

Malaysian Accommodation Providers' Understanding of
Halal Hospitality

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the understanding of *halal* hospitality among accommodation providers in Malaysia. *Halal* means permissible in Arabic and the concept is a cornerstone of Islam and is used to refer to what is permissible to Muslims. The concept of hospitality adopted in this study is that of describing both the material and the technical nature of the hospitality industry services as well as the relationship between host and guest. This study addresses three research questions related to Malaysian accommodation providers' understanding of *halal* hospitality and their utilization of websites to inform the provision of *halal* hospitality. First, what is Malaysian accommodation providers' understanding of the concept of *halal* hospitality? Second, what are the social, technical, and commercial means by which accommodation providers provide *halal* hospitality? Third, how do accommodation providers communicate the social, technical and commercial dimensions of *halal* hospitality on their websites?

Using a qualitative approach, the understanding of *halal* hospitality was investigated through interviews with 18 accommodation providers from four accommodation categories: hotel, budget hotel, resthouse/guesthouse/homestay/hostel and chalet. The results were analysed thematically. A content analysis of the websites of accommodation providers was used to recognize the *halal* hospitality attributes displayed to acknowledge *halal* services to customers. The keywords or terms used to identify the *halal* hospitality attributes displayed were based on the study conducted by Razzaq, Hall and Prayag (2016) for reasons of comparison. A total of 781 websites were identified over a period of six months for this purpose with the results then subject to statistical analysis.

The qualitative results indicated that many Muslim accommodation providers understand the *halal* hospitality concept based on Islamic laws and regulations. However, both Muslim and non-Muslim respondents have difficulties in complying with *halal* hospitality requirements set by the government. The website analysis indicated that the promotion of *halal* attributes by accommodation providers was limited. The findings of the website analysis were somewhat surprising given the avowed focus of Malaysia as promoting itself as an international *halal* tourism destination.

The findings add to existing knowledge in several ways. The study adds value to the contemporary literature on *halal* hospitality from the accommodation providers' perspectives. The findings help guide accommodation providers as to what to promote in the marketing of *halal* hospitality to *halal* oriented customers. Fuller utilization of websites could be the most efficient and effective way to inform the *halal* hospitality service worldwide. The study further emphasizes the importance of *halal* suppliers in supporting the operation of *halal* hospitality industries. Finally, this study identified the potential research areas in relation to the topic for the future.

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ACRONYMS

AFIC	Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
CAC	Codex Alimentarius Commission
CIBAL BRAZIL	Central Islamica Brasileira de Alimentos <i>Halal</i>
DOE	Department of Environment
ETP	Economic Transformation Programme
FIANZ	Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand
FIANZ	The Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand
HDM	<i>Halal</i> Directory Malaysia
HFSAA	<i>Halal</i> Food Standards Alliance of America
HICO	<i>Halal</i> International Certification Organization
HMC	<i>Halal</i> Monitoring Committee
IFANCA	Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America
IPP	Industry Partner Programme
ISNA	Islamic Society of North America
ISWA	Islamic Society of the Washington Area
JAKIM	Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia/Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
JIT	Japan Islamic Trust
MATRADE	Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation
MHA	Malaysia Hotel Association/ Muslim Consumers Association of Malaysia
MNCs	Multinational Companies
MOF	Ministry of Finance Malaysia
MOH	Local Council, and Ministry of Health

MOTAC	Ministry of Tourism and Culture
MOTOUR	Ministry of Tourism
MUI	Indonesian Council of Ulama/Majelis Ulama Indonesia
MUIS	Islamic Religious Council of Singapore/Majlis Ugama Islam Singapore
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
PEMANDU	Unit Pengurusan Prestasi dan Pelaksanaan
SESRIC	The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries
TDA	Trade Description Act
TEKUN	National Entrepreneur Group Economic Fund/Tabung Ekonomi Kumpulan Usaha Niaga
WTTC	World Travel & Tourism Council

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

This thesis examines Malaysian accommodation providers' understanding of *halal* hospitality. *Halal* means permissible in Arabic and the concept is a cornerstone of Islam and is used to refer to what is permissible to Muslims. The concept of hospitality adopted in this study is that of describing both the material and the technical nature of the hospitality industry services as well as the relationship between host and guest (Aramberri, 2001; Carboni & Janati, 2016; Causevic & Lynch, 2009). Research on the hospitality industry covers a wide range of sub-sectors, including hotels and accommodation (Lukanova, 2010; Politis, Litos, Grigoroudis, & Moustakis, 2009), food outlets and restaurants (Auchincloss et al., 2013; Ponnampalani & Balaji, 2014), airline services (Chen & Chang, 2005; Liou & Tzeng, 2007), coach services (Jain, 2011; Jen, Tu, & Lu, 2010) and the cruise industry (Skaalsvik, 2011; Sun, Fen & Gauri, 2014). Much of this research, however, has prioritised issues pertaining to general and secular notions of hospitality ahead of hospitality in a religious context.

The hospitality literature that considers the religious context mainly deals with topics such as religious needs, religious tourism, religious tourists, and the tourist who is religious (Weidenfeld, 2005). However, these topics are mainly focused on pilgrimage trips (Henderson, 2011), religious needs (Weidenfeld, 2005; Williams, 2003), religious lodging experience (Hung, 2015), religious issues and patterns (Din, 1989; Riaz, 2007), religious facilities (Shuriye & Che Daud, 2014), certification (Aziz & Chok, 2013; Abdul, Ismail, & Mustapha, 2013; Marzuki, Hall, & Ballantine, 2012a), and religious identity (Eum, 2008). There is no explicit focus on accommodation providers' understanding of hospitality in such studies. Although interest in the social and religious context of hospitality is growing, as evidenced, for example, by the emergence of journals such as *Hospitality and Society*, there has been no explicit study examining hospitality providers' perspectives on religious obligations for providing *halal* hospitality. The available research on accommodation providers, such as the nature of hospitality careers (Mkono, 2010);

provision of service in hospitality (Tsang, 2011); managerial perspectives on customer values (Nasution & Mavondo, 2008); hospitality success for managers (Peacock, 1995); the commercial home (McIntosh, Lynch, & Sweeney, 2011; Hall, 2009; Sweeney & Lynch, 2007); and service quality attributes (Tsang, 1991), usually emphasises management, standards, or financial returns, rather than their understanding of the services they provide from the context of the meaning of hospitality.

Although there is a small though growing body of knowledge on hospitality in an Islamic context, there is only limited research as to how hospitality providers communicate compliance with *halal* requirements to customers using online platforms such as accommodation websites (Razzaq et al., 2016). The literature on accommodation website as a communication tool tends to focus on the impact of online reviews (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). This study reveals that the positive or negative reviews published on the travel website can improve customers' awareness of accommodation businesses and their offerings. An informative website is usually necessary for the marketing purposes and improvements in customer service (Law, Leung, & Buhalis, 2009). Although websites have become an important source for travel information (Belkhamza, 2013; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010) and one of the essential marketing channels for accommodation businesses, many providers are not aware of the importance of offering specific information relating to their service offerings (Belkhamza, 2013). Such studies have also not examined how religious notions and understandings of hospitality are communicated on accommodation provider websites. A study conducted by Razzaq et al. (2016) for example, does investigate the use of websites to inform the availability of *halal* hospitality attributes; yet, the focus was only on the technical dimension of the service. Hence, what is often lacking is an appreciation of how the providers' own understandings of hospitality are influenced by the religious context and how this influences information on service provision through the website, i.e., informing their guests with respect to their stay in terms of the cultural, ethical, physical and social dimensions of hospitality. This thesis, therefore, aims to address this shortfall with specific reference to the accommodation sector in Malaysia.

1.1 The Concept of Hospitality

Hospitality has been defined in various ways. Telfer (1996) defines hospitality as “the giving of food, drink and sometimes accommodation to people who are not regular members of a household” (p. 83). He argues that hospitality has limitations, for example, how much and what is to be offered. This may be influenced by the intention of giving hospitality, whether to please the guests or to meet moral obligations. Yet, to complicate our understandings of hospitality and the relationship between host and guest, a hospitable host may mix such motives, either focusing predominantly on pleasing guests or meeting their moral obligation.

Seen from the perspective of economic exchange, hospitality can be defined as “the method of production by which the needs of the proposed guest are satisfied to the utmost and that means a supply of goods and services in a quantity and quality desired by the guest and at a price that is acceptable to him so that he feels the product is worth the price” (Tideman, 1983, p. 1). Arguably, there are many factors to consider in the subsequent changes in the demand for hospitality services, which include the supply of labour, government policy, income development, price elasticity, and service attitude. The concern is not only on the provision of the basic needs, but also the changes in the industry as a whole with respect to the purpose of economic exchange (Tideman, 1983). Despite the centrality of economic exchange in commercial hospitality relationships, hospitality from the sphere of social or cultural domain is described as “...requirements to offer shelter to strangers, to provide food and drink and protection from danger. These obligations extended to all, irrespective of status or origins” (Lashley, 2008, p. 71). Both hosts and guests are expected to respect each other in giving and accepting the hospitality. In many countries, these obligations originate from cultural or religious restrictions that regulate social and economic relationships. The same obligations remain in contemporary hospitality service (Lashley, 2008).

There is limited literature on commercial hospitality in a religious context be that religion Islam, Christianity, or Judaism. Even though studies on the provision of hospitality to pilgrims (Cohen, 1992; Hill, 2002; O’Gorman, 2007; Timothy & Iverson, 2006) and religious and spiritual tourism (Cochrane, 2009; Haq & Wong, 2010; Huntley & Barnes-

Reid, 2003) have been undertaken previously, the in-depth understanding of hospitality in a religious context beyond obligations to pilgrims, such as on the provision of *halal* hospitality by Muslims is scarcely discussed (Din, 1989; Mokhsin, Ramli, & Alkhulayli, 2016; Weidenfeld, 2005). Hence, perspectives from accommodation providers seem significant to identify the common understanding on how *halal* hospitality should be interpreted and implemented. Meanwhile, hospitality in a commercial context emphasizes that the hospitality provider “provides, and fulfils” (King, 1995, p. 229) the requirements, either voluntarily or enforced by the authority in certain conditions. If King’s statement is considered in relation to *halal* hospitality, it is clear that understanding the *halal* hospitality concept could be a burden to some providers, especially given the absence of a universal *halal* standard (Saad, Ali, & Abdel-Ati, 2014). Furthermore, avoiding *halal* requirements may have consequences, for example, Muslim customers may not be comfortable with accommodation services (Laila, Kholidah, & Mi’raj, 2012) and providers may miss the opportunity to penetrate local and global markets (Samori, Ishak, & Kassan, 2014). The need for *halal* hospitality in Islamic tourism and lodging requires providers to understand the holistic nature of the *halal* hospitality concept, however, how far they understand and feel obligated to perform the requirements of this type of hospitality is yet to be examined.

1.2 The Significance of *Halal* Tourism

One area of growing interest in hospitality and tourism studies is that of Islamic tourism (Zamani-farahani & Henderson, 2010), which may be defined as tourism by Muslims. The terms ‘Islamic tourism’ or ‘Muslim tourism’ are often used interchangeably with that of ‘*halal* tourism’ although, as will be noted below, these terms should be treated slightly differently. Industry reports (e.g. Arabianindustry.com, 2016) states that *halal* tourism was valued at US\$151 billion in 2015, and is expected to reach US\$192 billion by 2020. The Muslim market represents 21.01% (1.666 billion) of the world population (Isfahani, Pourezzat, Abdolmanafi, & Shahnazari, 2013), but, despite the size of the market with its special characteristics, Islamic tourism is a relatively minor area of academic interest (Alserhan & Alserhan, 2012; Carboni, Perelli, & Sistu, 2014; Razalli, 2012; Stephenson, 2013). Nevertheless, given the growing wealth of some Muslim populations and increased mobility, Islamic tourism is attracting attention from governments, institutions and researchers who recognise its potential economic and employment benefits (Ishak & Ab

Manan, 2012). For example, the Islamic Development Bank (ISDB) sees potential in Islamic tourism stimulating economic and social growth of Muslim countries (Okhovat, 2010) and emphasises the socio-economic development and poverty reduction dimensions by encouraging the integration of Islamic values in tourism activities.

The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) reported that international tourist arrivals in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries reached 151.6 million in 2011, representing a 15.2% share in the total international tourist arrivals worldwide and generating US\$135.5 billion of international tourism receipts in the OIC countries with a 13.0 % share in the world's total tourism receipts (OIC Secretariat, 2014). Most of these receipts are concentrated in ten main tourist destinations, Turkey, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Indonesia, Kuwait, Tunisia, Jordan, and Iran. These countries offer different kinds of tourism activities depending on the purpose of the visit such as shopping, sightseeing, family visiting and business meetings. However, it should be noted that these statistics include travel by non-Muslims in these countries as well as Muslim travellers. Indeed, many predominantly Muslim countries and countries for which Islam is the official state religion also have significant non-Muslim minorities. In fact, Middle East countries generated US\$83.2 billion in exports by visitors in 2016 and this is forecast to reach US\$148.3 billion in 2027 in tourism revenue (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2017).

Growth in travel for leisure and business by Muslims both within Islamic countries and beyond has created increased interest in their travel needs, and especially the various products and services they use, including accommodation, food services, transportation, attractions, and other related sectors to the hospitality service (Sahida, Rahman, Awan, & Man, 2011). The need to respond to Islamic values in a commercial tourism and hospitality setting has also generated awareness of the need to ensure that business products and services that cater to, or seek to target the Islamic market, satisfy requirements of being *halal*, and avoiding that which is *haram* (forbidden in Arabic). The commercial satisfaction of *halal* requirements for Muslim travellers is often referred to as *halal* hospitality, while the demand for *halal* hospitality services when customers are on a leisure holiday is referred to as *halal* tourism. Importantly, due to changing patterns of international migration and travel flows, and the associated increase in demand for *halal* hospitality

products, the concept has been introduced to non-Muslim countries such as Canada, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Australia (Kamali, 2011), along with the continuation of such services in Muslim countries, where the notion of services being *halal* has long been taken as a given. There is a growing trend to regulate and certify *halal* products in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries as a result of increased international trade in *halal* products and in response to the recognition of human rights (Friese, 2009; McMillan, O’Gorman & MacLaren, 2010; Zizek, 1997).

Interest in the Muslim market is undoubtedly part of the reason why many accommodation providers offer *halal* products and services (Wilson et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the area is greatly under-researched given the size of the potential market (Stephenson, 2014). Moreover, much of the focus in the existing literature is on *halal* food certification (Fernando, Zailani, & Mohamed, 2008; Razalli, Yusoff, & Mohd Roslan, 2013; Samori et al., 2014), rather than on the larger picture of what constitutes *halal* in a hospitality setting. This means that existing work on *halal* in a hospitality context has focused on the restaurant sector (Gayatri et al., 2011; Marzuki, Hall, & Ballantine, 2014; Prabowo, Abd, & Ab, 2012). While the technical aspects of *halal* are important, and will also be examined in the present study, as with many religions, hospitality in the Islamic context is more than just a technical or commercial service and is understood as being part of a particular set of social relationships that are embedded within a broader spiritual significance. Although, this dimension of *halal* and hospitality is little acknowledged in the literature (Samori, Md Salleh, & Khalid, 2016), arguably it underpins the services provided to guests by providers who embrace the *halal* concept, as well as potentially the broader orientation towards, and relationships with, their customers. For example, hospitality is noted in the Quran (Adz-Dzaariyaat, verses 24-27), where it is about manners in entertaining guests even though they are strangers.

Has the story reached you, of the honoured guests of Abraham (PBUH)? When they came in to him and said: “Peace be upon you!” He [Abraham] replied: “Peace be upon you,” and said: “You are a people unknown to me.” Then he turned to his household secretly and brought out a fattened [roasted] calf. Then placed it before them [noticing that they refrained from eating, he said]: “Will you not eat?”

(Adz-Dzaariyaat, verses 24-27)

These verses indicate the way guests should be provided hospitality. The manners and obligations of entertaining guests are further elaborated in Chapter Three in which the ways in which Muslims are required to understand and implement *halal* hospitality in their daily lives is discussed.

The concept of hospitality has a number of different dimensions. For example, Lashley and Morrison (2000) suggest that it involves social, private, and commercial dimensions. These authors state that hospitality in a social dimension represents the obligation to entertain guests genuinely according to culture and religion. They also indicate that a private dimension of hospitality refers to hospitality offers to guests at home whilst a commercial dimension revolves around the relationship of host and guests in a business context. In this thesis, the researcher can also add a technical dimension of hospitality, which refers to the products and services that are provided by hospitality businesses in order to meet religious and other requirements. The technical dimension in this thesis refers to *halal* certification and other requirements, including the provision of a prayer room, prayer mat, direction to Kiblah, Quran, and prayer timetable (Battour, Ismail, & Battor, 2011). Even though the social and commercial dimensions of hospitality in general are discussed in previous research (Marci, 2013; McMillan, O’Gorman, & MacLaren, 2011), there is limited knowledge of these two dimensions in the context of *halal* hospitality, compared with the technical dimension.

In this thesis, a social perspective on *halal* hospitality is about the hospitable conduct of the relationship between host and guest (generous and genuine), religious aspects (spiritual and ritual) and trust (commitment). From a technical perspective, *halal* hospitality is concerned with the material aspects of hospitality provision that meet *halal* status. This comes not only from the interpreted authority of the Quran and the *Sunnah* that prescribe the way of life for Muslims, but also from government and religious institutions that can regulate products and services which is sometimes referred to as *shariah* tourism or hospitality (*Halal* Malaysia, 2014), meaning that which is lawful in Islam. For instance, although there is a multitude of certifying bodies internationally, many countries have an established *halal* authority to address *halal* issues. Examples of these *halal* authorities include the Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia/Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), the Indonesian Council of Ulama/Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), the

Japan Islamic Trust (JIT), the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ), the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore/Majlis Ugama Islam Singapore (MUIS), and the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA).

From a commercial perspective, hospitality is considered as an attempt to make money from the host-guest relationship, for example, including when the host treats guests according to their religious needs only because of the financial gains that can be made (Kirillova et al., 2014). The use of *halal* certificates (often provided by third-parties or government organisations) for example, is part of how providers provide assurance to customers with respect to the religious appropriateness of the food that is provided (Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011; Tieman, 2013; Tieman & Ghazali, 2014), but a certificate by itself does not necessarily indicate the totality of the religious and/or social basis of hospitality. Currently, Muslim friendly hospitality for example, is regarded as an “alternative” service that caters to the need of Islamic religious oriented customers offered by Muslim and non-Muslim providers in order to fulfil the market demand (Sahida, Rahman, Awang, & Man, 2014). Nevertheless, the offering of Muslim friendly tourism has potentially increased the number of Muslims travelling to some non-Islamic countries that provide Muslim friendly service (Kamali, 2011). In fact, a few accommodation providers in New Zealand for example do provide information on *halal* food availability on their accommodation website (Razzaq et al., 2016) as a way to inform Muslim travellers of the service.

In this research the understanding of the social and technical dimensions of *halal* hospitality will be studied in a commercial context; although it is acknowledged that the ‘purity’ or ‘authenticity’ of hospitality may be complicated by providers having financial motives in the hospitality exchange between host and guest (Telfer, 2000). In order to better understand the wider context of the provision of *halal* hospitality this thesis focuses on several different elements of hospitality as well as different methods to seek to frame them. This study has therefore conducted interviews with accommodation providers in order to obtain insights into the understanding of the social, technical and commercial aspects of the *halal* hospitality concept. A content analysis of the accommodation providers’ website has been conducted to observe the interconnection of these three aspects in publically communicating the offering of *halal* hospitality. The trust element in the

social dimension, for example, is often displayed in the form of *halal* certification and/or *halal* logo in order to convince customers that the food provided is *halal*. The technical elements are provided via facilities that may include the prayer room, prayer mat, and direction of kiblah. With respect to the commercial dimension, the displaying of *halal* certificate, logo and facilities on a business' website can become an attraction to those customers that appreciate the *halal* hospitality service being offered. Nevertheless, the examination of how commercial providers understand concepts and provision of hospitality are rare, and will provide a significant contribution to the understanding of hospitality not only in an Islamic context but with providers overall.

