, with Islam officially being the official religion. For this reason, we can build one of the world's most enviable infrastructure for the growth of Halal Tourism. Since Crescent Rating, Singapore was awarded and named us the number one destination for Muslim travellers for four consecutive years from 2011-2014 based on the annual survey. According to The Malaysia Islamic Tourism report for 2014/2015, Malaysia has received 3.2 million inbound Muslim tourists to Malaysia. In 2016 a total of MYR 2.56 billion contributed by tourist from Middle Eastern to the country's revenue.

Halal tourism has traditionally been associated with pilgrimages or umrah and haj. Muslim customers are that in wealthier middle classes, and the degree of interconnectedness that has influenced travel as a part of daily life is slowly shifting Muslims' tourism choices for tourist destinations. The halal tourism market represents 12.3% or USD126.1 billion of the total global outbound tourism market and is growing at 4.8% compared to the global average of 3.8% (Elasrag, 2016). For example, in 2011 alone, Muslim travellers spent about USD126 billion, according to Dinar Standard (2012). This amount will hit \$419 billion by 2020. Malaysia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia are among the top destination for Muslim tourism. In addition, many Muslim minority nations have made significant progress in meeting Muslim tourist needs and demands (Master Card and Crescent Rating 2015). Singapore, Thailand, the UK, South Africa and France are among the countries that encourage 'halal tourism' (Master card and Crescent ranking, 2015).

Malaysia government has taken a step to empowered Halal Tourism to attract more tourist to come over and spend in Malaysia. For instance, Malaysia herself has been leading the Halal Tourism and Halal Hotel industry by establishing the standard certification of MS 2610:2015 – Services and requirements of Muslim friendly hospitality. The first standard for the Islamic tourism sector was established in Malaysia as a guiding document in setting up an assurance system to preserve the integrity of products and services catered for Muslim travellers in three tourism sub-segments: accommodations, tour package and tourist guide.

Hotels adopt and implement innovations in today's competitive global tourism sector to remain competitive and sustain market share (Sintes and Mattson, 2009). The Sharia Compliance Hotel (SCH) was therefore introduced as a service innovation. The adoption of SCH is an indicator of Muslim tourists' hotel accommodation (Hjalanger, 2010). In response to the SCH in Malaysia, few hotels in the De-Palma Hotel, PNB Darby Park, Grand Bluewave Shah Alam and Putra Hotel in Kuala Lumpur have been reconized for practising Sharia principles.

1.2 Problem Statement

The hotel industry increases in the central and reconstructed city where job opportunities and economic activities occur drastically. Sharia Compliance Hotel has been one part of the industry where we can see the numbers of hotels' operators following the practice. Malaysia, for instance, has been taken a step to empower the halal tourism industry. According to the Department of Statistic Malaysia (DOSM), in 2019, 61.3% of the Malaysian are Muslim, followed by Buddhist at 19.8%, Christian 9.2%, Hindu at 6.3% and others. As most of the population are Muslim, most of the hotels' operators are in line with Islamic values indirectly; for instance, some of the hotels providing Buffet Ramadhan during the fasting month, prayer room to perform prayers and promote traditional halal food.

According to the Malaysia Islamic Tourism Centre, in 2014, Malaysia welcomed around 3.2 million inbound Muslim tourists (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2015). A report from the Global Muslim Travel index stated that, in 2017, there were an estimated 131 million Muslim visitor arrivals globally compared to 121 million in 2016, and this figure forecasted to grow to 156 million by 2020, which will represent 10 per cent in the travel segment (Global Muslim Travel Index, 2017). For a record, in 2016, Malaysia received a total of 287,398 Middle Eastern tourists that contributed MYR2.56 billion to the country's revenue (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2017).

Considering the size and the opportunity lies ahead for halal tourism, hotel industry player should grab to ensure that the forecasted Muslim visitor is attracting to visit Malaysia. They should allow their hotels to implement the

Sharia principle as an innovation in this segment. The market for Islamic products and services is one of the strategic advantages for hotel operators. The influx of tourists from the Middle East into Malaysia offers the Sharia Compliance Hotel an enormous opportunity to attract them, increasing the hotel's profits (Norzafir 2015).

Today, the halal market is not exclusive to Muslims and has gained more recognition among non-Muslim consumers who associate halal with ethical consumerism (Elasrag, 2016). For Muslims, it's no longer merely a religious obligation or observance. Halal, meaning lawful, has become a robust market. According to Lina (2013), Islamic tourism can have high impacts on Malaysia's tourism industry from economics, social, environmental and politic. This is because Islamic tourism provides new peculiar and universal needs which will influence the development of the tourism industry in Malaysia. Othman, Mohamed and Aziz (2012) mentioned this industry promises a profitable chain of economic opportunities.

Muslim customers are among the fastest-growing segments of the industry, so destination marketers and tourism operators should not neglect the demands (Battour & Ismail, 2014). According to the study by Reuters (2015) on the State of the Global Islamic Economy, the global Muslim travel market was worth USD140 billion in 2013, which represent 11.5% of global expenditure. The tourism industry required changes in its market; as we can see, Halal Tourism is projected to raise visibility in several Asia-Pacific countries and companies that provide accommodation according to Sharia-compliant.

Most traditional hoteliers hesitate to move to SCH because of the term's lack of knowledge and comprehension. Capacity hotel management refers to room constraints and facilities provided to hotel resource customers. The hotel must handle the efficiency of its rooms well because this influences its returns. Additional costs incurred for renovating the existing pool and spa facilities can add to the challenges facing existing hotel operators (Sabtu, 2012). According to Zakiah and Norsalwati (2014), in designing proper Sharia hotels, such as the separation of rooms for men and women, architectural and interior design is suggested, which demands comfort and space for prayer. In addition, SIRIM (2014) states that hoteliers must hire a consultant/officer who knows the SCH concept to ensure that everything conforms to the guidelines.

On the other hand, according to Zakiah and Norsalwati (2014), In developing SCHs, like separation of rooms and floors to males and females, the architectural and interior decoration is argued that the room should be spacious and comfortable for prayer. Zailani, Omar, & Kopong (2011) mentioned in their exploratory study, most of the managers are not well

understood the importance of Halal certification, but they still can have a successful business without it.

In reliance on previous research and study conducted, most of the studies indicated that the level of awareness and profit are their biggest concerns to develop or transform following the requirement of SCH. It remains interesting to know if Malaysian hotel and international brand hotel operators have been conscious of this idea and whether they will accept this concept to be implemented like any other conventional hotels. At the same time, SCH has not received significant attention among industry players even though such a study has been conducted towards the challenges, issues, and findings that have been shared thoroughly within the tourism segment. Despite the growing number in demand and Ringgit value towards this concept, the industry's ignorance is something to ponder. As mention in the above statement, the previous study did indicate that the reason being why most industry player in Malaysia refuse to accept this concept is due to the acceptance. Acceptance towards the concept from the operators, the customer and the regulation.

Thus, this study has been developed to fill up the gap in this matter by carrying out an all-inclusive participatory investigation to discover the SHC concept and the acceptance from the hotelier's perspective.

1.3 Research Questions

From the above problem statement, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is hotelier's level of awareness about SCH implementation in Malaysia?
2. What is the level of understanding among hoteliers about the attributes and the concept of SCH?
3. Does attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control influence hotelier's acceptance of SCH implementation?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were set as follow:

1. To find out the hoteliers level of awareness about SCH implementation in Malaysia,
2. To assess the hoteliers level of understanding towards SCH attributes, and

3. To evaluate the influence of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control on the acceptance of SCH implementation among hoteliers in different star rating hotel.

1.5 Contribution and Limitation of the study

The significance of this study is discussed from two perspectives: 1) practical contributions for the management of hotels in Malaysia and (2) its contribution to the body of knowledge about SCH and its acceptance among hoteliers.

The knowledge from the expected outcome that the above factors have a direct influence on the acceptance in the implementation of SCH among hoteliers. Thus, by analysing the data from the survey that has been done, the result can be used as a reference to the industries and regulators bodies that monitoring and controlling the tourism situation in Malaysia. Besides that, the result can be shared so that Malaysia can go fully SCH to capture the growing demand in Muslim tourist.

This study focuses only on hoteliers or hotels operator's acceptance level and how the attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control influence their acceptance in SCH. This study will not discover from the consumers' point of view and to assess any other factors that affect the acceptance level of SCH implementation among hoteliers. Further study needs to be carried out that cover the above limitation.

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