1.3 The Research Context – Malaysia

Malaysia is the location of the study as it is actively promoting *halal* tourism and hospitality as part of its aim to be the world's *halal* hub, including for tourism (Ministry of Finance [MOF], 2011). As a result, awareness of *halal* issues has increased among food producers and service providers who also influence the accommodation sector (Samori et al., 2014). Income from the tourism industry (based on tourist arrivals and receipts to Malaysia) increased from RM60.6 billion (US\$14.46 billion) in 2012 to RM82.1 billion in 2016 (US\$19.58 billion) (Ministry of Tourism and Culture [MOTOUR], 2017). This figure indicates the continuing growth of the industry in terms of tourist arrivals and expenditure during their stay in Malaysia. The high volume of tourists and the Malaysia population of nearly 31 million provide good opportunity for the expansion of *halal* hospitality together with the exports of *halal* products in 2016 amounted to RM39.3 billion (US\$9.38 billion) ("Malaysia on track to become global *halal* hub by 2020", 2017). The Malaysian government has also granted various facilities to tourism agencies to develop Islamic tourism including areas such as eco-tourism, edu-tourism, and homestay (MOTOUR, 2017). The Malaysian Homestay Program also has been promoted by the Malaysian government to introduce the culture, lifestyle, economic activities, recreation, and environmental preservation to international tourists (MOTOUR, 2017). However, there is limited knowledge available with respect to *halal* certified accommodation for guest houses, hostels, and chalets as many *halal* hospitality studies emphasise the hotel and food sectors (Bohari, Hin, & Fuad, 2013; Ratnamaneichat & Rakkarn, 2013; Shariff, Akma, & Lah, 2012).

Malaysia is positioning itself as a leading global *halal* hub with an annual export value of RM35.4 billion (approximately of US\$8.44 billion) for *halal* products (Tourism Malaysia, 2014). The country is actively promoting its *halal* standards worldwide to attract more foreign investment. Its credibility and leadership in the *halal* sector is also reinforced by its role in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) which acts as a global reference point for *halal* standards. The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) stated that the Malaysian Standard *Halal* Food (MS1500:2004) is the most justifiable standard for *halal* food globally (Noordin, Hashim, & Samicho, 2009). Yet, there is no universal *halal* standard for *halal* certification as there are many different approaches to *halal* regulatory issues in both Islamic and non-Islamic countries (Ab. Halim & Mohd Salleh, 2012). Despite the improvements in Malaysian Standard *Halal* Food (MS1500:2009) that strengthen its application of practical guidelines in the form of preparation, processing, handling, packaging, storage and distribution of food and non-food products, it is still limited to Malaysian producers only (Nasaruddin, Fuad, Mel, Jaswir, & Abd, 2012). This standard, however, is used by multinational companies (MNCs) in Malaysia such as Nestle, Ajinomoto, and Unilever and has expanded to other areas including tourism, cosmetics, logistics, and pharmaceuticals (Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation [MATRADE], 2013).

As demand for *halal* tourism and hospitality services has increased as a result of increased Muslim travel flows, many accommodation providers, such as hotels and other types of accommodations including resorts, rental apartments, and homestays, are promoted as providing *halal* hospitality (Sahida, Zulkifli, Rahman, Awang, & Man, 2014). Various promotions of *halal* tourism have been conducted by government tourism agencies, travel booking agents, as well as accommodation providers. For example, in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), Malaysian government indicates upgrading the MOTOURL website into a one-stop portal for potential tourists to gather information on location to visit and book for accommodation. The information provided includes details on *halal* tourism and its related activities such as the *halal* food outlets and accommodation providers (“Holiday in Malaysia”, 2017).

Websites have come to be regarded by the tourism industry as a significant means to spread knowledge and information about *halal*, which require less cost and effort to reach the global market (Chen & Hamid, 2011; Hernández, Jiménez, & Martín, 2009; Liu & Park, 2015). For example, a website can be a one-stop centre to offer *halal* information (HalalDagang.com, 2013). Accommodation providers can utilise the capability of website to inform customers on the hospitality provision provided (Panagopoulos, Kanellopoulos, Karachanidis, & Konstantinidis, 2011). Thus, websites can potentially help accommodation providers specifically promote their *halal* hospitality offerings and provide better customer service (Nasution & Mavondo, 2008), increase potential customers and sales (Carvel & Quan, 2008; Dev & Olsen, 2000; Hashim, 2008), and fully utilize the online booking service (Díaz & Koutra, 2013; Manganari, Dimara, & Theotokis, 2015; Tian & Wang, 2014), thereby improving efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, and convenience (Quinn, 1996). Nevertheless, even though accommodation providers *can* promote *halal* hospitality attributes on their website, Razzaq et al. (2016) noted that many “accommodation operators *fail* to promote and provide [emphasis this author]” (p. 92) information on such attributes even when these were readily available to guests. However, they did not conduct interviews to find out why this was the case.

Despite the many advantages of website functionality, accommodation providers do not necessarily fully utilise the advantage of website in promoting their service and to gain competitiveness (De Marsico & Levialdi, 2004). Yet it is important to evaluate the extent in which the website information meets customers’ needs (Dragulanescu, 2002). Law and Heung (2000) and Heung (2003) indicate that understanding customer’ needs and behaviour is important for the success of web marketing strategies. Razzaq et al. (2016), for example, state that emphasising the *halal* service offering is also important to promote Muslim friendly tourism to Muslim tourists on accommodation providers’ websites. In fact, demonstrating a *halal* certificate and/or *halal* logo on the website (e.g., a similar act to showing the *halal* certificate and/or *halal* logo at the premise) could be considered as the honest act of providers (Lashley & Morrison, 2000) in offering *halal* hospitality service. Displaying the major *halal* attributes on the websites may therefore have significant implications for accommodation providers as to compete in both the tourism and hospitality markets.

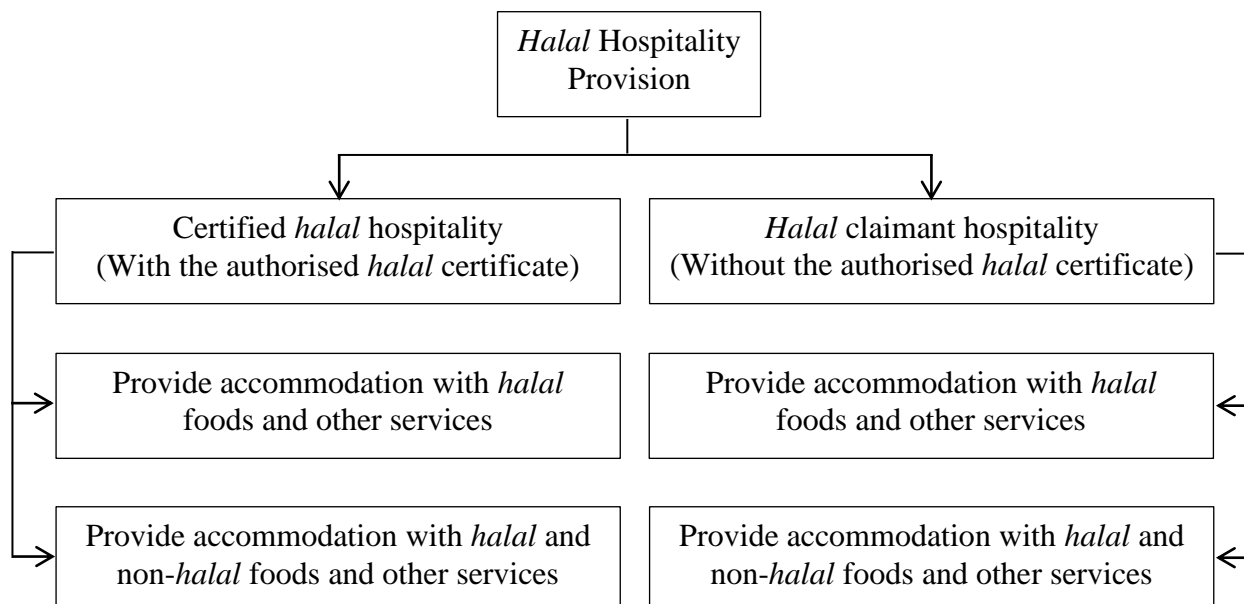
The adoption of *halal* hospitality services also involves both Muslim and non-Muslim accommodation providers (Alserhan, 2010), which suggests that research into the motivations to provide *halal* products and services may potentially lie beyond religious motivations. Providers may also need to display certain values on the website that are of particular importance to them such as in relation to cultural, religious, and ethical values (Alserhan, 2010; Zakaria & Abdul Talib, 2010). Mentioning values, rituals, and symbols (Hofstede, 1991) for example, can provide additional knowledge and awareness of cultural expectations regardless of whether customers are Muslim or not. However, even though the potential significance of Islamic tourism and *halal* hospitality has been recognised in the Malaysian context in a number of areas (Sahida et al., 2014), especially in the restaurant sector, no specific research has been conducted into Malaysian accommodation providers' understanding of *halal* hospitality and how this may be expressed in specific aspects of marketing strategy, such as the website. Given the growth of academic and industry interest in *halal* tourism and hospitality such research may have significant implications for service provision as well as providing a much deeper understanding of the notion of *halal* from a supply perspective than has previously been the case in the international literature.

1.4 Issues in *Halal* Hospitality Understanding

Hospitality involves a social relationship with strangers by providing food and drinks, safety, and accommodation. The noble aim of hospitality is to make strangers feel comfortable, happy, safe, and appreciated (Ariffin, Maghzi, & Aziz, 2011; King, 1995; Ryan, 2016). However, the evolution of hospitality traditions to the modern era means that the way hospitality is treated is different from the past as a result of consumer, economic, technological, lifestyle and cultural change. Through globalisation and growth in international tourism hospitality, providers are often socially involved with many kinds of customers of different culture, status, and lifestyle (Mkono, 2010). Sensitivity to these differences may have influenced providers to consider the nature and different forms of hospitality. As the *halal* dimension is important for Muslim customers of the hospitality industry (Abdullah, Zainoren, Abdurrahman, & Hamali, 2011), accommodation providers have to consider the importance of going *halal* to gain a competitive advantage in the industry. Nevertheless, Abdullah et al. (2012) suggest that commitment in implementing

halal compliance is evidenced by having *halal* certification at the premise provided by the authorised authority which is important for positive perception and reputation of the accommodation providers.

Figure 1.1: Two categories of *halal* hospitality provision in Malaysia



The authentic provision of *halal* hospitality arguably requires the providers' full understanding of the concept beyond a narrow technical appreciation. In Malaysia, there are currently two categories of *halal* hospitality provision: certified *halal* hospitality and *halal* claimant hospitality (Figure 1.1). In this study, certified *halal* hospitality refers to businesses that provide accommodation, *halal* foods and drinks, and other services such as entertainments, and who hold a *halal* certificate from the authorised authorities. A *halal* certificate is granted by JAKIM to any businesses that is following the *halal* standard as set by this authority. The standard serves as practical guidelines for all food related businesses in preparing and handling of *halal* food which include the nutrient enhancers (Halal Malaysia, 2014). The term *halal* claimant refers to providers that claim that they provide *halal* hospitality, e.g. via their advertising or in response to customer queries, but who do not have any certification. However, these self-claim accommodation providers are further divided into two. The first is accommodation providers, without the authorised certificate, that serve *halal* food and drink, entertainment, and accommodation. The second is accommodation providers that serve *halal* and non-*halal* foods and drinks, entertainments, and accommodation that is also known as mixed hospitality in this thesis. It is clearly of

interest to the present work as to why businesses are claiming for *halal* without the authorised *halal* certificate. However, this research aims to understand all providers comprehension of the concept of *halal* hospitality.

There are many reasons given by accommodation providers for not getting an official *halal* certificate noted in the relevant literature. These include limited knowledge of *halal*, the concept, cost, problem with the supply chain, consumer demand for non-*halal* foods, bureaucracy, and that it is non-compulsory (Nur, Rahman, Saleh, Rahman, & Hashim, 2011). However, there is no detailed research available on Malaysian accommodation providers actual understanding of the concept, and the implications that this has for service provision (Syazwan, Talib, Remie, & Johan, 2012). Moreover, in New Zealand research conducted on *halal* restaurants, it was noted that in some cases businesses would not display certification for *halal* foods, even though they may have had it, because they felt that as ‘good Muslims’ their word should be sufficiently trusted (Wan Hassan & Hall, 2003). No research exists that may help us understand whether the same situation may exist in Malaysia.

In Malaysia, both Muslim and non-Muslim providers can be *halal* hospitality claimants. Under *The Trade Description Act 2011* (2011 Act) a *halal* certificate is compulsory for those serving Muslim customers regardless of whether the providers are Muslim or not. This *halal* certificate covers products and services such as food and beverage, cosmetic, chemical, shipping, entertainment, fashion, and banking (DagangHalal.com, 2017). The aims of the Act are to ensure customers have peace of mind and the providers are abiding by the law (Buang, 2012): “The 2011 Act aims to promote good trade practices by prohibiting false trade descriptions and false or misleading statements, conducts and practices in relation to the supply of goods and services, thereby protecting the interest of consumers” (DagangHalal.com, 2014). Problems with certification emerge when there is no proper understanding of the *halal* concept; for example, food safety and the violation of the *halal* process in restaurants (Marzuki et al., 2012a; Said, Hassan, Musa, & Rahman, 2014) that create a wider problem for the credibility of food accommodation providers as well as specific businesses. As stated by Nur et al. (2011, p. 88), “Reports of fraudulent practices by food operators in mass media and the majority of food premises displaying various types of private *Halal* logo nowadays

has confused the consumers and created doubt over the Malaysia's *Halal* logo validity". The credibility of the authorisation authority, the Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM), is also jeopardised (Iberahim, Kamaruddin, & Shabudin, 2012) as consumers may blame the authority for not enforcing the *Halal* Act.

Iberahim et al. (2012) claim that in response to the high demand for *halal* products and services, there is a crucial need for accommodation providers to gain *halal* certification. However, comments from JAKIM suggest that many accommodation providers do not understand the *halal* procedure (Noordin et al., 2014). Lack of knowledge of *halal* procedures may also affect the level of customer trust of hospitality services (Abdullah et al., 2012; Marzuki et al., 2012a). The time and cost involved in solving such trust issues may be "a valuable asset in a relationship" to sustain the market (Rahim & Voon, 2012, p. 176). However, while the focus on formal certification is significant, and will be part of the present research, it does not necessarily provide the larger picture by explaining the perceptions and attitudes of providers with respect to *halal*, and their understanding of what constitutes *halal* hospitality.

1.5 Research Statement

This research aims to examine the understanding of *halal* hospitality concept and website communication of *halal* hospitality among four categories of accommodation providers in Malaysia, which include hotel, budget hotel, rest house (guesthouse, homestay, bed and breakfast, hostel), and chalets. This research is expected to be beneficial for developing an improved commercial and technical understanding of hospitality and *halal* services in Malaysia as well as making a substantial contribution to the understanding of the social dimensions of hospitality, particularly within an Islamic context. In addition, this study seeks to identify the *halal* attributes that are displayed on the website of accommodation providers in order to inform the availability of the *halal* services. Despite *halal* tourism and hospitality being an increasingly popular research topic, very limited studies have addressed the importance of displaying *halal* attributes on online platforms to promote *halal* hospitality provision (Battour, Battor, & Bhatti, 2013). Although several studies mention the importance of displaying the *halal* certificate on hospitality business premises (Ahmad, Abdul Kadir, & Salehuddin, 2013; Aziz & Sulaiman, 2014; Zulfakar, Anuar, &

Talib, 2014), few studies prioritize its importance for being published on the providers' website. Somehow, the use of a website is regarded as one of the most effective ways to communicate information about a business (Díaz & Koutra, 2013; Law & Heung, 2000). As such, the findings of this study will contribute to the improvement of service delivery and communication about *halal* hospitality provision among accommodation providers in Malaysia.

This research therefore seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is Malaysian accommodation providers' understanding of the concept of *halal* hospitality?
2. What are the social, technical, and commercial means by which accommodation providers provide *halal* hospitality?
3. How do accommodation providers communicate the social, technical and commercial dimensions of *halal* hospitality on their websites?

1.6 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. This first chapter has introduced the reader to the topic and outlined its research significance. Chapter Two discusses the notion of hospitality including the history of hospitality in a commercial and a religious context. Chapter Three describes the *halal* concept, the existing literature on the level of *halal* hospitality understanding among accommodation providers in the form of *halal* and *haram* elements, *halal* standard, and *halal* hospitality practices. Chapter Four explains the context of *halal* certified and *halal* claimant hospitality businesses for Malaysian accommodation providers. Chapter Five discusses the research approach, the population, sampling design, the measures, the data collection procedure, and the statistical methods used to analyse the data. Chapter Six presents the findings from the interviews and Chapter Seven on the content analysis of the accommodation providers' website. Chapter Eight provides discussion of the findings, and finally Chapter Nine will offer recommendations and conclusions of the thesis.

1.7 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has provided an introduction to the thesis research topic. The thesis examines Malaysian accommodation providers' understanding of *halal* hospitality. The thesis makes a significant contribution to knowledge as not only is there limited research on *halal* hospitality services but there is also little research on how accommodation providers understand the concept of hospitality, *halal* or otherwise. Given the limited literature on *halal* hospitality and tourism, the insights gained from this research will be useful to other accommodation providers around the world as well as contribute to a deeper understanding of hospitality within an Islamic and Malaysian context.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NOTION OF HOSPITALITY

2 Introduction

This chapter discusses the notion of hospitality, the different ways in which it can be understood, and its development over time. The chapter begins with a discussion of the history of modern notions of hospitality. The introduction of trade routes and the development of transport facilities have eased the burden of travel activities for traders and travellers. The growth of domestic and international travel as well as changes in lifestyle and consumption have contributed to the growth in demand for commercial accommodation and dining and consequent provision of food, services and facilities. Section two explores the literature on hospitality in a commercial context and highlights its importance in shaping the host-guest relationship through modern practices of hospitality. Section three explores hospitality in the religious context and stresses the boundaries between paid (in exchange for service) and free (charitable) hospitality services.

2.1 Hospitality

O'Connor (2005) stated that "once an understanding of hospitality's origins and its place in human nature is achieved can one expect to discover what hospitality means today, and more importantly what it will mean to those entering the industry in the future" (p. 267). Researchers agree that tracing the roots of hospitality provision and the traditions of hospitality can provide a greater understanding of modern hospitality practices (O'Gorman, 2009; O'Mahony & Clark, 2012; Iomaire, 2012). History provides knowledge of how hospitality developed from its early embryonic forms to current practice. This practice outlines characteristics of hospitality in many forms, such as the social relationship in hospitality (Aramberri, 2001), provision of a paid and a free hospitality (Bryce, O'Gorman & Baxter, 2012; Kerr, 2007), the significance of urbanization (Bell, 2007; MacLaren, Young & Lochrie, 2012; O'Mahony & Clark, 2012), and improvements in hospitality accommodation (O'Gorman, 2009).

Knowledge of the origins of hospitality are useful (Connor, 2005) in contributing ideas for improvements and further development of the modern hospitality industry. This is because what happens in history can potentially be emulated and adapted to the current hospitality practices to meet customers' needs while allowing current accommodation providers to better understand the challenges of hospitality provision.

2.1.1 The Development of Hospitality Accommodation

Commercial hospitality has existed for at least 4,000 years (BP). O'Gorman (2009) notes that commercial hospitality is recognised from societies in ancient Mesopotamia (c. 2000 BC), Greece (c. 500 BC), Roman Pompeii (79 AD) and the Middle East (c. 700 AD onwards). Rutes and Penner (1985) indicate that the development of accommodation services in a commercial context begins when more facilities have to be established to cover the needs of travellers. Commercially based public lodging houses, for example, were found along trade routes in Egypt, Babylonia and throughout the Persian Empire during the ancient Middle East (Burgess, 1982). Hospitality accommodation, such as taverns, inns, and other commercial accommodation were built to provide shelter, food and entertainment for traders and travellers. O'Gorman (2009) indicates noted the existence of hospitality in a commercial context in the archaeological remains of Roman Pompeii. The physical structures and written documents of the Roman Empire, for example, depict the existence of different type of accommodation provided for hospitality service during the period (Table 2.1). Based on Table 2.1, we can note, that similar to the present day, hotels providing paid services for rooms and meals. Bars and restaurants provided more limited services such as serving simple meals and offering only a limited number of rooms. Brothels meanwhile provide a variety of personalized services. The same types of accommodation businesses (e.g., hotel, budget hotel, B&B, and spa house) all still exist today.

Table 2.1: Hospitality in commercial context of ancient Roman Empire

Latin name	Description and facilities	Modern equivalent
<i>Hospitium</i>	Larger establishment that offered rooms for rent, and often food and drink to overnight guests; often specifically built for business purposes	Hotel
<i>Stabula</i>	Buildings with open courtyard surrounded by a kitchen, a latrine, and bedrooms with stables at the rear. Often found just outside the city, close to the city gates; offered food, drink and accommodation	Coaching inn
<i>Taberna</i> <i>Thermopolia</i> <i>Ganeae</i>	Sold variety of simple foods and drink. They usually contained a simple L-shaped marble counter, about six to eight feet long	Bar
<i>Popina</i> <i>Caupona</i>	Served food and drink, offered sit-down meals; this term was often used to describe public eating-houses and sometimes included a few rooms	Restaurant
<i>Lumpanar</i>	Provided a full range of services of a personal nature	Brothel

Source: O’Gorman (2009, p. 782)

2.1.2 The Provision of Paid and Free Hospitality Service

The provision of hospitality does involve monetary and humanity aspect. Burgess (1982) indicates that hospitality is a voluntary practice in most societies worldwide, which is offered to others through food and service. He also notes that food is a symbol of friendship, generosity and life-giving qualities, which can be given freely without any expectation of economic exchange. In Islam for example, travellers were given free accommodation and food, regardless of whether they were enemies or guests within a three-day period of a visit, which is a part of Islamic duties (Bryce et al., 2012). Similarly, the ancient Indian kings provided pilgrim rest houses (chattrams) with free food and accommodation for travellers, pilgrims and the poor. This free hospitality is part of the duty of the pious in the Hindu religion and were common practices of the ancient Indian kings, such as the Maratha Kings of Tanjavur (Tanjore) in South India, during the reign of Raja Serfoji II (r. 1798-1832) (Linderman, 2012).

Paid and free hospitality also existed in the form of caravanserais during the early period of the Middle East (c. 700 AD onwards). Caravanserais served as a stop centre for the purpose of religious (pilgrimage), economic (trade) as well as political (diplomatic) activities (Abdullah, 2012). During the era of caravanserais, the Caliph was responsible for

accumulating sources of finance to manage the caravanserais for the use of travellers. Finance mainly came from charities and also from the rents of shop spaces in the bazaars at the caravanserais (Bryce et al., 2012). Similarly, the funds to manage the chattrams came from rents of small shops and the lands leased for cultivation purposes located around the chattrams (Linderman, 2012). Travellers thus could enjoy the free hospitality service, and the provider was not burdened with the monetary commitment to manage the hospitality. However, as the number of travellers kept on increasing, communities felt the burden of providing free hospitality (Kerr, 2007; Lashley, 2008). Bell (2007) also argued that guests have the tendency to abuse the free hospitality. Hence, as modern hospitality has developed and as society has become more secular so the need to treat guests like in ancient times has faded (Wijesinghe, 2007).

Hospitality is prone to reciprocity (Heumen, 2005; Lashley, 2008). Suntikul (2012) argues that there is no definite distinction in offering hospitality freely, or as an act of generosity in the context of commercial. She further indicates that domestic hospitality, for example, is always associated with host-guest relationship with some degrees of social obligations, yet in a commercial hospitality, it more as an exchange for profit. Nevertheless, hospitality can be both domestic and commercial in some circumstances, such as commercial private homes, so that the differences are difficult to clarify (Walton, 2000; O’Gorman, 2009). In addition, although generosity was a key element in domestic and older forms of hospitality (Heal, 1990), it is not favoured in current hospitality practices as monetary exchange and profit maximisation is more important to business entities such as hotels, motels, restaurants and wine bars. In fact, monetary exchange is important for the modern hospitality industry as a means to provide better material hospitality (i.e. goods and services), and improve capital accumulation, as well as business survival (Symons, 2013).

2.1.3 Entrepreneurship Opportunities and Changes in Hospitality Consumption

The development of tourism from pilgrimage travel to mass tourism involves changes in leisure and business ventures mediated via changes in technology as well as the social and technological structures within which hospitality occurs (Stausberg, 2011). Travel needs are facilitated through the improvement of transport and communication technology (Eum,

2009; Henderson, 2011), which has led to massive expansion in the numbers of people travelling in the post World War II era (Hashim, 2008; Law et al., 2009). Improvements in the transportation system and the use of modern technology thus place new demands on business development at destinations (ASEAN Tourism Investment Guide, 2008), as well as on local communities affected by the growth in visitation. In the case of the later, globalisation and urbanisation also mean that hospitality businesses and the communities within which they operate are now exposed to a wider range of cultures, languages and people of different ethnicities and beliefs than ever before (Abdullah et al., 2011). Apart from social pressures, such changes affect the capacity to provide adequate and appropriate food services, although commercial necessities mean that it is important for hospitality providers to identify and fulfil customers' preferences (Abdullah et al., 2011). Nevertheless, the combination of accommodation and food continues to provide space for social ties to flourish. For example, the introduction of bed and breakfast accommodation as well as apartment hospitality services imitates many of the services offered by domestic hospitality providers that prioritize the relationship between host-guest instead of profit maximising (Symons, 2013).

2.1.4 The Host-Guest Relationship in Hospitality

Burgess (1982) emphasizes the importance of elements of social relationships in hospitality, particularly warm, friendly, welcoming, and generous behaviour of hosts to guests. Suntikul (2012) indicates that the social relationship between host and guest is an important part of hospitality. She argues that in the pre-modern era, providers strongly emphasized their responsibilities as a host, in comparison to contemporary society that considers hospitality as an economic and commercial accomplishment. Such perspectives are found elsewhere in the hospitality literature. For example, Siddique (2015) linked the scriptures of the three Abrahamic religions, Christians, Jews and Islam to the host-guest relationship. She stresses the obligation of hosts to treat the guests well as a reflection of the worship of God based on the story of Prophet Abraham welcoming guests in *Genesis* 18: 1-10, and serving food (calf) in *Quran* 51: 24-30 and *Hebrews* 13: 2. In fact, generosity and life-giving qualities in hospitality are seen as potentially create the possibility of long-term relationships with others (Burgess, 1982).

Kirillova et al. (2014) also indicates that religion is an important factor in host-guest relationships. They state that religious differences between host and guest influence interactions and can be a threat to positive hospitality service. Wijesinghe (2007), for example, states that during the Romans times, strangers would be avoided or mistreated for their unknown intention or identity. They were also believed to have a magical power that can benefit or give harm to the host. The host showed kindness so as to ensure the friendly use of the magical power of strangers as well as to satisfy the possibility that the stranger was God in disguise (and therefore a possible test of generosity to strangers).

According to Aramberri (2001) host-guest relationships in the pre-modern era of hospitality are based on three features, protection, reciprocity, and duties for both sides (host and guest). The guest is protected during the stay at the host's property, for example from theft or danger that makes him feels safe and secure while in the host's premise. The guest then is expected to return the hospitality to the host when their roles are swapped in the future. The host is responsible to provide the hospitality and the guest is responsible to abide by the rules and respect the host's property. However, Aramberri (2001) also argued that the old tradition of host-guest relationships does not work in the modern hospitality as it is not a long-term relationship that requires reciprocity if the roles are swapped in the future. In addition, the long-term relationship exists more based on the provider-customer relationship (i.e., a loyal customer relationship) that involves a monetary transaction.

Modern hospitality involves monetary transactions in order to obtain services such as accommodation, food, and entertainment (Lugosi, 2008). These services involve commodities (i.e. accumulation of capital, human labour, and goods or raw materials) whereby the provider has to have or purchase before transforming them into services (i.e. involve monetary transaction). The nature of the modern hospitality service cannot therefore be treated the same way as the ancient hospitality (i.e. perceived as more generous and authentic), as the hosts are just the providers of services, and the guests are the customers in the current hospitality phenomenon. Arguably, providers may not be able to be genuine in the commercial context (Lashley & Morrison, 2005) as the pressures exist between hospitableness (i.e., generosity) and its costs to the business (Hemmington, 2007). Rooms, for example, are charged according to type of accommodation, size, decoration, design, and space (Weidenfeld, 2006). A standard room generally offers basic amenities

such as a bed, cupboard, fan and toilet. Deluxe room provides better amenities such as television and air condition. Superior thus usually provides cable TV channel and mini fridge in the room. The accommodation will be rated higher when more facilities, amenities and services are provided (Baker, Huyton, & Bradley, 2000). A high star hotel adjusts the price for each type of room as more services are given as per customers' request. As shown on TripAdvisor website (TripAdvisor.com.my, 2018), the price for a hotel room can reach RM500 - RM3000 (approximately US\$125 – US\$750) or more per night for 4 and 5 star hotels as in Malaysia. The 3-star hotel offers less services or facilities with room rates set within RM100 - RM250 (approximately US\$25 – US\$62). While for a chalet, homestay or/and B&B, the facilities offered are very limited that the price set can be as low as RM30 (approximately US\$8) per room. Hence, the physical manifestations of hospitality given are different depending on the amount paid for the services (Aramberri, 2001).

Morrison (2001) argues that the commercial context of hospitality has reduced the importance of social relationship and ignores the obligation of care. Suntikul (2012) goes further and argues that the commercial context of hospitality provide less benefits to societies as profits become the major priorities in business. Nevertheless, O'Gorman (2009) notes that commercial hospitality does portray some aspects of humanity and spiritual. He argues that these two aspects still exist yet in different forms of delivery based on different periods of history and/or culture. He argues that protection and security are still offered to guests in contemporary hospitality practices such as by strictly following security protocols, providing CCTV, and strong linkages with police, fire, and other security personnel in order to increase security (Cowell, McDavid, and Saunders, 2012). In such cases the generosity in safeguarding the customers' security is shown through the effort given by the providers.

All these interpretations of hospitality have contributed to knowledge as to how hospitality has been undertaken in the past and how it influences the implementation of modern hospitality in commercial environments. The next section elaborates on the concept of hospitality in a commercial context.

2.2 Hospitality in a Commercial Context

Hospitality in the commercial context was described by King (1995, p. 229) as

“a specific kind of relationship between individuals – a host and a guest. In this relationship, the host understands what would give pleasure to the guest and enhance his or her comfort and well-being, and delivers it generously and flawlessly in face to face interactions, with deference, tactfulness and the process of social ritual. The objective is to enhance guest satisfaction and develop repeat business”.

Based on this description, the discussion of hospitality in a commercial context in the current study is focusing on the host-guest relationship. Studies on the host-guest relationship and the provision of hospitality in a commercial context have been discussed in relation to many topics including guest satisfaction in the hotel industry (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012), hospitality in restaurants and accommodation (Teng, 2011), and the nature of the hospitality industry (Pizam & Shani, 2009). The providers' capability to understand hospitality in a commercial context represents the effort to improve the industry performance, customer satisfaction, and growth (Hemmington, 2007). Furthermore, it is the providers' responsibility to provide hospitality and well-being to guests at all levels of service (Barrington & Olsen, 1987), a perspective that potentially raises tensions between the physical and social attributes of hospitality.

2.2.1 Host-Guest Relationship and Customer Satisfaction

Understanding the host-guest relationship in delivering hospitality is very important. In many cases, the provider is more accountable in maintaining the host-guest relationship, such as in securing customer loyalty (Lee, Barker, & Kandampully, 2003) and creating memorable experiences for them (Wall, 2009). It is important for a provider to understand customers' expectations in terms of personalization, warm-welcome, and comfort. Achieving these expectations can bring customers satisfaction (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012). Understanding the host-guest relationship can also be helpful in explaining hospitality in a commercial context. Pizam and Shani (2009) argue that there are four ways to uphold the

host-guest relationship in the hospitality industry: professionalism, hospitableness, hospitality as an experience, and hospitality as a philosophy.

Professionalism is important in the hospitality industry, especially in the accommodation sector. This sector requires highly skilled employees that become the backbone of professional services. However, there is no specific definition of professionalism in hospitality services based on the context of cultural and religious perspectives. Nevertheless, it is very important that professionalism be interpreted in accordance with the cultural rules and beliefs of the local community, although there will be a limit on what can be provided as it involves providers and customers of different cultural and religious values. This may be particularly the case if it involves hospitality business that operating worldwide and which conform to international standards and requirements rather than local mores. Large international hotels, for example, has limitations in their capacity to follow local culture and values. However, the adoption of appropriate greeting methods, attire, and decorations could be provided as per local expectation. In Malaysia, for example, many employees will put their hands on their chest (i.e., right hand on left side on their chest) to replace the welcoming handshake in hospitality service. This way of greeting has also become a symbol of appreciation for using their services and it respects Muslim values in hospitality businesses.

Professionalism is defined in different aspects such as personal orientation to people, the employee competency, and the existence of a code of ethics (Sheldon, 1989). As a 'people-oriented occupation', for example, hospitality employees are expected to interact with customers and this is a very important aspect of the hospitality industry. The employees are expected to be friendly, helpful, and polite during the interaction as well as capable of understanding and fulfilling the needs of customers. Professionalism can also help the effectiveness and the efficiency of service delivery (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012). In fact, interpersonal interaction, such as having an eye contact, pleasant voice tone and volume, and smiling can enhance the host-guest (provider-customer) relationship (Teng, 2011), including strengthening the economic relationship, as customers are not only guests, but also buyers of the services offered. Hospitality providers are clearly not only hosts but also sellers of hospitality services (Slattery, 2002). Professionalism is therefore important

in securing customer loyalty (Lee et al., 2003) through repeat purchasing and concurrently contributing to profit making (Austen, Herbst, & Bertels, 2010).

Hospitableness refers to understanding the social and cultural meanings of hospitality in a commercial context (Pizam & Shani, 2009). Lugosi (2008) indicates that hospitableness is more meaningful as it involves providers' willingness to share space and in turn provide meaningful social experiences to customers. He further indicates that hospitableness provides emotional experience for those who give and experience it. In fact, hospitableness must come 'straight from the heart' (authentic) without expecting anything in return (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012, p. 196). A smiling face, for example, is an image of hospitality at cultural level whilst welcoming customers, like opening doors at the main entrance and providing a welcome drink during arrival is partly the social ritual. However, the meaning of hospitableness varies across culture as it represents a set of social values and practices followed by particular societies (Mahadi & Sino, 2008), what is considered hospitable is therefore socially constructed within the cultural values of the societies (Patterson & Smith, 2001).

Arguably, social values generally combine the beliefs and traditions of a society including religious and spiritual aspects (Mahadi & Sino, 2008). Mahadi and Sino (2008) argue that these social values are subject to the acceptance or rejection by other societies or groups. For example, the denial of hijab for Muslim staff at several hotels in Malaysia is an important issue that relates to the rejection of an expression of Muslim cultural values by the management of some 3 to 5 star international chain hotels ("Larangan Pakai Tudung Jadi Polimik Hotel", 2017). This news article also reported the objection of many Muslims to the reason given by the management that insisted their action is due to the standard operation procedure (SOP) of international hotels. However, the Minister from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz advised the management of international hotels in Malaysia to respect local values even though the SOP is used globally ("Larangan Bertudung", 2017). Hence, the management of the hotels need to understand and consider both the observable and non-observable factors in service provision given the differences that exist between cultures.

Hospitableness in hospitality service is closely related to the behaviour of employees. Thus, it is significant for providers to find ways to encourage employees to display behaviour that has a positive impact on customers' satisfaction with hospitality service (Soderlund & Rosengren, 2010). Customer experience is "the multidimensional takeaway impression or outcome, based on the consumer's willingness and capacity to be affected and influenced by physical and/or human interaction items, formed by people's encounters with products, services, and businesses influencing consumption values (emotive and cognitive), satisfaction, and repeat patronage" (Walls, 2009, p. 171). Teng (2011), for example, found that customers enjoy a free and cosy atmosphere that make them feel a sense of belonging, and feel as if they are at home. He also found that customers appreciate an authentic environment (i.e. receive generous and genuine treatment) and humour in host-guest relationships (i.e. during interaction) in enriching their hospitality experience (Lashley, 2008; Ball & Johnson, 2000). Although, other aspects to consider include the room condition (Ahmad, Ariffin, & Ahmad, 2008), a safe and secure physical environment (Ariffin, Nameghi, & Zakaria, 2013), and trust in the host-guest relationship (Lovell, 2009).

Hospitality philosophy is therefore very important in the hospitality industry. The philosophy must be genuine or authentic and emphasizes on the kindness as well as generous behaviour to ensure customers' happiness. The philosophy may be 'global', e.g. as in international hotel chains, but implementation can be country specific. Hence, again, the point that a cultural lens is required to understand the hospitality philosophy. A genuine philosophy, consistent with a great implementation by providers can be reflected in customer satisfaction (Pizam & Shani, 2009). However, high commitment to hospitality philosophy is also important to achieve required standards. This includes the mission, vision, and goals that are aligned with policies, practices, and procedures of the hospitality services. Achieving customers' satisfaction, for example, signifies the success of the hospitality philosophy (Severt, Aiello, Elswick, & Cyr, 2007).

2.3 Hospitality in a Religious Context

Studies on hospitality in a religious context are still limited (Kirillova et al., 2014; Weidenfeld, 2005). To the researcher's knowledge, to date, there has been no specific interpretation of hospitality in a religious context from the perspective of the providers. In this study, this means specifically how are commercial forms of hospitality interpreted in relation to Islam. However, as in Kirillova et al. (2014, p. 30) study on the interpretation of hospitality across religion, they found that the Muslim and Christian participants interpret hospitality as helping those in need among their own community and then it is extended to the strangers. These interpretations emphasize the priority of hospitality towards the members of a community instead of to total strangers as in commercial relations. Kirillova et al. (2014) also claimed that the teaching of each religion possibly influences the interpretations, for example, a Christian is expected to love his neighbours as he loves himself, a Muslim should be generously hospitable to the neighbours, and a Buddhist should be hospitable and charitable to friends, relatives, and neighbours. However, these representations are from those whom are considered religious in the context of their respective religion; yet do not have any work experience in a commercial context of hospitality. Chamber (2009) argued that hospitality in the modern era emphasizes monetary transactions, yet, the practice of traditional hospitality (i.e. social and religiously obligated) is still important as some cultures give a high value to the social and religious obligation in hospitality service. From that perspective, a combination of both commercial and religious contexts in hospitality service may improve the performance of modern hospitality.

Hospitality in a religious context involve rituals or collective acts of worship to religious commitment that contributes to the development of social relationship through the adoption of common religious values and experience (Hassan, 2007). Meeting religious requirements or regulations can be a challenge to a business. A study by Cheung and Yeochi King (2004) found that devoted Confucian business providers considered that adhering to Confucian moral values slowed their business growth and reduced profit making, as the values prioritize righteousness over profitability in business dealing. Similarly, *halal* providers in Muslim and non-Muslim countries face difficulties in ensuring that their tourism packages are strictly *halal* due to their inability to adhere to the *halal* concept (El-Gohary, 2016). Difficulties to commit to religious rituals caused many cases of kosher

fraud in the United States of America and influenced some states to implement disclosure laws to force vendors to show evidence that their kosher products were genuine (Tieman & Hassan, 2015). Hence, offering hospitality within the context of religious requirements can be a challenge for providers, especially those who cater to global markets (Hassan, 2007) while, as the next section discusses, the role of religiosity is also important in understanding hospitality in the context of the religious requirements of guests.

2.3.1 Religiosity in Hospitality

Weidenfeld (2005) claimed that hospitality in a religious context presents a new segment of customers in the hospitality industry. Religious customers are regarded as customers with requirements that are proscribed by their religious beliefs and that are involved with tourism activities other than pilgrimage (Hung, 2015). The needs of religious customers may include specific religious requirements that affect staffing, facilities, servicescape, and information services (Table 2.2). Studies on the needs of religious customers have grown given the needs of providers in understanding religious customers' expectations in multi-religion destinations (Weidenfeld & Ron, 2008). Whilst religious needs are necessary for customers to practice their daily religious routine, fulfilling such needs can improve their satisfaction with the accommodation experience.

Table 2.2: Comparison of research findings and religious needs in the literature

Religion	Religious need	Reference
Islam	Copy of the Koran in every room hotel room Accommodation close to mosque	Mansfeld et al. (1995)
Judaism	Synagogue at the hotel Well-organised religious activities, by a hotel e.g. lectures and excursions	Hoffman (1994)
Christianity	Religious guided activities at the holy site Training the rural operators to be familiar with the market segment's needs	Fleischer and Nitzav (1995)

Source: Adapted from Weidenfeld (2006, p. 147)

Customers' religion and religiosity influences consumption habits (Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011; Jamal, 2003), including customers' concerns as to food choices in hospitality service. Some foods are permitted and some are prohibited for religious

customers. For example, Jews will look for kosher, Muslims for *halal*, and Hindus for vegetarian (Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2012; Sack, 2001). These restrictions require providers to pay attention to the provision of foods in hospitality services including not only the dishes that are served, but also the use of ingredients, the food supply chain, and food preparation procedures (Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011). Major religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Shinto have strict restrictions on food requirements (Table 2.3).

Every religion has norms and rules that shared among the religious communities and those who do not understand may conflicting with religious norms and rules (Hung, 2015). Fasting is often an important matter for religious customers (Table 2.3). Customers will consider looking at places that could cater their needs, such as during the Ramadan fasting month when Muslim customers will need providers that serve meals for breaking fast in the evening and breaking-dawn (*sahur*). Buddhists and Hindus will look to accommodation that provides vegetarian foods; and Jews will consider providers that could provide food that strictly prepared according to kosher requirements. Although some followers may not comply due to unavailability of appropriate food or differences in local custom (Dugan, 1994), providers should consider these kinds of religious needs in order to honour their customers wishes as well as add value to their hospitality service.

Examples of religion based food restrictions (Table 2.3) include Brahmans who do not eat with subordinate castes. Some Muslim customers also appreciate eating-places that are separately reserved for women and men as well as for family members only (Shechter, 2011; Sobh, Belk, & Wilson, 2013). Issues related to the segregation between sexes remain substantially under-researched, including religious inspired rules involving spas, swimming pools and recreational treatments (Oktadiana, Pearce, & Chon, 2016). These are significant issues as they may pose very different management issues from those set by secular markets, and providers' awareness of these issues may also be lacking leading to potential issues in managing accommodation and hospitality services for religious customers.

Table 2.3: Food restrictions according to some religions

Major Religion	Restrictions	Remarks
Buddhism	<p>Prohibition of meat, meat products or their derivatives in any food intake</p> <p>Prohibition of use on onions, leeks, garlics, scallions, and chives</p> <p>Alcohol use is strongly discouraged</p>	<p>Soybeans and product derived from them are major sources of protein for Buddhists.</p> <p>Follow a lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet (meaning milk, milk products, and eggs are permitted).</p> <p>Fasting is up to individuals.</p>
Christianity	<p>The Methodist Church recommends limiting the use of alcohol, and Christian Scientists and members of the United Church of Christ are strongly discouraged from using it.</p> <p>Jehovah's Witnesses do not condone excessive drinking of alcohol. Meat must have the blood completely drained from the carcass before it may be consumed. Kosher meats are acceptable. There is no ritual fasting.</p> <p>Seventh-day Adventists strongly discourage alcohol consumption and strongly encourages a lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet. Meat must be kosher. Caffeine, aged cheeses, and 'hot' spices (peppers) are also discouraged. There is no ritual fasting.</p> <p>Eastern Orthodox Church members prohibit red meat intake on Wednesdays or Fridays during the liturgical year, and the very observant will also refrain from eating fish, poultry, and dairy products on these days. During Lent (note that this Christian church follows the Jewish calendar), red meat, poultry, dairy, and fish are not allowed at any time. From Good Friday until Easter Sunday only small meals and water are allowed.</p> <p>Roman Catholics prohibit red meat or poultry products on their derivatives on Fridays during Lent; however, fish, eggs, and dairy products are allowed. On the two mandatory fast days, Ash Wednesday and</p>	<p>African Methodist Episcopalians, Episcopalians (Anglicans), Disciples of Christ, Lutherans, and Presbyterians have no food prohibitions, no fasting period, and no restrictions on alcohol. Alcohol is permitted to all Baptists.</p>

	<p>Good Friday, only small snacks are allowed, no meat is allowed, but drinks are permitted throughout the day.</p> <p>Mormons do not allow alcohol; so called 'hot' drinks such as coffee and tea; cold caffeinated drinks such as colas; and any chocolate and other food products that contain caffeine. The first Sunday of each month is a voluntary fast day.</p>	
Hinduism	<p>Meat, fish, eggs, garlic, onions, mushrooms, and root vegetables that resemble a head are not allowed. Alcohol use is strongly discouraged.</p>	<p>The Hindu religion recognizes five castes of people. People are born into their caste; they cannot change castes over their lifetime. They only eat food prepared by members of the same castes. Mixed-caste dining is not allowed. A person of the highest caste (a Brahmin) cannot dine with a person of the opposite sex or with a non-Hindu. Before eating, Hindus ritually clean themselves by taking a bath; hands, feet, and mouth and washed before and after eating. Fasting is associated with special events, such as marriages.</p>
Islam	<p>Prohibition of pork and pork-derived foods, including lard and bacon, and flesh and other products from carnivorous animals or from those that eat carrion.</p> <p>Alcohol in all forms is forbidden. No contamination of <i>halal</i> (permitted) and <i>haram</i> (prohibited) utensils for kitchen use.</p>	<p>During Ramadan, which lasts about a month, Muslims fast from before sunrise until after sunset. During the fast all drinking water and smoking are forbidden.</p>
Judaism	<p>The dietary rules consist of two parts: forbidden foods and the process of cooking foods.</p> <p>Kosher foods (allowed to eat) must follow both parts.</p>	<p>The mashgiach monitor the whole process, including the kosher ingredients that are used; cleaning products used on machines; meat and dairy products are not mixed; and the cleanliness of the kitchen</p>

	<p>Meat products must be from animals that have cloven hoofs and chew their cud. For example, beef can be kosher (if butchered properly), while pork can never be kosher.</p> <p>By-products (lard or animal gelatin, for example) from non- kosher animals are forbidden. Only the four quarter cuts from kosher animals are permitted.</p> <p>Animals must be slaughtered in a humane manner and according to a set process with specific equipment by a butcher (approved by Jewish community). The blood is drained, and the cuts are salted to remove all traces of blood.</p> <p>Only fish with fins and scales are permitted, shellfish is forbidden as well as by-products of non-kosher fish.</p> <p>Only domesticated birds are permitted and must come from a certified kosher farm.</p> <p>Meat and dairy products cannot be consumed or served together, for example, beef stroganoff, a turkey and swiss cheese sandwich, or a cheeseburger.</p> <p>Kosher kitchens have two sets of cooking utensils to avoid contamination of meat and dairy items.</p>	<p>operations. Once it meets all requirements, a kosher symbol can be used on the products.</p> <p>Jewish has six fasting days: Yom Kippur, Tisha, Fast of Esther, Tzom Gedaliah, the Tenth of Teves, and the Seventeenth of Tammuz.</p>
Shinto	No specific food taboos, however, eating meat is considered to render a person unclean for several days and thus ineligible to enter the shrine.	None

Source: Adapted from Dugan (1994, pp. 80-85)

Knowing the rules and regulations of food requirements is important as it can affect customers' trust and acceptance of hospitality as consumption of prohibited ingredients in any food will affect their spiritual beliefs and identity (Tama & Voon, 2014). It is therefore extremely important for providers to gain more knowledge on the differences in religious needs in order to meet the requirements of different tourism segments (Weidenfeld & Ron, 2008).

2.3.2 Providers' Perspectives on Hospitality Behaviour in Religious Context

This sub-section discusses hospitality behaviour in the religious contexts of commercial hospitality. According to Kirillova et al. (2014), the providers' understanding of hospitality behaviour is still associated with religious belief systems, yet elements of professionalism also exist (see Table 2.4). Through the analysis of relevant holy texts and in-depth interviews with 30 respondents, including Buddhists, Christians and Muslims, Kirillova et al. (2014) indicates that irrespective of religious beliefs, hosts have prioritized their own communities first, then the outsiders, following the teaching of each religion (i.e., Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam). This study does point out there are differences in the interpretation of hospitality and hospitable behaviour in line with religious values. Interestingly, the role of religious hospitality in a commercial context was well understood as part of the needs of business ventures, for example, Buddhists saw that friendly behaviour in a commercial hospitality can help to retain the business; and the Christian and the Muslim respondents in Kirillova et al's (2014) study, viewed their behaviour as consistent with financial and business expectations. Moreover, the providers also pointed out that as their relationship with customers of different religions involved financial transactions, the guests were entitled to *claim* hospitality instead of only *accepting* it. This business venture relationship is also consistent with Aramberri's (2001) criticism on the transformation of the host-guest paradigm in contemporary hospitality, in which it is framed more towards a relationship between a provider and a customer in a business situation.

Table 2.4: Hospitality behaviour in a commercial context

Buddhists	Christians	Muslims
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • although it implies monetary exchange, it should be no different than private hospitality • donating money and give blessings to others • considering dietary restrictions, particularly offering vegetarian food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being pleasant, welcoming • genuinely greeting people • teaching staff to be hospitable • being and acting with sincerity • treating everyone equally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • less genuine than other domains • as a business, donating to local community • treating everyone equally • it is standardized, not personal • hard to balance: give back to the community yet still make a living • interaction is important • being mindful of dietary needs • not expecting warmth, but good service • providing place for prayer to allow guests to fulfil their religious duties

Source: Adapted from Kirillova et al. (2014, p. 30)

The study of hospitality in a religious context has opened up discussions about *halal* hospitality. The discussion on *halal* hospitality or Islamic hospitality is significant to the understanding of hospitality in a religious context. As yet, there are still many areas to be explored to increase the understanding of *halal* hospitality and other areas associated with it (Mohd Yusof & Muhammad, 2010). Although *halal* has become another segment in hospitality offering, and is gaining popularity in Muslim and non-Muslim countries alike, there are issues that require further explanation such as the Islamic principles in Islamic hospitality (Laila, Kholidah, & Abdurrahman, 2012), *halal* certification (Marzuki, Hall, & Ballantine, 2012b), *halal* food standards (Razalli, Yusoff, Wahidar, & Roslan, 2013), and *halal* accommodation (Samori & Sabtu, 2012). Confusion and lack of understanding of the concept and its requirements will affect the entire operation of *halal* hospitality (Mohd Yusof & Muhammad, 2010). In addition, *halal* hospitality can provide business opportunities to hospitality providers by adding another service option to their offerings (Lukanova, 2010).

2.4 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter described the historical development of the hospitality concept to the current period. This chapter also explained the relationship between the provider and the customer in the context of commercial services. The commitment of the provider is significant to ensuring customer satisfaction and the existence of long-term relationships between host and guest. Further discussion stressed the role of hospitality in a religious context, which has been gaining popularity among customers, especially religious customers. The discussion focused on the religious needs of customers and the capability of the provider to fulfil the needs such as the facilities, amenities, and foods. The formal introduction of *halal* hospitality in Muslim and non-Muslim countries has created the opportunity to further explore the different segments of hospitality, especially to cater to the religious needs of customers. The hospitality provider on the other hand can provide better customer experiences and satisfaction.

CHAPTER THREE

UNDERSTANDING HALAL HOSPITALITY

3 Introduction

The relationship between *halal* and *Shariah* law in general is first discussed, followed by an account of how the *halal* rules and regulations affect the commercial aspect of hospitality requirements. Differences in perspectives among sects as well as issues on *halal* hospitality practices in the context of multicultural country like Malaysia are also examined. A final section then highlights the understanding of the concept and the action taken to overcome some of the issues discussed.

3.1 *Halal* and *Shariah* Law

Al-Qaradawi (1992) indicates that *halal* and *haram* are part of the *Shariah* law (also known as *Shariah* principles or Islamic law). The main goal of *Shariah* law is to protect mankind from harms in all aspects of life, such as from nuisance traditions, superstitions, and evils. It is also aims to simplify and bring benefits to mankind in their daily activities (e.g., business, entertainment, and travel). Al-Qaradawi states that *halal* (the lawful) refers to anything that is permitted and *haram* (unlawful) is anything that is prohibited as per *Shariah* law. Ahmat, Ridzuan, and Zahari (2012) added that *Shariah* law means ‘the path’ that guided Muslim daily lifestyle. The Quran, Sunnah, Ijma and Qias are central to *Shariah* law.

Din (1982) stated that the concept of *halal* in the production, transaction and trade of any products and services must be based on the Quran (which is a revelation from God), Sunnah (the traditions and customs of the Prophet Muhammad), Ijma (consensus as to the Prophet’s teachings), Qiyas (that which is assigned to the Prophet’s teachings as a result of deduction or analogy) and Fatwa (advice from Islamic authorities). *Shariah* law provides guidance in the aspects of belief (*Aqidah*), law (*fiqh*) and behaviour (*akhlak*) of Muslims, which involve *halal* and *haram* of certain acts and behaviours (Kamali, 2015). *Aqidah* in Islam is about faith, where Muslims belief that there is no God except Allah. Anything

done by a Muslim is meant to get His blessing. *Fiqh* is about value structures or jurisprudence of Islam. There is guidance in all acts and behaviours as well as rewards and punishment for a right and wrongdoing. *Akhlak* specifically focuses on individual behaviour and how an individual should behave towards Allah and others.

All Muslims follow the same *Shariah* law, although they belong to different sects, such as Sunni and Shi'is (also known as Syia or Syiah) (Kamali, 2015). Differences between sects or *mazhabs* (school of thought) exist in the form of details on certain issues. For example, there are four *mazhabs* of Sunni jurisprudence, the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hambali. These *mazhabs* recognized each other interpretation of *Shariah* law, although they have their own principles of thought. Nowadays, these schools of thought also selectively adopted principles from each other in some cases and incorporate them into their own *mazhabs*. In addition to religious teachings, living conditions and natural surroundings also influence the customary practices and dietary options of Muslims (Kamali, 2015).

Conformity to *Shariah* law creates restrictions on society, especially in countries in which religion and state are inseparable, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). Nevertheless, customary practices have influenced different choices and preferences with respect to what is *halal* in some areas, such as with respect to the eating of sea creatures. In the Shafi'i and Hanbali traditions it is permissible to eat all kinds of seafood as long as it lives only in the water (e.g., oyster, shrimp, shark, and eel). In the Maliki tradition all seafood can be eaten except eel; and in Hanafi it is only permitted to eat sea creatures that are in the form of 'fish' (i.e. must have scales and fins), meaning that hagfish, eel, oyster, shrimp, and lobster are not allowed (Eum, 2008). The reason for this is that some sea creatures are perceived as being unclean (e.g., have sands in shells) and are, therefore, not safe for consumption, meanwhile hagfish and eels have no scales.

Differences in definitions of what is *halal* are also strongly influenced by the sects' interpretation of the Quranic verses (Hassan, 2005) because different *mazhab* interpret the Quran with reference to different hadiths. This has led to confusion and misunderstanding in some cases as to what can be consumed, and has become a significant challenge for some hospitality providers with the development of global tourism and an international

Muslim consumer market. Ideally, the existence of a global *halal* standard would facilitate understanding and avoid confusion with dietary regulations (Eum, 2008). Nevertheless, as Hamdan (2007) argues, the existence of various sects within Muslim societies raises difficulties in standardizing *halal* requirements in a commercial context. Fischer (2008) argues that setting *halal* standards is further complicated when *halal* requirements are framed in terms of being marketable products and services, which also involve providers, *halal* authorities, and customers (Muslim and non-Muslim). Nevertheless, despite the absence of a global standard, providers cannot ignore the travel and worship needs of Muslim customers in domestic and international markets.

3.1.1 Travel and Worship

Hasan, Mahyuddin, and Zaki (2010) indicate that travel in Islam can be divided into several forms, *musafir*, *rehlah*, *siyahah*, *umrah* and *hajj*. Travel in Islam can be performed for many reasons such as to obtain knowledge, education, experience, business, recreation, relationship and to commit religious ritual (Sahida et al., 2014), and the objective for each reason is similar, to learn the greatness of Allah and to worship Him always (Table 3.1). Travelling in Islam is about improving the spiritual aspect of individual by observing and appreciating the creations of God (Din, 1982). Hashim et al. (2007) indicate that many verses on travelling in the Quran encourage Muslims to see the creations of Allah and feel for His greatness. Among these verses include Al-Imran (The Amramites) 3:137; Al-An'am (Livestock) 6:11; Yunus (Jonah) 10:22; Yusuf (Joseph) 12:109; Al-Nahl (The Bee) 16:36; Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage) 22:46; Al-'Ankaboot (The Spider) 29:20; Al-Rum (The Romans) 30:42/9; Saba' (Sheba) 34:18; Faater (Initiator) 35:44; Ghafer (Forgiver) 40:82/21; Muhammad 47:10; and Al-Mulk (Kingship) 67:15. As such, Hayati et al. (2012) argue that due to the high demand for *halal* hospitality, businesses should consider providing the necessary *halal* facilities to facilitate the religious rituals of Muslim tourists.

Table 3.1: The meaning of travel in Islam

Term	Explanation
<i>Musafir</i>	Originated from the Arabic word <i>Safara</i> , meaning going, walking and wandering Al-Maidah: verse 6
<i>Rehlah</i>	Originated from the Arabic word <i>Rahala</i> , meaning travelling/trading Quraish: verse 6
<i>Ziyarah</i>	Originated from the Arabic word <i>Zara</i> , meaning visiting or paying a visit Al Takathur: verse 2; Al Kahfi: verse 17
<i>Siyahah</i>	Originated from the Arabic word <i>Saha</i> , meaning wander the earth Al Taubah: verse 112
<i>Umrah</i> and <i>haji</i>	Originated from the Arabic word <i>Saha</i> , meaning a worshipping obligation for capable Muslim Ayat surah Al Baqarah: 196

Source: Adapted and translated from Hasan et al. (2010)

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encouraged Muslims to travel to gain knowledge and to spread the Islamic religion. One of the most famous Muslim travellers was Ibn Baituta, whom has travelled as far as China and India around 1325 and 1354 (Morgan, 2001). His journeys took about thirty years of his life as a judge (*qadi*) in Islamic courts and he visited many places including North Africa, Egypt, Persia, Maldives, Sumatra, China, and Sumatra and helped spread Islamic teaching. He learnt and wrote about the customary practices of the places that he went including the culture and food (Morgan, 2001). In this he reflects the way in which travel within Islamic traditions is meant to be a two-way enrichment between host and guest, in which hospitality is integral to Islamic custom.

Islam is therefore imbued with a substantial, and in some cases explicit, focus on the provision of hospitality which also affects the expectations of its adherents (Kamali 2011). In providing *halal* hospitality, organisations and individuals must therefore consider whether the activities, values, purposes, products and services offered, are compliant with *Shariah* law (Abdullah & Mukhtar, 2014).

3.2 The Concept of *Halal* Hospitality

According to Saad (2014, p. 1) *halal* hospitality is defined as “a hotel that provides services in accordance to the *Shariah* principles”. Samori and Rahman (2013, p. 99) defined *halal* hospitality in a similar fashion to Saad but extend their definition by adding “it is not only limited to serv[ing] *halal* food and drink, but more than that, is to ensure the entire operation throughout the hotel would also operate in accordance with the *Shariah* principles.” Another definition is “...a hotel where the services offered and financial transactions are based on *Syariah* principles and it is not only limited to serving *halal* food and beverages but all parameters that have been designed for health, safety, environment, and the benefits on economics of all mankind, regardless of race, faith or cultures” (Yusuf, 2009).

The definitions above similarly emphasise adherence to *Shariah* law in providing *halal* hospitality. However, the definition given by Yusuf (2009) is more extensive in comparison with Saad (2014) and Samori and Rahman (2013). Saad (2014) in his definition only notes the hospitality services offered, while Samori and Rahman (2013) focus on dietary and the entire hospitality operation. Yusuf (2009) provides a precise definition that covers the many aspects of hospitality, the overall operations carried out, financial transactions, services provided, economic contribution, and physical and spiritual aspects of providers and customers. These definitions will guide the discussion of the concept of *halal* hospitality for all types of accommodation as mentioned above in this thesis.

The concept of *halal* hospitality is not yet fully developed due to different interpretation of *halal* matters in different countries (Al-Qaradawi, 1992) and also the lack of expertise, knowledge, and awareness in the field (Che Omar et al., 2013). However, as mentioned in some studies, *halal* hospitality can be characterized as in Table 3.2. *Halal* hospitality providers should note these technical attributes in order to satisfy customers’ needs to conform to Islamic religious obligations (Fernando et al., 2008). In addition, providers need to inform customers as to the availability of *halal* attributes such as *halal* certification, availability of a prayer room, direction to kiblah and segregated facilities in order to influence customers’ decision-making.

Table 3.2: Physical characteristics of *halal* hospitality service

Technical Attributes of <i>Halal</i> Hospitality	Author(s)
Prayer mat, Quran, prayer beads, Qiblah direction, no alcohol, separated kitchen utensils, no unmarried couple to check in, no drug-dealing activities.	Din (1982) Malaysia
Provide information on mosque and <i>halal</i> food location.	Hashim et al. (2006) Malaysia
No alcohol, <i>halal</i> foods, Quran, prayer mat, arrow indicating the direction of Mecca, bed and toilet positioned not facing the direction of Mecca, bidets in bathroom, prayer room, appropriate entertainment, no nightclub or adult television channels, predominant Muslim staff, conservative staff dress, separate recreational facilities for men and women, all female floor, guest dress code, Islamic funding.	Henderson (2010) Middle East
Serving <i>halal</i> food and beverages, <i>halal</i> management and operation, design, facilities (separate spa, gym, swimming pool, guest and function room for male and female customers), Islamic financing in sharing profit and loss, no interest (riba or usury), Islamic insurance (takaful).	Sahida et al. (2011) Malaysia
Appropriate dress code, hospitality behavior, physical facilities such as serving <i>halal</i> food, no alcohol, providing separating gymnasium, sauna, swimming pool and comfortable praying area, free interest financing mode, obligation of paying <i>zakat</i> , adhere to Islamic business principles.	Hayati et al. (2012) Malaysia
Have <i>halal</i> certificate, <i>halal</i> logo, Qiblah indicator, prayer mat, prayer room, no living being symbol, Quran, no gambling and prostitution, predominant Muslim workers, appropriate dress code, proper behaviour, <i>zakat</i> , prayer time information, toilet facilities, breaking fast and <i>sahur</i> , no unmarried couple in a room.	Samori and Sabtu (2012) Malaysia

Source: Din (1982), Hashim et al. (2006), Henderson (2010), Sahida et al. (2011), Hayati et al. (2012), and Samori and Sabtu (2012)

Stephenson (2014) provides additional characteristics of the concept of *halal* hospitality. The characteristics are categorized according to human resource, private rooms, dining quarters, other public facilities, and business operation as in Table 3.3. Islamic finance, insurance, charity, and *zakat* were infrequently discussed in many articles related to *halal* hospitality. The reasons for this are unknown but perhaps these attributes emphasize the accommodation providers responsibility instead of what is requested by customers on *halal* hospitality offering. To become a *shariah*-compliant accommodation business, providers should comply with Islamic business principles including the giving of charity and using Islamic finance for capital sources (Hayati et al., 2012; Samori & Sabtu,

2012). In fact, in the Malaysian context, the availability of many Islamic financing products from many banks could help providers in obtaining financial support for their business operations (Muhamed, Ramli, Aziz, & Yaakub, 2014).

Table 3.3: Characteristics of Shariah compliance (*halal* hotel)

Human Resources	Traditional uniforms for hotel staff; dress code for female staff; prayer time provision for Muslim employees; restricted working hours for Muslim staff during Ramadan; staff (and guest) adherence to moral codes of conduct; and guest-centric strategies underpinning service delivery.
Private Rooms (bedrooms and bathrooms)	Separate floors with rooms allocated to women and families; markers (i.e., Qibla stickers) indicating the direction of Mecca; prayer mats and copies of the Qur'an; conservative television channels; geometric and non-figurative patterns of decoration (e.g., calligraphy); beds and toilets positioned away from facing Mecca; toilets fitted with a bidet shower or health faucet; and <i>halal</i> -friendly complementary toiletries.
Dining Quarter	Provision for women and families, in addition to the communal area provision; art that does not depict human and animal form; and no music expressing seductive and controversial messages.
Other Public Facilities	No casino or gambling machines; separate leisure facilities (including swimming pools and spas) for both sexes; female and male prayer rooms equipped with the Qur'an (also available at the front desk); built-in wudhu facilities located outside prayer rooms; toilets facing away from Mecca; and art that does not depict human and animal form.
Business Operation	Ethical marketing and promotion; corporate social responsibility strategies (linked to Islamic values) and philanthropic donations; and transactions and investments in accordance to the principles and practices associated with Islamic banking, accounting and finance.

Source: Adapted from Stephenson (2014, p. 157)

Sahida et al. (2014) suggested that *halal* hospitality should also focus on the operation, design and financial sources to be fully claimed as *halal*. Similarly, Mohamed Nasir and Pereira (2008) agreed that a fully *halal* hospitality business required assessing the overall operation according to *Shariah* principles. Additionally, Saad (2014) in his study on a *Shariah* compliant hotel in Egypt presents features for operation, design, and finance according to their ranking in importance as in Table 3.4. These characteristics complement the characteristics provided by Stephenson (2014) and other researchers as

above, with the additional feature of *zakat* being added as part of the financial characteristics of operations.

Table 3.4: Category and features in rank order of importance

Category	Features in rank order of importance
Operation	Alcohol and pork should not be served Female staff for single female floors and male staff for single male floors Food products have to be <i>halal</i> Quran, prayer mats in each room Majority of the staff are Muslim Conservative staff dress Conservative TV service
Design	Separate facilities for males and females Signs indicating the direction of Mecca in every room Appropriate entertainment (no nightclubs) Beds and toilets placed so as not to face the direction of Mecca
Financial	Hotel financed through Islamic arrangements Hotel should follow <i>Zakat</i> principles

Source: Adapted from Saad et al. (2014, p. 7-8)

The features in rank of order in Table 3.4 are based on hospitality experts' views (i.e., academic staff, industry consultant, and providers) in Egypt. Saad (2014) also indicates that the formal concept of *halal* hospitality in Egypt is still at the early stage of implementation as there are no formal procedures or rules available for authorization. However, he noted that the *halal* concept is used more as a marketing strategy in Egypt in line with high expectations for future demand for *halal* hospitality service.

Accordingly, all of the characteristics of *halal* hospitality presented above emphasize the physical or tangible aspects of customers' needs. Din (1989, p. 560) argued that "It is quite difficult to find a Muslim who can provide the services as outlined in Islamic teachings (Sunnah), which reflect the original intent of travelling purpose, namely spiritual aims". Ahmad et al. (2012) also argue that there is a lack of an 'internal' or 'personal' aspect in the current practice of *halal* hospitality services. Indeed, in line with the findings of Kirillova et al., (2014), Muslim respondents consider that hospitality services provided in the context of business are less genuine because they involves monetary exchange. Ahmad et al. (2012) provided an example of De Palma Hotel in Malaysia that claimed to be the pioneer *Shariah* Compliant hotel in the Asian region, yet only emphasized the tangible aspects, although the management of the De Palma Hotel

Group believes that the entire management of hospitality must be *halal*, which includes adopting a ‘Muslim personality’. Ghozali (2015) argues that personality can only be judged and felt by the effect arising from certain acts or behaviour by staff. For examples, in the context of attire, female Muslim employees in De Palma hotel must wear decent outfit and a headscarf that symbolize Muslim personality. All Muslim employees must all respect the five-prayer time without compromising the hectic work schedule at the hotel. Therefore, arranging appropriate time for prayer and taking turns for prayer activities are considered as upholding the Muslim personality of the hotel operation.

Rudnyckyj (2009) discusses the concept of ‘spiritual economies’ that combine religion and capitalism in forming ethical behaviour to enhance corporate productivity and competitiveness. The author focuses on the responsibility of the management to instil understanding of spiritual economies among employees through training. Employees can be trained to understand how their works involve the principle of worship, which is regarded as significant to the spiritual success in life in Islam. For example, practicing the ethics of Islam that emphasize both the physical and the spiritual aspects of work life in the forms of work transparency, productivity excellence, personal responsibility, and rationalization in every action. Haq and Wong (2010) meanwhile, argue that marketing activities are important in attracting people to understand spiritual messages of Islam. These spiritual messages can be disseminated to others through seminars, workshops, conferences, as well as advertisements.

Din (1989) notes how Muslims should provide hospitality to non-Muslims. Henderson (2010), for example, argues on the challenges faced by *halal* hospitality providers in targeting Muslim and non-Muslim customers, such as in satisfying customers’ needs without having any conflicts with their religious belief. Prohibition of alcohol and no-smoking policies for examples are not favoured by some customers. Ahmat et al. (2012) argued about the level of understanding of Muslim and non-Muslim providers on the *halal* hospitality concept. Razalli, Abdullah, and Hassan (2009) indicate that Muslim customers will consider using *halal* hotel based on providers’ initiatives in fulfilling *halal* requirements, although the success of this depends on the extent to which providers understand the *halal* hospitality concept (Razalli et al., 2009) and understand the foundations of the concept in Islam.

3.2.1 Hospitality in Islam

Laderlah, Rahman, Awang, and Man (2011) discuss the three dimensions of Islamic teaching, Islam, *Iman* and *Ihsan*. Islam consists of five pillars. First, the witness (*syahadah*) as there is no God except Allah, and Muhammad is the last Messenger of Allah. Second, praying five times a day, third is given the *Zakat* (alms), fourth is fasting in Ramadan, and finally is performing the *hajj* if able. *Iman* is about affirming the existence of Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and believing in good and bad (*qada'* and *qadar*). *Ihsan* is about worshipping God in which all actions are done for His's blessing (*ibadah*). The Quran states that:

And I (Allah) created not the jinn and humankind except to worship Me (Alone).

(Adz Dzaariyat: verse 56)

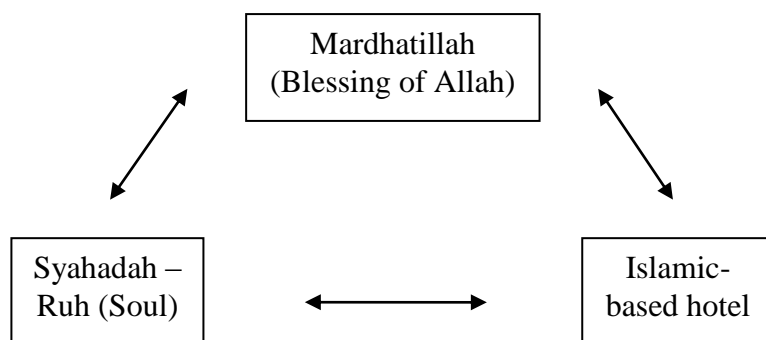
This verse clearly states that the creation of humankind is specifically to worship Allah. The obligation to worship Allah is a must in sustaining the spiritual aspect of life. However, worship does not mean fasting, prayers, giving alms and pilgrimage only, but includes all activities in life including undertaking a business. The Quran states that:

By men whom neither trade nor business diverts from the remembrance of Allah and performing of prayer and paying of the poor due (Zakat). They fear a day in which hearts and eyes shall be turned about.

(An Nur: verse 37)

This verse emphasizes the Muslim obligation to worship Allah even in conducting a trade or business. In explaining the concept of worshipping God in a hospitality business, specifically from a Islamic perspective, Che Omar et al. (2014) suggested that the Islamic-based hospitality (IBH) concept emphasises the *Ruh* of *Syahadah* (soul) and *Mardhatillah* (the blessing of Allah) (Figure 3.1). This concept emphasizes the spiritual aspect (soul) with the aim of gaining a better life, both in this world and in the afterlife.

Figure 3.1: Islamic-based hospitality concept



Source: Che Omar et al. (2014, p. 150)

To explain the concept above, an illustration is given. A Muslim will receive a reward of worship in business if it follows the principles of Islam and the principles of *Iman*. In opening a *halal* hospitality business, one has helped the society to meet the needs of their lives (communally obligation or *fardhu kifayah*). If there is no hospitality service available at a place, then its existence is considered a personally obligation (*fardhu ain*) for a Muslim. However, these activities must be done with a genuine intention to gain a blessing from Allah. The Prophet Muhammad says:

Actions are (judged) by motives (*niyyah*), so each man will have what he intended. Thus, he whose migration (*hijrah*) was to Allah and His Messenger, his migration is to Allah and His Messenger; but he whose migration was for some worldly thing he might gain, or for a wife he might marry, his migration is to that for which he migrated.

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Theoretically, this notion of religious-based hospitality concept does emphasize both the physical and the spiritual dimensions of hospitality. Mohd Sirajuddin, Sahri, Khalid, Yaakob, and Harun (2013) discuss the spiritual and the physical aspects of *halal* hospitality and used a thematic approach in understanding *halal* according to four verses in Quran, specifically mentioning the words *halalan tayyibban*. Their findings are presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Discoveries through thematic approach

Extracted theme of the verses			
Spiritual aspect (Tayyib) (al-Baqarah:168-169)	(al-Ma'idah:87-88)	Physical aspect (<i>Halal</i>) (al-Anfal:67-69)	(al-Nahl:114-115)
Avoid evil conducts i.e: <i>munafiq</i> (hypocrite) criteria Avoid anything connected to any sin. (su'). Avoid anything connected to sexual exposed. (fahsyah').	Avoid transgress in actions Avoid changing status of <i>haram</i> to <i>halal</i> & otherwise	Avoid taking for granted from the prisoners (non- Muslim) in a way that will corrupt Muslim society. Avoid fraudulent financial planning	Process Sanitation Ingredients Transportation and supply chain Storages Non-toxic/ Not harmful Non-pork and alcoholic (<i>khamr</i>)

Source: Adapted from Mohd Sirajuddin et al. (2013, p. 48)

Mohd Sirajuddin et al. (2013) state that in order to reach *halalan tayyiban* (e.g., pure, clean, and nourishing) in business practices, there should be a holistic combination between the aspects of *tayyib* and the physical dimension. Any action, behaviour and object involves (e.g., products and services) in the business must not relate to evil. Avoiding sin, sexual immorality, transgression, and changing the status of *haram* to *halal* or vice versa can help individual Muslim to reach this holistic benefit. Accommodation providers, for example, can be genuinely generous in giving hospitality so as to gain peace in mind.

With respect to the physical aspect of *halal*, a Muslim is prohibited from corruption and fraud. The physical aspect also includes avoiding *haram* in the entire processes of services, sanitation, ingredients, transportation, supply chain, and storages. It is important for a Muslim to do *halal* and avoid the *haram* in order to gain the blessing of Allah. Based on this discussion of the aspects of hospitality, it is important to considering what exactly is understood by providers in terms of the *halal* hospitality concept, and the extent to which they genuinely provide the service to cater the needs of the society or whether they are only taking the advantage of the business opportunity.

3.3 *Halal* and *Haram* in Hospitality Service

The principles of *halal* and *haram* are integral to *halal* hospitality. The providers must have a thorough understanding of what is *halal* (permissible) and *haram* (not permissible) in providing Islamic hospitality. This concept of *halal* and *haram* covers the entire aspects of hospitality services such as in food deliveries, facilities provision and activities conducted by the provider. In Islam, there are four main sources in determining *halal* and *haram*: *Quran*, *Sunnah*, *Ijma* (consensus of the scholars) and *Qiyas* (analogy). Siddique (1997) explains the uses of these sources. If the changes in need can be found in the Quran, then these changes can be approved and serve as guidelines to Muslim society. If there is no indication of the changes posed, then Muslim scholars and jurists must refer to the *Sunnah*. Similarly, the third source of *Ijma* (consensus) is used to compare a situation to see whether it is approved or disapproved in *Shariah* law. In this case, Muslim scholars and jurists will usually look to what has already been adopted in respect of existing norms. Finally, *qiyas* is used for making a decision on something that is not comparable to a teaching or situation in the Quran or Sunnah. Islam prohibits all kinds of intoxicants (*kharms*) from any source (e.g., corn, honey, or barley), form, and name through the fermenting process as it can befog human mind (Al-Qaradawi, 1992). Using *qiyas*, narcotics are considered as *kharms* because they are regarded as bringing more harm than benefit to people. The Prophet Muhammad said:

Truly, Allah has cursed *kharms* and has cursed the one who produces it, the one for whom it is produced, the one who drinks it, the one who serves it, the one who carries it, the one for whom it is carried, the one who sells it, the one who earns from the sale of it, the one who buys it, and the one for whom it is bought.

(Al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah)

Products whose status as *halal* or *haram* is unknown because they were not mentioned specifically in the Quran or Sunnah, and/or involve a new way of production or are a new invention, such as contraceptive products and energy drinks, are categorized as *mubah* or undecided products that require discussion among the Muslim scholars to determine whether it is *halal* or not (De Run et al. 2010). Once its status is decided, a *fatwa* will be published. The acceptance of this *fatwa* is up to individual Muslims, for example,

the controversial issue of slaughtering process according to *Shariah* law (Fisher, 2008; Zakaria, 2008). In such situations, it is possible that different interpretations as to the status of a product will exist in different locations.

In addition to *halal* and *haram*, another important term in Islam is *mashbooh* (doubtful or questionable). *Mashbooh* contributes to the complexities of issues related to *halal* and *haram* (Wan Hassan, 2008; Marzuki, 2012), as again there may be different interpretations in different locations. Nevertheless, despite the existence of some areas of question or debate over status, scholars have argued that it is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that the hospitality service provided is *halal* and not *haram* (Prabowo et al. 2012). As a result, Marzuki et al. (2012) stress that hospitality providers must improve their understanding and acceptance of the *halal* hospitality services. This means that providers would be responsible to confirm the entire processes of the supply chain, including the raw material, handling, processing equipment, processing, storing, transporting, preparing, and delivering are *Shariah* compliant.

Halal hospitality entails a genuine commitment in providing hospitality by following *Shariah* principles or rules. *Shariah* refers to “the totality of Allah’s commands which regulate life for every Muslim in all aspect” (Sahida et al., 2011, p. 140). The commitment to the rules include providing cafes and restaurants according to gender, restraining unmarried couples occupying the same bedroom, displaying calligraphy arts and scenes, hosting seminars and preaching sessions, and making charitable donations to Muslim societies (Henderson, 2010). These rules are becoming commercialised in the hospitality industries in Islamic countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei Darussalam that highlight the important role of Islamic religion in influencing the market demand among Muslims (Muhamad & Mizerski, 2013). According to Che Omar et al. (2014), the hospitality industry emphasizes too much on the extrinsic part of *halal* hospitality (e.g. *Halal* food, the direction of Qibla, toilet not facing the direction of Qibla, and providing Quran and prayer mat), while the intrinsic part is left unattended. The intrinsic part covers the spiritual aspect (soul) with the aim to gain a better life, both in this world and in the afterlife with the God’s blessing. Nevertheless, while Muslims undoubtedly regard both the physical and spiritual aspects of *halal* hospitality as important, the first encounter of many people, whether Muslim or not, with *halal* hospitality will be in

terms of the information provided by operators prior to the decision by consumers to purchase. This thesis therefore examines how the concepts of *halal* and *haram* are conveyed in hospitality service. These issues are discussed further in the following subsections of this chapter in terms of food, entertainment and business values.

3.3.1 Food

Global tourism has led to increased diversity in food offerings by hospitality operators (Eum, 2008). Global tourism also opens up new opportunities for the hospitality industry to explore diversity in food offerings. However, the increasing number of religious travellers has increase demand for religious foods according to their scriptures. Religious foods include those prepared for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Religious foods are restricted according to scriptures (Tieman & Hassan, 2016). Table 3.6 provides a comparison between the three Abrahamic religions in seven parts: prohibition of animals for food, prohibition of blood, prohibition of alcohol, fasting, animal welfare, slaughtering requirements for livestock and poultry, cases of doubt, and segregation requirements in the food supply chain.

In the prohibition of animals for food, for example, animals from the sea without fins and scales are prohibited for Jewish, Christian and Muslims (from the Hanafi school of thought). Blood is prohibited for all three religions, but alcohol is only prohibited for Muslim. However, there is a great deal of diversity within Christianity, with Nicene churches having few, if any, prohibitions, although the New Testament does give some suggestions with respect to eating that some churches have adopted, e.g. Seventh-day Adventist and Trappist monks avoid eating meat because in Corinthians, Paul of Tarsus comments that some Christians may wish to abstain from meat if it causes "my brother to stumble" into idolatry (1 Corinthians 8:13). When it comes to fasting, the believers of the three religions will fast according to certain days. During the fasting day, there are foods encouraged to eat for example in Malaysia, the demand for dates will increase during Ramadan. It is a custom for Muslims to eat dates during fasting as to gain more rewards from God. The three religions have concerns for animal welfare but when it comes to slaughtering requirements, only kosher and *halal* require animals to be slaughtered according to religious rituals (the Armenian Orthodox church being one of the few

Christian churches that retains a degree of ritual when slaughtering occurs). If in doubt about food, Jews will refer to the Rabbi, Christians will not eat, and Muslim will avoid from eating. Jewish will separated food according to section for meat, dairy, and neutral products. There is no issue on food segregation for Christian and Muslim will look on the segregation of *halal* and non-*halal* foods.

Table 3.6: A comparison of religious food law

	Kosher food laws	Christian food laws	<i>Halal</i> food laws
Prohibition of animals for food	According to Leviticus and Deuteronomy (Campbell et al., 2011), pig, wild birds, sharks, dogfish, catfish, monkfish and similar species, crustacean and molluscan shellfish, other animals from the sea without fins and scales, most insects, rockbadger, hare, camel, ostrich, emu, rhea (Regenstein et al., 2003b)	According to the Old Testament: pig, camel, rockbadger, hare, animals in the water without fins and scales, eagle, vulture, osprey, kit, falcon, raven, ostrich, nighthawk, sea gull, hawk, owl, cormorant, ibis, water hen, pelican, carrion vulture, stork, heron, hoopoe, bat, most winged insects, swarming things that swarm upon the earth (Leviticus 11); However, very few Christians still practice this today	By Quranic verse (Quran 2:173): pig only (Al-Qaradawi, 2007; Kamali, 2010); However, based on a Hadith, wild animals with a canine tooth and any bird with talons are regarded as detestable, but not prohibited (Al-Qaradawi, 2007)
Prohibition of blood	Prohibited and should be as much as possible removed during and after slaughter (Dresner and Siegel, 1966; Regenstein et al., 2003b)	According to Genesis 9:3-4)	By Quranic verse (Quran 2:173) (Al-Qaradawi, 2007; Kamali, 2010)
Prohibition of alcohol	Not prohibited, however, there are strict production requirements on grape-juice-based products such as wine (Regenstein et al., 2003b)	Not prohibited	Prohibition of intoxicants by Quranic verse (Quran 5:90) and the Hadith (Kamali, 2010)
Fasting	Fasting plays a significant role in Jewish religious tradition. It can be done voluntary, for the bride and groom on their wedding day or on	Christians have a tradition of fasting during Lent, Advent, Saint Martin and on the eve of various feasts and festivals (Grumett and Muers, 2010), as	Fasting is an important obligation for Muslims, which regulates fasting during Ramadan and optional fasting (Laldin, 2006)

	major and minor events in the Jewish calendar (Corn, 2006)	well as abstinence from red meat during certain days of the week. However, this practice is continued by only a small number of Christians today	
Animal welfare	Kindness to animals has a strong foundation in the Torah (Shechita UK, 2009; Rosen, 2004; Silver, 2011)	The Old Testament defines important principles in animal welfare	Part of the Shariah (Fiqh al-Mu'amalah or al-adah) describes the rulings that govern the relationship between man and other creatures of Allah (Laldin, 2006)
Slaughtering requirements for livestock and poultry	Strictly defined under the laws of shechita (Dresner and Siegel, 1966); Prohibition of pre-slaughter stunning (Rosen, 2004; Zivotofsky, 2011)	Not defined for meat that is not used for offering	Strictly defined under <i>shariah</i> (Al-Qaradawi, 2007), but the acceptability of certain procedures (like stunning and machine slaughter) depend on the Islamic school of thought (Kamali, 2010)
In case of doubt	Consult Rabbi (Dresner and Siegel, 1966)	Do not eat (Romans 14:23)	Avoid (Hussaini, 1993; Al-Qaradawi, 2007; Kamali, 2010)
Segregation requirements in the food supply chain	Segregation between meat products, dairy products and neutral products (pareve) (Regenstein et al., 2003b)	Not defined	Segregation between <i>halal</i> and non- <i>halal</i> , depending on the product characteristics and market requirements (Tieman et al., 2012, 2013)

Source: Tieman and Hassan (2015, p. 2320)

It is crucial for the hospitality provider to consider religious restrictions if catering to the religious market. In some jurisdictions, providers can be subject to legal action if caught violating the religious restrictions especially those that already gazetted in trade and food safety laws (Diamond, 2002). In the case of Malaysia, providers that violate the *halal* requirements are subject to legal action as stated in the *Trade Description Act 2011*.

In Malaysia, the government agencies are perceived as not disseminating information on *halal* knowledge and education to the service providers (Said, Hassan, Musa & Rahman, 2013). Many providers are not willing to be certified for reasons that include the lack of understanding of *halal* hospitality. Educating providers on *halal* certification can potentially increase the numbers of operators that provide *halal* hospitality

(Said et al., 2013). Consumer pressure is also important as they have the purchasing power that helps to encourage providers to comply with *halal* requirements.

A study by Sahida et al. (2011) on *halal* hospitality in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, suggests that the reason for providing the service is to cater to the needs of Muslim travellers that otherwise have difficulty in finding accommodation to suit their lifestyle. Most hotels in Malaysia are practicing conventional hotel services, because of the significance of the international tourism market. Therefore, even in a Muslim country such as Malaysia, it can be quite difficult for religious customers to obtain *halal* hotel services in large urban centres. Interestingly, Wan Hassan and Hall (2003) found the same difficulty for Muslim travellers in obtaining *halal* food in New Zealand, although about 98% of lamb and sheep, 60% of the cattle, and 85% of deer grown in New Zealand, are *halal* slaughtered every year.

Halal food is defined as “those that are free from any component that Muslims are prohibited from consuming” (Riaz & Chaudry, 2004, p. 2). *Halal* food includes milk (from cows, sheep, camels, and goats), honey, fish, legumes, grains, and plants (not intoxicated). The *haram* food includes swine meat, pork-based products and by-products (e.g., jelly and marshmallow), carrion or dead animals, blood and blood by-products (e.g., blood sausage), animals slaughtered, or killed without the name of Allah, intoxicants (e.g., alcohol and narcotic), carnivorous animals (e.g., tiger and lion), bird of prey (e.g., eagle and owl), land animals without external ears (e.g., snake and worm) (Riaz & Chaudry, 2004). The *Quran* states that:

Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah, and (those animals) killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a head-long fall or by the goring of horns, and those from which a wild animal has eaten, except what you (are able to) slaughter (before its death), and those which are sacrificed on stone altars...

(Al-Maidah, verse 3)

This verse clarifies what can be eaten and what are not. Furthermore, in any consumption of food, Isfahani et al. (2013) stated that *halal* food is food that is clean, safe, and healthy to consume, while *haram* food is any food that could harm humans as forbidden by Allah. The *Quran* states that:

You who believe, eat the good things We have provided for you and be grateful to God, if it is Him that you worship. He has only forbidden you carrion, blood, pig's meat, and animals over which any name other than God's has been invoked. But if anyone is forced to eat such things by hunger, rather than desire or excess, he commits no sin: God is Most Merciful and Forgiving.

(Al-Baqarah, verses 172-173)

The implications of these verses signify the need to produce *halal* and *tayyib* foods that are interpreted as permitted and wholesome. *Tayyib* is used to refer to a standard that have been revealed in the books of Allah that come prior to the *Quran*, i.e: the *Torah* (the Old Testaments) and the *Injil* (The New Testaments) (Mohd Sirajuddin, Saad, Sahri and Yaakub 2014). *Tayyib* highlight a universal standard of food consumption amongst Abrahamic believers, as the *Quran* states that:

The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them.

(Al-Maidah, verse 5)

This verse refers to the slaughtering method used in Judaism, which has similarity to Islamic slaughtering process, and is regarded as consensually permissible amongst Muslim scholars including Al-Qaradawi (1992). Both of these religions have firm restrictions to ensure the food provided is truly kosher or *halal* and stress ritual cleanliness as a means to achieve spiritual goals (e.g., blessing from God) (Hashim, 2012) (Table 3.7).

Table 3.7: *Halal* versus Kosher slaughtering process

Item	Kosher	<i>Halal</i>
Pig, pork, carnivore	Prohibited	Prohibited
Ruminant animals (e.g., buffalo, cattle, goat, and horse) and bird (e.g., chicken, turkey, duck, and goose)	Slaughtered by a trained Jewish sochet	Slaughtered by a Muslim adult
Intention (<i>Niyah</i>)	Done before entering the abattoir; not to all animals	Done to each animal slaughtered
Slaughter by hand	Mandatory	Recommended
Mechanical slaughter	Not allowed	Can be done (huge number of chickens) but must be supervised
Stunning before slaughtering	Sometimes allowed	Allowed to make the animal unconscious but not dead before slaughtering
Other requirements on meat	Only the front quarter of the animal is usually used unless the sochet has received special training to remove sinew and sciatic nerve; needs to be soaked in salty water	The whole meat can be used and does not need to be soaked in salty water
Animal blood	Prohibited	Prohibited
Fish	Scales only	All types of fish
Seafood	Not allowed	Generally allowed
Microbial enzymes	Allowed	Allowed
Enzymes produced from biotechnology processes	Allowed	Allowed
Animal enzyme	Kosher slaughtering only	Sometime accepted
Pig enzyme	Probably accepted	Prohibited
Cattle gelatine	Kosher slaughtering only	<i>Halal</i> slaughtering only
Pig gelatine	Allowed by the liberal orthodox rabbi	Prohibited
Dairy product	Made by kosher enzyme	Made by <i>halal</i> enzyme
The addition of cheese	The addition must be made by a Jew	No restriction
Alcohol (wine)	Allowed	Prohibited
A mixture of meat and milk	Not allowed	Not related
Insect and insect product	The grasshopper is accepted, but not other insect products	The grasshopper and other insect products are accepted
Plant substances	All allowed	Those involving alcohol (e.g. wine) strictly prohibited
Sanitation equipment	Cleaned; require a certain period, ritually cleaned (kosherization)	Cleaned as a whole; no specific period required
Special occasion	More restrictions during Passover	The same requirements all year round

Source: Adapted and translated from Hisham (2012, p. 27-29)

However, there are issues with respect to the entire production process of *halal* food such as toxic ingredients (scheduled toxic) and inhumane farming practice (Mohd Sirajuddin et al., 2013). In addition, animal feeding, slaughtering methods, packaging, logistics, and contamination are problems in *halal* food production (Ab. Halim & Mohd Salleh, 2012; Nasaruddin et al., 2012), along with serious concerns as to the applicability of *halal* logistics in order to support the *halal* supply chain globally (Mohd Sirajuddin et al., 2014; Tieman & Ghazali, 2014).

Halal food must be cleaned from any contamination with prohibited items or ingredients that change its status of *halal* to *haram*. Cleanliness is expected from the beginning of production to the end food product, e.g. ‘from farm to fork’ (Wan Hasan & Hall, 2003). There are also potential issues of kitchen design in accommodation, given its role as a site of food preparation, preservation, storage, and packaging that providers must ensure appropriate food hygiene for (Hasri, Taib, & Ahmad, 2016). Cleanliness is necessary, both in the terms of physical and spiritual aspects of *halal* hospitality. Food contamination, for example, occurs when hospitality providers do not have a good knowledge of the *haram* ingredients (Prabowo et al., 2012). Providers must not claim their food as *halal* if contaminated with *haram* ingredient (Ismaeel & Blaim, 2012), such as in using gelatine that is produced from the skin and bones of pigs in a dessert (Nasaruddin et al., 2012) or mixing of *halal* and non-*halal* meat from unethical *halal* butchers (Harvey, 2010). To avoid food contamination, providers must find alternative materials or ingredients to replace non-*halal* products. For example, Karim and Bhat (2008) indicate that there are other sources of gelatine, such as from marine sources (e.g., cod, haddock, pollock, and salmon) to replace non-*halal* bovine gelatine. In addition, accommodation providers may perform ritual cleansing or *samak* for the cleaning purpose.

Food contamination, however, may come not only from ingredients, but also involve the utensils used during the production processes. Wan Hassan (2008) found that many hospitality providers have misconceptions about the use of kitchen utensils. These providers viewed that the utensils used for non-*halal* food can be used to cook the *halal* food after been washed with soap and water, whereas in Islam these utensils must be washed according to Islamic ritual cleansing (use clay and water). According to Kassim, Hashim, Hashim and Jol (2014), a Muslim must go through an Islamic cleansing (*samak*)

process if he/she is in contact with impurities. This Islamic cleansing process has to be done before religious activities, such as prayers. There are three categories of impurities (Table 3.8). However, only the extreme category is required to be cleaned with water clay, otherwise the cleaning process is not following the requirements of *Shariah* law. These cleansing processes are not specifically mentioned in the Quran, yet the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) described the processes verbally or through his action (JAKIM, 2013; Tieman, 2011). *Samak or sertu* encompasses the ritual cleansing of transport, containers, truck, machines, utensils, equipment that are used in the preparation, production and transporting the *halal* and non-*halal* products to other location. In order to confirm that the whole processes are *halal*, *samak/sertu* is necessary to achieve *tayyib* standards (Ahmad & Mohd Shariff, 2017). However, problems with *samak/sertu* for some transportation companies include cost, time, energy and human resources to *samak* their huge vessels (Ab. Talib, Lim, & Khor, 2013). Transport company representatives indicate that the number of *halal* products is not sufficient to focus on *halal* shipping alone. Efforts to educate and train businesses in *halal* logistics are considered insufficient given the costs involved. Instead, businesses are hoping for government intervention in *halal* logistics that cover the many stages of delivery, storage, distribution and handling stages (Ab. Talib, Lim, & Khor, 2013).

Table 3.8: Categories of impurity (*najis*) and its cleansing method

Classification	Example of <i>najis</i>	Cleansing method
Light	Urine of boys aged less than 2 years old and fully breastfed.	Remove <i>najis</i> and sprinkle water over the contaminated area.
Medium	vomit, blood, and urine.	Remove <i>najis</i> and wash with free flow clean water until achieving absence of appearance/colour, odour and feel.
Extreme/Severe	Dogs and pigs (<i>khinzir</i>) including any liquids and objects discharged from their orifices.	Remove <i>najis</i> and rinse seven times with clean water; one of which is water that is mixed with soil/clay. This cleansing method is called <i>samak</i> .

Source: Adapted from Kassim et al. (2014, p. 187)

Edible animals according to Islamic law must be slaughtered hygienically before consumption. All blood must be removed during the slaughtering process to confirm that the animal is clean and safe for consumption. There are protocols set by JAKIM and other group committees for slaughtering process so as to guide abattoir and poultry processing

plants with respect to slaughtering, stunning method, further dressing process, storage and transportation of *halal* meat, poultry and their products (Group Committee, 2011). The protocol includes information on the general requirements of Malaysian slaughterhouses, the *halal* control system, *halal* ritual slaughtering, stunning method, slaughtering process, storage, and transportation.

Wan Hassan (2008) discussed the animal slaughtering process based on aspects of production allowed by *halal* certification bodies such as Jabatan Agama dan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), Central Islamica Brasileira de Alimentos *Halal* CIBAL BRAZIL), Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), *Halal* Monitoring Committee (HMC), Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), and the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ). This study updates the key aspects mentioned by Wan Hassan (2008) and adds more *halal* certification bodies for comparison (Table 3.9).

There is general agreement that the slaughtering staff must be Muslim, verbal recitation of *tasmiyah* (pronouncing the name of Allah) is required, and the minimum blood vessels to be cut off. There are differences over stunning, the machine slaughtering process, and the conduct of both *halal* and non-*halal* slaughtering at slaughter plants. The sharing of slaughter plants between *halal* and non-*halal* meat was not agreed to by six certification agencies. The reason is to avoid contamination and ritual cleansing. Out of nine certification bodies, three do not support stunning and four do not support mechanical slaughter. These two items are considered doubtful by some Muslims. One of the reasons to reject stunning is that it can sometimes be an ineffective stunning process that can cause death prior to the slaughtering process, which then makes the animal *haram* for consumption. Moreover, producers cannot confirm all chickens survive during stunning and there is no guarantee for separating the stunned unconscious (*halal*) and dead chickens (*haram*) on the processing line. The use of machine slaughter is rejected because slaughterers cannot recite the *tasmiyah* to each chicken as the machine is too fast, and also the possibility of cutting less than three (the minimum) blood vessels during the process (Wan Hassan, 2008).

Table 3.9: List of *halal* certification bodies and aspects of production allowed

	JAKIM	CIBAL BRAZIL	ISNA	HMC	AFIC	FIANZ	MUI	ISWA	HFSAA	HICO
Slaughterman must be Muslim.	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Stunning (water bath, head only - does not kill the animal)	/	x	/	x	x	/	/	/	/	
Mechanical slaughter (conditions applied)	/	x	/	x	x	/		/	x	/
Verbal recitation of <i>tasmiyah</i> (not a recording)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Ensuring minimum required vessels are severed.	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Sharing <i>halal</i> and non- <i>halal</i> slaughtering plants (certain conditions applied such as no contamination and Islamic cleansing)	x	x	x	x	na	na	/	/	x	/

Source: Adapted and improved from Wan Hassan (2008, p. 90)

Note: na – information is not available on their website, Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), Central Islamica Brasileira de Alimentos *Halal* (CIBAL BRAZIL), Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ), *Halal* Food Standards Alliance of America (HFSAA), *Halal* International Certification Organization (HICO), Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC), Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Islamic Society of the Washington Area (ISWA), Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia/Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) and Indonesian Council of Ulama/Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI).

The differences in *halal* processes may also have commercial and marketing implications. HMC for example, claimed that the production of meat using stunning and machine slaughter is not *halal*. To discourage the use of stunning and machine slaughter, HMC is promoting a marketing strategy that position ‘non-stunned’ meat as ‘authentic’ *halal* quality (Lever & Miele, 2012). In contrast, Abraham Natural Produce, a small company that produce *halal* organic meat, claims their meat is more authentic even though their slaughtering process involves stunning (Wilson & Liu, 2010). The company further claimed that animal care was carried out from the early stage of rearing following ‘organic’ procedures; therefore, they promote their meat as being more authentic and of a high quality. However, the extents to which Muslim consumers perceive the relative authentic of the two producers is unknown.

Despite differences in acceptance of stunning and machine slaughter among Muslim societies, slaughtering without stunning is considered cruel by some animal rights activists. These activists often suggest *halal* slaughtering is cruel (Mukherjee, 2014). However, some studies show that the *halal* method is more humane compared to other slaughtering techniques. But the interpretation as to what is humane depends on the viewer. When the spinal cord is left uncut during the slaughtering process, the brain can still receive messages from the heart for the supply of blood. The animals become unconscious and convulse while bleeding, although it is regarded as painless (Grandin & Regenstein, 1994; Newhook & Blackmore, 1982; Schulze, Schulze-Petzold, Hazem, & Gross, 1978). With stunning, animals may be in a conscious condition if insufficient voltage is supplied during the process. Cases have been recorded where animals are skinned, scalded or drowned to death while conscious (Stevenson, 1993). Harvey (2010) indicates that the ritual and spiritual aspect of slaughtering is mentioned in Quran such as Al-Baqarah, verse 172-173, Al-Maidah, verses 1, 3, 4, and 5, and Al-An’nam, verse 121, which allow the killing of animals by the most humane method. The Prophet Muhammad also says:

Verily God has prescribed excellence in all things. Thus, if you kill (an animal), kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade so to spare suffering to the animal he slaughters.

(Muslim)

The differences in opinions on the Islamic slaughtering process cannot be avoided as interpretation varies among scholars. Other services offered in hospitality are also subject to debate among the Muslim scholars. Entertainment, for example, is another interesting topic as it adds value to the customer experience in hospitality (Lugosi, 2008).

3.3.2 Entertainment and Other Services

Wolf (1999) indicated that entertainment is a necessity in customer oriented businesses. Entertainment can provide pleasure, enjoyment and a sense of belonging. Hospitality providers can use entertainment to create a pleasing experience for customers such as through shows and themed environments (Teng & Chang, 2013). Islam does not forbid its believers from fulfilling their needs and wants such as in food intake, relaxation and entertainment so long as it does not contradict with Islamic teachings (Al-Qaradawi, 1992, p. 125). Ghani (2009) argues that it is a huge challenge to develop Islamic entertainment in terms of *halal* and *haram*. Ghani also indicates that there are two different views of Muslim scholars (conservative vs. moderate) on the issues of whether entertainment is *halal* (in some forms) or completely *haram*. For some Muslim scholars, entertainment is *halal* if the objectives and performances emphasize intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects, for example, the lyrics of songs must be based on Islamic teaching. Hence, understanding Islamic entertainment concept can help providers to create appropriate entertainment for Muslim customers.

A finding from a study by Saad et al. (2014) show that appropriate entertainment, which is 'no night club', is the third most important *halal* hotel design after segregated facilities and signs into the Qibla. The authors indicate that many religious Muslims (*ulama*) forbidding the use of musical instruments, song, dance and amusement for entertainment purposes. This is because entertainment such as nightclubs, pubs, snooker and video games can cause a Muslim to neglect his duty to God (Wan Hussin, 2005). In addition, the behaviour of Muslim artists that are in conflict with Islamic teachings has led to entertainment being regarded as something negative that harms society (Saad et al., 2014), especially youth. However, entertainment is about not only songs, dancing, and music, it also involves physical and spiritual aspects of life. For example, religious song, dance and music is integral to the Sufi traditions of Islam.

Fikri and Tibek (2014) argue that life is about fulfilling physical and the spiritual needs, which include entertainment, relaxation, and recreation. Their study on the acceptance of Islamic entertainment (*nasyid*) in North Sumatera, Indonesia, presented a number of important findings that relate to the current thesis and showed that 86.7% (267 out of 308) respondents like *nasyid*. The reasons given were the lyrics of the *nasyid* contain advice about life, the attire worn by the *nasyid* group as well as the moderate body movement is also suited to Muslim culture. This is consistent with the concept of entertainment in Islam that is always remembering God in every act and keeping with the *Syariah* law (Al-Qaradawi, 1992). Fikri and Tibek (2014) argue that Muslims cannot avoid the influence of entertainment from other cultures (which can include those who do not share Islamic values), especially in multiracial countries.

Hospitality providers provide a range of facilities to customers such as television, dining areas, and swimming pools. According to Rejab and Lateh (2012), to be in line with Shariah law, the television channel selection should have an Islamic information channel and other appropriate channels such as education, and avoiding the subscription of 'unbeneficial' channels. In addition, information such as prayer schedule, a list of mosques and information regarding *halal* restaurants near the hotel should be provided for customer reference. Moll (2010) in her study on *halal* entertainment describes the values that exist in the satellite television program. She details the producers' opinion on what should be aired by the *halal* satellite channel, which covers programs for devoted Muslim and less devoted Muslim customers (Muslims with less knowledge about Islam or those with a different reading of Islam). However, commercialization of *halal* entertainment has created confusion between religious and commercial entertainment (Eum, 2009). In selecting suitable channels for *halal* hospitality service, the provider may not consider whether their customers are pious or not. Providers are often bound to the number of suitable channels available and the associated costs to supply them. Thus, different providers (i.e. small versus large hospitality providers) may have different views on specific channels to subscribe to in order to suit their budget.

A study conducted by Battour et al. (2011) on foreign Muslim tourists in Malaysia found that these tourists have set a high priority on the availability of Islamic entertainment such as the segregation of men and women's beaches, swimming pools, and gym, and the

absence of adult video channels in hotel entertainment. However, it was acknowledged that such Islamic entertainment may not be appropriate for Western or non-Muslim guests, although hotels could block services to channels as one means of managing what guests can see. Nevertheless, employing Islamic entertainment in the hospitality industry may create challenges in fulfilling the entertainment wishes of non-Muslim customers.

Okhovat (2010) noted how the closure of gaming rooms, unisex hair salon, and revocation of license sales of alcohol has affected hospitality providers in Iran. In addition to the decline in the influx of foreign tourists, especially non-Muslims, the closure of these places also affects Iran's tourism industry due to government policies that are seeking *halal* source income only. Okhovat also argue that Islam is not the only religion that is professed by Iranians and foreign tourists and this poses a dilemma for Muslim countries that want to enact *shariah* law yet also want to develop modern tourism. Some countries chose to continue to isolate tourists from the wider society, while others strive to find a balance between pleasing the tourists and gaining benefit to the local economy, while ensuring that religious requirements are respected, such as in the case of Muslim friendly service practices in Malaysia, Turkey and UAE (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Razalli et al., 2012). Din (1989) argued that Malaysia for example, is practicing a strict policy for Muslim and a moderate policy of non-Muslim in terms of tourism activities. Some activities, such as avoidance of gambling, no consumption of pork and alcohol, consumption of *halal* food, and control of gender proximity are strictly imposed only on Muslims. Such policies can be adopted by other countries to meet the requirements of the secular and religious values of the Muslim societies. However, he also argued that when there is a compromise in services involving religious prohibition, it will cause problems unless there is effective enforcement by authorities (Din, 1989). Similarly, Nik Muhammad (n.d) discussed the conditions of the companies that following the Shariah law. According to Shariah Advisory Council (SAC) in Malaysia, companies that claim themselves as *halal* must not be involved in business activities such as entertainment (*haram* entertainment), interest (*riba*), and gambling. The conformity to these conditions is a 'must' in the structure and spiritual aspects of *halal* business operation.

3.3.3 Business Values and Philosophy

Abuznaid (2009) defines Islamic ethics as “the code of moral principles that are prescribed by the Quran and Sunnah” (p. 280). Business ethics refer to ethical rules and principles should be obeyed by everyone to avoid immoral behaviour and unethical conduct in any business activities. The basis for Islamic ethics include truthfulness, trustworthiness, generosity and leniency, and avoidance of immoral behaviour such as fraud, cheating, and deceit. In Islam, the obedience to the ethical rules and principles is a part of worshiping obligation (Dasuqkhi *et al.*, 2013). They further argue that unethical issues in business, such as product misrepresentation, are against Islamic ethical values. They also emphasize the importance comprehensive understanding of Islamic ethical values to curb unethical behaviour in *halal* hospitality service.

Rice (1999) suggested that ethical values such as honesty, trustworthiness, and care for the poor are similar from the point of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, and that there is a common approach within the Abrahamic religions. However, with respect to business, Islamic ethical values cover the entire aspect of business practices such as in the commitment of interest (*riba*), taxation (alms or *zakat*) and accumulation of wealth. These are similar to the other Abrahamic religions but also depend on scriptural interpretation, the nature of institutions and religiosity. Muslims are obliged to earn a living (e.g. by doing business) and if capable, they are expected to pay *zakat*. *Zakat* means purification which is also means spiritual redemption. Each Muslim is obligated to use his wealth for the sake of Islam, such as by fulfilling the needs of the poor. The Quran states that:

Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

(At-Taubah, 103)

Complying with Islamic ethical values in obtaining sources of wealth is a form of worship in Islam, not complying is therefore a sin. For example, *riba* is *haram* in Islam as it puts burden on others to pay more for a loan. The accumulation of wealth for personal interest is also *haram* as the wealth must be distributed to others in need through *zakat*

(Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011). As stated in the verse above, the commitment in *zakat* can purify the individual's spirit. The purpose of the life of a Muslim is to receive mercy from Allah which refers to earnest compliance to all the teachings of Islam. By successfully undertaking all the Islamic requirements one will be blessed in this life and the hereafter. However, in contrast, in the commercial context, the satisfaction achieved is to provide the best satisfaction to the accommodation users themselves – Muslim and family-oriented customers. If the *halal* service offered exceeds what the customer expects, then it will give the best customer satisfaction. Consequently, Islamic ethics itself will potentially have a positive implication on the professionalism of the work that creates ethical workers, the work of qualitative achievement of organizational goals, and summarizes the excellent organization (Ghozali & Kamri, 2015). Nevertheless, the possibility of conflict between Islamic and secular goals of service remain, when the accommodation users have other belief systems outside Islam, of where when management philosophy is more commercially oriented.

Rice (1999) argues that there is a gap between the philosophy and practice of Islamic ethics in some Muslim countries, especially in the area of international trade and banking. She stresses on in any business dealing, business people have to know a culture's ideal set of ethics prior to the actual ethical practice as there are differences between the two. For example, in Egypt, a foreign businessperson is well appreciated if he demonstrates an interest and respect in Islamic culture. Teng (2011) argues that hospitality providers have to pay attention to cultural differences and provide a variety of services to create a true hospitality experience. Understanding culture enables providers to develop effective strategies to increase customer satisfaction given that operating a business and providing genuine hospitality coexist in hospitality service. Providers should reduce the business oriented image of hospitality, but are encouraged to show generosity and create reciprocal relationships with customers in order to achieve a balance between commercial profits and customer satisfaction. Morgan (2004) indicates that educating hospitality managers to be more genuine, and knowing their own qualities of self-awareness and creativity, is significant to satisfy customers' demand. He suggested rediscovering humanistic values to encourage managers to build genuine relationships with customers. By participating in the courses and trainings offered by *halal* authorized authorities for example, Muslim and non-Muslim providers can increase their understanding of *halal*

hospitality concept (Alina, Norhayati, Syamsul, Mashitoh, & Yusop, 2013). Moreover, many non-Muslims misunderstand *halal* food, for example, as a religious ritual, instead of it being framed as a way of ensuring that it is healthy, hygienic, safe and nutritious for consumption. If such understanding is increased, then they will appreciate the benefits of providers obtaining the *halal* certificate.

Mukherjee (2014) argues that *halal* is a form of spiritual capital, which is disseminated through the aid of *halal* verification. Murkherjee (2014) highlights the holiness of Islam that encompasses the moral and spiritual aspect of life, yet it requires verification when it comes to *halal* and *haram* matters especially when exercised contrary to global standards. He also argued that *halal* may be treated as just another product to be exchanged for profit in the global market as some companies are willing to set aside deeper religious requirements in order to achieve substantial profits. Hanzae and Ramezani (2011) discuss about the need for businesses worldwide to participate in the *halal* industry to gain profit. They note the profits gained by *halal*-friendly burgers, tacos, and chicken (e.g. McDonald's, Taco Bell, and KFC) when joining the *halal* industry, although such measures raise further questions about the way in which *halal* hospitality is framed and understood. Nevertheless, the use of *halal* certification is important in order to be accepted by Muslim customers in many non-Islamic countries as well as some Islamic countries as well, such as Malaysia.

3.4 Halal Standards

There are several concerns with regards to *halal* standard. Dolan (2010) argues that the *halal* industry is excessively concerned as to “who should lead the industry, who gets to create *halal* standards, and whose standards are best” (p. 50). If a global standard existed, providers would not need to compare the superiority and the trustworthiness of certification bodies, for example, the certification bodies from the Middle East are trusted more than those of Australia and Southeast Asia (Dolan, 2010), because of the history and strength of Islam in the Middle East. Muslim scholars also have stronger influence in the implementation of Islamic law on those countries (Zamani-farahani & Henderson, 2010) compared with other Muslim countries in the world.

Harvey (2010) argues about the importance of having a universal *halal* standard in order to curb fraud in *halal* industry. For example, in the United Kingdom, the sale of non-*halal* that is claimed as *halal* meat by irresponsible providers creates difficulty for Muslims in purchasing *halal* meat. The presence of a universal *halal* standard that covers the rules and regulations with specific definitions of *halal* could overcome the many issues including *halal* fraud in *halal* business. Similar to Dolan (2010), Harvey (2010) raised concerns about who should set the universal *halal* standard. Further, he argues about whom is responsible to take action on fraud in the industry and to the extent to which a country is obliged to curb fraud if involving international providers outside of its national jurisdiction. Halim and Salleh (2012) also stress the need for uniformity of the *halal* standard globally to assist the growth of *halal* industry. The absence of a universal *halal* standard leads to disagreements in many aspects such as animal feed, slaughtering methods, packaging, and logistics. In addition, confusion and misunderstanding exist as a result of countries having different *halal* standards. However, to produce a universal *halal* standard, some countries include Malaysia would need to compromise their autonomous rights as part of any international agreement. Nevertheless, such actions may not benefit Malaysia as JAKIM's *halal* standard is internationally recognised for its stringent criteria and is used by several major trading nations (Badrudin et al., 2012). Moreover, less interest is shown for a universal *halal* standard by some countries and trading blocs, for example the European Commission, that already have strong food laws and regulations (Othman, Sungkar, & Wan Hussin, 2009).

3.4.1 Malaysian *Halal* Standard

Malaysia has several standards that can be used to guide the Malaysian business people in *halal* matters. Malaysian *halal* standards are also used by some other countries to certify their *halal* products and services. The standards include the MS1500:2004 which is the most admissible standard for *halal* food globally; MS1900:2005 guides the organization of the principles and practice of quality management from Islamic perspectives; and MS2610:2015 is for the management of tourism facilities, products and services for Muslims in hospitality accommodation (HDC, 2015). Malaysia's has established *halal* standards covering the areas of chemicals, hospitality service, packaging, food production and preparation, furs, cosmetics, and quality management system (Table 3.10).

Table 3.10: List of *halal* standards in Malaysia

Malaysian Standards (MS)
MS 2594:2015 <i>Halal</i> chemicals for use in potable water treatment - General guidelines
MS 2610:2015 Muslim friendly hospitality services – Requirements
MS 2565:2014 <i>Halal</i> Packaging-General Guideline
MS 1500:2009 <i>Halal</i> Food - Production, preparation, handling and storage - General guidelines (Second revision)
MS 2200: Part 1: 2008 Islamic Consumer Goods - Part 1: Cosmetic and personal care - General guidelines
MS 2200-2: 2012 Islamic Consumer Goods - Part 2: Usage of animal bone, skin and hair – General guidelines
MS 1900:2005 Quality management systems - Requirements from Islamic perspectives
MS 2300: 2009 Value-based management system – Requirements from an Islamic perspective
MS 2424: 2012 <i>Halal</i> Pharmaceuticals – General Guidelines
MS 2400 Series on Halalan-Tayyiban Assurance Pipeline
MS 2393: 2010 (P) Islamic and <i>halal</i> principles - Definitions and interpretations on terminology

Source: Adapted from HDC - Halal Standards (2017)

Sirajuddin et al. (2013) argue that the Malaysian standards emphasize the physical aspect of products, and food and beverage in particular. Other aspects such as services, leisure and entertainment are not included. Samori and Sabtu (2012) for example, stated that it is important to have a *halal* standard for hospitality service in order to increase the confidence of customers on *Shariah law* compliant practices on its products, instruments, operations, practices, and management. However, there is currently no legal standard being developed for hospitality providers to enable them to cover all aspects of their facilities and services when applying for *halal* certification. The basic requirements of the standards cover the aspects of *halal* and *tayyib* such as safety, cleanliness, and quality (Table 3.11),

while HDC (2015) regard the introduction of MS2610:2015 as good guidance for providers in managing their hospitality service.

Table 3.11: Basic requirements for *halal* in MS2610:2015

1.	Does not contain any parts or products of animals that are non- <i>halal</i> to Muslims or products of animals which are not slaughtered according to Shari'ah law?
2.	Does not contain any ingredients that are Najs according to Shari'ah law?
3.	Is safe and not harmful
4.	Is not prepared, processed or manufactured using equipment that is contaminated with things that are Najs (filth or unclean) according to Shari'ah law?
5.	The food or its ingredients do not contain any human parts or its derivatives that are not permitted by Shari'ah law?
6.	And during its preparation, processing, packaging, storage or transportation, the food is physically separated from any other food that does not meet the requirements stated in items 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, or any other things that have been decreed as Najs (filth or unclean) by Shari'ah law.

Source: Adapted from HDC (2015)

Che Omar et al. (2014) discuss the notion of an Islamic Quality Standard (IQS) for hospitality service. They present 18 requirements that are divided into seven ranking criteria (Table 3.12). The first rank (IQS1) offers basic quality requirements and the seventh rank (IQS7) presents the highest quality requirements for *halal* hospitality. In terms of the level of *Shariah law* compliance, IQS1 to IQS2 are categorized as weak, IQS3 to IQS5 are moderate, and IQS6 to IQS7 are the highest standard. The IQS are cumulative.

Table 3.12: Islamic Quality Standard (IQS) for *halal* hotel

IQS	Requirements
IQS1	Bedroom (1 queen/2 standard size bed and telephone). Convenient accessibility and staffs are on duty 24 hours; Qiblat direction, prayer mat and time schedule for prayer ; Serve <i>halal</i> breakfast; At least 2 prayer rooms
IQS2	Restaurant serving <i>halal</i> food
IQS3	Serving <i>halal</i> food at all times
IQS4	Scheduling of swimming pool or spa according to gender
IQS5	Spacious bedroom for prayer; Prayer rooms available by gender
IQS6	Spa and gymnasium by gender; Additional facilities e.g. separate saloon for male and female, boutique arcade; Serving <i>sahoor</i> (pre-dawn meal) and <i>Iftar</i> (fast breaking) during Ramadhan.
IQS7	2 ≥ swimming pool by gender; 2 ≥ spa by gender; 4 prayer rooms made available for hotel guest; More than 2 restaurants of <i>halal</i> international cuisine; Entertainment for family and by gender; Bathrooms equipped with bidets

Source: Adapted and modified Islamic Quality Standard (Che Omar et al., 2014)

Mathew, Abdullah, and Ismail (2014) indicate that although the *halal* hospitality concept is complex, some of the rules and requirements are possible to implement within organizations. For example, the use of *halal* logo to prove to customers the service provided are *halal* compliant. However, with about 122 *halal* certifying bodies around the world with a different *halal* standard and logo, there are clearly implementation difficulties when import and export activities with other countries are involved (Ab. Halim & Mohd Salleh, 2012). Many countries have developed their own *halal* standard including Brunei, Maldives, and Jordan (Table 3.13), even though many studies that examine *halal* issues state the importance of having uniform *halal* standards in order to facilitate various industries and sectors such as food, agriculture, shipping, and logistics (Aziz & Sulaiman, 2014). Alternatively, more countries need to pay attention to the mutual recognition of *halal* standards in the development of free trade agreements as a way of making international trade in *halal* products easier.

Table 3.13: Examples of *halal* standards from other countries

Country	<i>Halal</i> Standard
Brunei	Brunei Darussalam Standard for <i>Halal</i> Food PBD 24:2007 -Guidelines for <i>Halal</i> Certification (BCG HALAL 1) -Guideline for <i>Halal</i> Compliance Audit (BCG HALAL 2) -Guideline for Certification of <i>Halal</i> Compliance Auditor (BCG HALAL 3) -Guideline for <i>Halal</i> Surveillance Audit (BCG HALAL 4)
Maldives	<i>Halal</i> products 2011 Inspection and monitoring are only limited to the port of entry. The majority of the imported goods being checked at the Port of Entry is only checked for the presence of pork, pork products or alcohol and <i>halal</i> certificates for the poultry and meat products.
Jordan	The Conformity Assessment Centre (CAC) Developing the <i>halal</i> certification scheme in Jordan on its genuine belief that <i>halal</i> certification is an urgent need due to the expanding markets worldwide.

Source: Adapted from Halim and Salleh (2012, pp. 7-8)

3.4.2 *Halal* Certification

Depending on the national jurisdiction *halal* certificates can be issued by any individual Muslim, Islamic organization or agency. The national legal context frames the capacity to both regulate and issue certificates. Social acceptance of such certificates is up to the

importing countries or Muslim societies. However, it is typically the responsibility of the authorized authorities to check providers' compliance with the requirements of *halal* certification and associated law so as to ensure the safety of consumers (Aziz & Sulaiman, 2014; Abdul et al., 2013). For example, in Malaysia, providers are subject to legal action if they use the *halal* logo to promote products that contravene the principles of Shariah law (Manual procedure for Malaysia *halal* certification (3rd Revision), 2014). Other than that, statutes created by governments such as the *Trade Description Act 2011*, *Food Act 1983*, and *Abattoir Act (Private) 1993* can be used for enforcement purposes (Halim et al., 2014). For example, issuing bodies for a *halal* certificate from other countries must get approval from JAKIM or MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia) to export products to Malaysia and Indonesia. This is to confirm that the issuing body of the exporting country is following the guidelines provided by JAKIM or MUI (Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011). Samori and Sabtu (2012) indicate that *halal* certification is important to attract customers to choose a *halal* product and service.

Non-Muslim trading companies may also acknowledge the importance of *halal* certification. Abdullah et al. (2012) stated that providers should consider in having a *halal* certificate in order to gain advantage in business so as to secure customers' trust, satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term relationship. Abdul, Ismail, Mustapha, and Kusuma (2013) found that most of the small size businessmen in Jogjakarta, Indonesia, agreed that having a *halal* certificate can enhance customers' satisfaction, confidence and trust. Moreover, *halal* certification can increase market share and competitiveness. However, in Abdul et al's (2013) study, only 60% (102 out of 153) of the businesses are *halal* certified due to the non-compulsory enforcement of *halal* certification and the preference of business to focus on the local market. It is also a common situation for Muslims to assume that many products and services provided in Muslim countries are *halal*, even if this may not actually be true, thus reducing the dependency on *halal* certification in business operations (Nooh, Nawai, Mohd Dali, & Mohammad, 2007). Wan Hassan (2008) found that more than 50% (out of 99) of *halal* restaurant providers in New Zealand have no interest in applying for *halal* certification. The reasons given by some of these Muslim providers include because Muslim customers have to trust them because they have similar beliefs, and that they have been in the market for such a long time and are already trusted for providing *halal* hospitality among the local customers. Marzuki, Hall and Ballantine

(2012) note the limited participation of hospitality providers in Malaysia in *halal* certification, while also highlighting that a number of food service providers misuse the *halal* logo, and show it even though they are not actually certified, in order to create trust on their service. However, the question clearly arises as to why should providers commit to this unethical code of conduct when *halal* hospitality is meant to create trust with customers?

Samori and Sabtu (2012) state that the introduction of a *halal* logo can assist in identifying a product or service that has been certified *halal* by certification bodies, for example, JAKIM has introduced a standard *halal* logo for that purpose. Abdullah et al. (2012) indicate that Muslim customers are more confident with a *halal* logo from a trusted *halal* certification bodies. Hanzae and Ramezani (2011) agree that products are well accepted if the logo is authorized by a local authority or trustworthy *halal* certification bodies. The symbols used can be in Arabic lettering with the word *halal* or simply a *halal* word. The *halal* logo enhances the marketability of products in many countries and creating a good image in satisfying the customers' needs, especially Muslims. Aziz and Chok (2013) state that the element of trust is important for repeat purchases, therefore in Malaysia, not only Muslims, but non-Muslim customers as well, do consider the benefits of *halal* products and *halal* certification in their buying intention. In contrast, *halal* hospitality (food service) providers in New Zealand claimed that the Muslim customers' market is not sufficiently significant to them as New Zealand is a non-Islamic country with a minority Muslim population and many also claimed that the cost of *halal* certification is expensive (Wan Hassan, 2008). Nevertheless, 66% (46 over 70) providers do publish the *halal* sign on their premise (Wan Hassan, 2008).

The costs involved in the provision of *halal* hospitality include the certification fee, maintenance and renovation, and labour (Samori & Rahman, 2013). The Malaysian certification fee is shown in Table 3.14-3.16 according to type of industry and category. This fee is payable to JAKIM for approval purposes, as well as the provision of *halal* certificates (Marzuki et al., 2014). Maintenance and renovation costs are expensive because it involves the specific allocation of rooms for males, females, and families. Providers also need to ensure the presence of prayer rooms by gender (see Table 3.12). Providers argue that the need for such changes for certification purposes will increase costs (Karim,

Ahmad, & Zainol, 2017). However, once providers have understood *halal* requirements, future improvements and the design of new facilities should be much easier. If the religious routines of Muslim travellers are understood, and if they are the target market, providers could further improve hotel design to suit these customers' expectations (Salleh, Hamid, Hashim, & Omain, 2014). A third cost is the need to hire staff, as it requires careful planning to ensure that appropriate numbers of staff are available to handle male and female customers. The cost of staff may also be high in non-Muslim countries because of the difficulty in getting Muslim workers (Low & Cheng, 2008).

Table 3.14: Annual fee per category

Scheme	Type of Industry	Category Criteria	Annual Fee Rate (RM)
Product, logistic and manufacturing service	Micro	Yearly income less than RM300,000.00	100
	Small	Yearly income from RM300,000.00 to less than RM 15 million	400
	Medium	Yearly income from RM15 million to RM50 million	700
	Multinational	Yearly income more than RM50 million	1000

Source: Translated from *Halal Malaysia* (2017)

Table 3.15: Annual fee per hotel kitchen/restaurant

Food Premise Scheme Hotel: Kitchen/Restaurant	
Category	Annual Fee Rate (RM) – Each Kitchen
4 Star and above	500
3 Star and below	200

Source: Adapted and Translated and from *Halal Malaysia* (2017)

Table 3.16: Annual fee per catering/food catering service/convention centre kitchen

Food Premise Scheme: Catering/Food Catering Service/Convention Centre Kitchen		
Type of Industry	Criteria	Annual Fee Rate (RM)
Small	Yearly income less than RM500,000.00	100
Medium	Yearly income from RM500,000.00 to RM5 million	400
Large	Yearly income more than RM 5 million	700

Source: Adapted and Translated from *Halal Malaysia* (2017)

Hanzaee and Ramezani (2011) suggest that providers need to gain a clear understanding of the cost involved in the application of *halal* certification in order to assess its benefits and the repercussions for their business. The cost can be expensive if the entire process of certification needs to be done annually. In some cases, providers may have to change the ingredients in their food production if any of the ingredients do not qualify for the *halal* standard. Based on the current development of the *halal* hospitality industry in Malaysia, Salleh et al. (2014) suggest consideration needs to be given to its capacity to fulfilling the needs of both Muslim and non-Muslim customers. Providers should therefore consider the acceptance by non-Muslim customers of *halal* hospitality in order to enhance the concept at an international level (Razalli et al., 2009). Hospitality providers therefore need to plan the operation of *halal* hospitality services strategically in order to avoid undesirable economic impacts. The non-Muslim customers' contribution to the hospitality industry also cannot be ignored in a multiracial country like Malaysia, however, there is a need to ensure that service innovation is capable of meet the different religious needs, yet comply with the rules and principles of *Shariah* law in Malaysia.

3.5 Summary and Conclusion

The concept of *halal* hospitality has yet to be fully explored. Lack of guidance causes confusion among providers. The development of the concept started with the physical aspects of hospitality, mainly food and the physical facilities. The concept is continually developing with more studies having been done in areas such as entertainment and business operation. In addition, the introduction of *halal* standard MS2610:2015 in Malaysia, that specifically focus on *halal* hospitality accommodation, can be a useful guideline for those involved in the hospitality industry. However, there are challenges in implementing the *halal* hospitality concept in modern, diverse and multiracial societies. Barriers to *halal* hospitality include in terms of compliance to *halal* food (e.g., no alcoholic drinks and non-*halal* foods), entertainment (e.g., no nightclub), and standards (e.g., fulfilment of *halal* requirements). Providers of *halal* hospitality services should aware of the *halal* standard and other statutes in relation to its requirements. Failure to comply with *halal* regulations will cause providers to be subject to legal action. A broader international challenge is that most countries appear uninterested in the development of uniform *halal* standards. If this issue is not resolved, it will potentially burden providers with other problems including the handling of *halal* logistics and meeting the requirements of different *halal* standards from different countries.

CHAPTER FOUR

ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS IN MALAYSIA

4 Introduction

This chapter describes the current situation of the hospitality industry in Malaysia. The first section describes its contribution to the Malaysian economy. While the second section presents the statistical information of accommodation providers, section three reveals the number of tourist arrivals from the majority Muslim population countries in connection to *halal* hospitality. The fourth section describes the development of *halal* hospitality accommodation in Malaysia, although it is noted that there is little previous research that exists on the acceptance of *halal* hospitality among providers in the country. Section 4.5 elaborates the *halal* hospitality provision in a wider context to non-Muslims. The conclusion and summary of the chapter is presented in the final section.

4.1 Economic Contribution

The accommodation sector plays an important role in the development and growth of the tourism industry worldwide. In Malaysia, the accommodation sector contributed RM13.9 billion (US\$3.31 billion) in 2015 compared to RM9.8 billion (US\$2.33 billion) in 2010 (DOSM, 2017). The number of hotels increased about 83.1% (2251 units) from year 2011 to 2016 (Table 4.1). As a result, the total supply of rooms has increased about 66.5% (128,632 units) during a six year period.

Table 4.1: Number of hotels and rooms supply

Year	No. of Hotels	No. of Room
2016	4961	321,972
2015	4800	304,720
2014	4070	262,020
2013	3090	209,530
2012	2720	195,450
2011	2710	193,340

Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2017)

The wealth of the Middle East as well as those of Islamic religious faith-centered countries has led to the increase demand of *halal* tourism / Islamic tourism and has contributed to Malaysia's success in attracting Muslim tourists into the country (Mohd Yusof & Muhammad, 2013; Ryan, 2016). MOTOUR has developed many other projects to further enhance the development of *halal* hospitality. These include high-impact projects such as positioning Malaysia as a duty-free shopping destination for tourist goods, establishing a global biodiversity hub, and targeting more international events to attract more visits. An increase in tourist arrivals is expected to boost occupancy rates as well as revenue for accommodation providers. High spending tourists, for example guests from Arab countries, are mostly like to shop for luxury goods, and stay longer at tourist destinations (Ariffin & Hasim, 2009; Armstrong, Badran, & King, 2011; Prayag & Hosany, 2014) and travel in a large group of family members (Ladki, Mikdashi, Fahed, & Abbas, 2002). These groups of tourists are expected to utilize the high-ranking (i.e., 4-star and above hospitality business) *halal* certified accommodation businesses. However, high rank *halal* certified accommodation providers in Malaysia are very limited (Sabtu & Samori, 2012) (see also Chapter Seven, Table 7.8 classified accommodation providers by star ranking in Malaysia).

Although there are limited numbers of *halal* certified accommodation in Malaysia, tourists (i.e., Muslims or non-Muslims) can opt for any accommodation available, ignoring whether these accommodations are *halal* certified or *halal* claimant. As noted in Chapter Three, providers may otherwise have constraints in implementing the *halal* requirements. Furthermore, constraints in market power, capital, and resources (Shah, El-Gohary, & Hussain, 2015) influence the decision as to whether to comply with *halal* hospitality requirements or not. In general, small size businesses have limitations in the forms of capital, competition, technology, and business networking (Arif, 2009). In Malaysia, small size businesses also have a lack of awareness of *halal* certification and are less trusted in the production of quality products and services (Arif, 2009). This may be because that without the authorized *halal* certificate; these small size providers cannot convince customers that their products are truly *halal* (Mohd Sharif & Lah, 2014).

It is estimated that in 2015, Muslims (Malays) represented about 50.0% of the total population (Portal 1Klik, 2017) (Table 4.2) constituting a significant market for accommodation providers. The supply of hospitality service should be better received if it complies with *halal* requirements in a majority Muslim population (Said et al., 2014). Table 4.2 illustrates that more than 70% of the total population of the states of Kedah, Kelantan, Pahang, and Terengganu are Muslims. As in 2016, 64.2% (46.44 million) of hotel guests were domestic and 35.8% (25.91 million) are international guests (Tourism Malaysia, 2016). Thus, the providers should consider obtaining the authorized *halal* certificate to increase the local market share in accommodation sector (Arif, 2009; Ab Talib, Abdul Hamid, & Thoo, 2015).

Table 4.2: Population by States and Ethnic Group, 2015 ('000)

States	Total	Malay	Others Bumiputera	Chinese	Indians	Others	Non- Citizens
Malaysia	30,485.2	15,479.6	3,672.4	6,642.0	2,012.6	267.4	2,411.4
Johor	3,553.6	1,893.1	60.9	1,075.1	230.7	16.9	276.9
Kedah	2,071.9	1,569.1	5.3	263.2	143.2	19.6	71.5
Kelantan	1,718.2	1,585.9	20.9	54.4	4.8	11.5	40.7
Melaka	872.9	552.7	11.5	215	51.4	4.8	37.6
Negeri							
Sembilan	1,098.4	621.9	20.7	234.3	154	4.2	63.3
Pahang	1,623.2	1,146.0	83.8	241.6	66.3	7.8	77.7
Pulau Pinang	1,663.0	692.4	7	689.6	166	4.7	103.3
Perak	2,477.7	1,314.4	72.3	713	293.3	10.5	74.2
Perlis	246	210.2	1.2	19.2	3.1	4.7	7.5
Selangor	5,874.1	3,069.1	77.5	1,499.4	712	41.4	474.7
Terengganu	1,153.5	1,092.2	3.5	27.7	3	2.5	24.6
Sabah	3,543.5	268.5	1,968.1	311.5	12.2	112.7	870.4
Sarawak	2,636.0	616.9	1,276.3	602.7	7.9	8.9	123.3
FT Kuala							
Lumpur	1,768.0	729.5	21.5	684.1	163	15.2	154.7
FT Labuan	96.8	33.9	40.9	10.7	0.8	1.7	8.8
FT Putrajaya	88.3	83.8	0.9	0.5	0.9	0.1	2.1

Source: Adapted from Portal 1Klik (2017)

Halal related industries can grow rapidly as a result of high demand from consumers. In the context of the Malaysian Muslim community which is inclined to buy *halal* products and services, including fashion and entertainment (Said, 2016), having more *halal* related information through online and offline media can raise awareness and understanding of *halal* matters (Abdul et al., 2013; Rezai, Mohamed, & Shamsudin, 2012). Several studies reveal that the inability to market and to provide useful information for their services is a substantial weakness of small size accommodation (Chen, Chen, Tseng,

& Chang, 2014; Jeong, 2004; Lanier, Caples, & Cook, 2000). However, the use of modern technology, such as the Internet, may help overcome the inability to market their services (Chen et al., 2014). Concurrently, promotions and campaigns to visit Malaysia also have a positive impact on the increase in the number of domestic tourists and the influx of international tourists (Tourism Malaysia, 2017). However, the number of tourist arrivals from Islamic countries to Malaysia is lower than the number of tourists from non-Muslim countries and this raises questions about the targeting and effectiveness of *halal* tourism promotion activities itself and may reflect back to the lack of dissemination of information on *halal* tourism. Hence, full cooperation from various parties such as JAKIM, travel agencies, and accommodation providers is essential for the pursuit of Malaysia's *halal* tourism goals. However, the lack of involvement from providers in obtaining the *halal* certificate as well as other *halal* issues is seen as a challenge for Malaysia to achieve that goal (Samori & Rahman, 2013; Stephenson, 2014).

4.2 Accommodation Providers in Malaysia

The accommodation sector has grown well with the total number of accommodation establishments increased to 4,377 establishments in 2015 compared to 3,129 establishments in 2010 (Table 4.3), with budget hotels accounting for almost 80% of the accommodation market share. It is in line with the government's efforts to increase the number of tourism activities as to increase the foreign exchange earnings (Mohd Yusof, 2010). The decline in the number of chalets and other accommodation types noted in Table 4.3 may be due to a change in status of the accommodation.

Table 4.3: Comparison of key statistics of accommodation services, 2010 and 2015

	Number of establishment		Market Share (%)	
	2010	2015	2010	2015
Hotels (including resort hotels) & apartment hotels	515	621	16.5	14.1
Budget hotels	2123	3395	68.0	77.6
Chalets	255	191	8.0	4.4
Rest houses/guest houses/ hostels/bed & breakfast/camping grounds	236	170	7.5	3.9
Total	3,129	4,377	100	100

Source: Department of Statistic Malaysia (2016)

Hospitality accommodation in Malaysia consists of various types and sizes (Table 4.4). Small size accommodation providers usually offer less service as they have more limited resources (Bastakis, Buhalis, & Butler, 2004). SME Corporation Malaysia defined small size businesses as those with 5 - 29 employees and having an annual sales turnover of RM300,000 to RM2,999,999 (US\$71,462.6 to US\$714,625.77). Micro businesses are those with less than five total employees and with an annual sales turnover of less than RM300,000 (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2015). Previous studies (Ab Rahman et al., 2011; K. Cheng, 2008, Marzuki, 2012) stated that cost is one of the constraints to meet the *halal* hospitality requirements and this may be a significant issue for small and micro accommodation providers.

Small accommodation providers are regarded as benefiting from the change of customers' life-style in the consumption of *halal* food (Siaw & Rani, 2012). Nevertheless, the size of businesses does influence the decision to apply for the *halal* certificate (Azmi, Chern, Che Man & Sambasivan, 2008). Many small size business operators in Terengganu, Malaysia, for example, stated that having the *halal* certificate could increase the market share but the process of getting it is complicated (Abdul et al., 2013). Furthermore, as they are offering limited services (Abdullah et al., 2012), providers may assume the customers accept their limitations and do not bother to request for any *halal* specific items. However, small size accommodation providers could utilize their websites to inform the provision of *halal* services on attributes such as prayer mat, prayer room or Muslim friendly environment even if they do not have *halal* certificate or do not provide food at their

accommodation. For small-sized businesses, online appearance alone is insufficient but exposure to potential market with the information most needed by customers can provide benefits (Smithson et al., 2010).

Table 4.4: Categories of hospitality accommodation

Category	Description
Hotels (including resort hotel) and Apartment hotels	<p>Hotels (including resort hotels) refer to establishments that provide short term accommodation especially for tourists and travellers. Hotels also provide services such as restaurants, swimming pools and convention facilities for groups to organize conventions and meetings. The classification of a hotel (including resort) is based on 3 star and above in line with the rating systems used by MOTAC.</p> <p>Apartment hotel is a fully furnished and exclusive apartment or house. An apartment normally provides more space, comfortable and privacy compared to a hotel.</p>
Budget hotels	<p>Budget hotels refer to accommodation that provides limited facilities compared to hotels. Generally budget hotels do not provide banquet, conference hall, swimming pool, gymnasium, sauna, games facilities (outdoor and indoor) and others. The classification of budget hotels are based on 2 star and below or Orchid rating in line with the rating systems used by MOTAC.</p>
Rest houses/guest houses/ hostels/ bed & breakfast/ camping grounds*	<p>A rest house/guest house are a private home which has been converted for the exclusive use of guest accommodation. Hostels provide short term accommodation to students or travellers. Facilities provided are bed with shared common bathrooms and lounge rooms. Private rooms are often unavailable. Rental on hostel are usually less expensive than hotels.</p> <p>A bed & breakfast is a lodging typically operated by a house owner (s) or members of their family who live there. Guests will be accommodated at night in private bedrooms and breakfast is served in the morning.</p> <p>Camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks and trailer parks is provision of accommodation in campgrounds, trailer parks, recreational camp, fishing and hunting camps for short stay visitors. Also provision of space and facilities for recreational vehicles.</p>
Chalets	<p>Chalets refer to the concept of living accommodation which is constructed using wood and built separately. Normally chalets are built in tourist areas such as beaches and mountains.</p>

Note:* Include homestay

Source: Adapted from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2016)

Bigger operators or high-ranking hospitality accommodation such as hotels, resorts, and apartment hotels conversely have more to offer with respect to capacity, facilities, staff, and services, but are hesitant to comply with *halal* hospitality requirements. One of the reasons for this is that often such accommodation is owned or managed by foreign companies from non-Muslim countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Singapore (Samori & Rahman, 2013). These hotels maintain standard operation practices (SOP) worldwide, for example, providing foreign and local foods, which can be non-*halal* or claimed as *halal*. Therefore, it is not possible for these hotels to implement the Malaysian specific *halal* requirements and obtain the *halal* certificate without changes in operation processes. However, all-star rated hotels are required to comply with the criteria stated by the MOTOUR of Malaysia that include provision of *halal* food, a prayer room, and information on the direction to Kiblah for customers (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: A summary of minimum requirements for star rating hotel

No.	Criteria	One-Star	Two-Star	Three-Star	Four-Star	Five-Star
1.	QUALITATIVE AND AESTHETIC REQUIREMENTS					
	The function and aesthetic are based on all equipment i.e. furniture, soft furnishing, decoration and bathroom, sanitary ware and fitting	/	/	/	/	/
2.	COMMON AREAS					
	2.1 Reception Area (hall, lounge, lobby, main entrance, facilities for the disable)	/	/	/	/	/
	2.2 Bar	*	*	/	/	/
	2.3 Fine Dining Room/Restaurant/Breakfast Room	*	*	/	/	/
	2.4 Banquet/Conference Hall	*	*	/	/	/
	2.5 Restaurants	All categories – restaurants serving <i>halal</i> and non- <i>halal</i> food must have separate kitchen, storage facilities, washing facilities, utensils and equipment. Subject to JAKIM's approval				
	2.6 Outdoor Area / Indoor Area	*	*	/	/	/
	2.7 Entertainments/Recreation/Sports	/	/	/	/	/
	2.8 Sanitary Installation for Common Areas	/	/	/	/	/
	2.8.1 Public Toilets for the Disabled (OKU)	All categories: Public toilets for the disabled should be provided				
	2.9 Dustbins	/	/	/	/	/
	2.10 Thermal Conditions for Common Areas	/	/	/	/	/
	2.11 Public Telephone	/	/	/	/	/
	2.12 Lifts	/	/	/	/	/
	2.13 Corridors	/	/	/	/	/
	2.14 Corridors Precautions	/	/	/	/	/
3.	BEDROOMS REQUIREMENT					
	3.1 Minimum Size of Bedroom	/	/	/	/	/
	3.2 Bedrooms Furniture and Fitting	All categories: Green Kiblat sign to be displayed clearly on the ceiling of every room				
	3.3 Electrical Equipment	/	/	/	/	/
	3.4 Bedroom Windows	All categories: To adhere to building code set				

		by appropriate authority for equipment/appliance				
	3.5 Bedroom Doors	/	/	/	/	/
	3.6 Thermal Conditions in Bedroom, Ventilation	/	/	/	/	/
	3.7 Ventilation Rooms	All categories: Each room shall be capable of being naturally ventilated by means which can be controlled by the room occupants				
	3.8 Bedroom Communication System	/	/	/	/	/
	3.9 Audio –Visual Installations in All Categories	/	/	/	/	/
	3.10 Drinking Water in Bedrooms	*	*	/	/	/
	3.11 Information Material in Bedroom	/	/	/	/	/
	3.12 Stationery in Bedrooms	*	*	/	/	/
	3.13 Sound-Proofing Bedroom	All categories: To adhere to the local authority standard				
	3.14 Suite	*	*	*	/	/
	3.15 Sanitary Installation for Bedrooms	/	/	/	/	/
	3.16 Water Hose	All categories: Water hose / bidet or other alternatives (ladle) to be provided for ablutions				
	3.17 Bed linen, Towels	/	/	/	/	/
	3.18 Room for the Disabled (OKU)	All categories: At least one room with facilities for disabled (e.g. lower bed, shelf, table, ramps, etc) to be provided in accordance to OKU Act 2007 and to ensure the entrance door is accessible by wheelchair				
4.	SERVICES					
	4.1 Executive Floor	*	*	*	/	/
	4.2 Food and Beverage Service (Where there are no restaurants available a breakfast room is provided)	/	/	/	/	/
	4.3 Front Desk Service	/	/	/	/	/
	4.3.1 Safety Deposit Box	/	/	/	/	/
	4.3.2 Left-Luggage Facilities	/	/	/	/	/
	4.3.3 Foreign Exchange	*	*	/	/	/
	4.3.4 Business Centre	*	*	/	/	/
	4.3.5 Internet Access Services	*	*	*	/	/
	4.3.6 Credit Card Facilities	/	/	/	/	/
	4.3.7 Tourism Service	/	/	/	/	/
	4.3 Shopping Arcade	*	*	/	/	/
	4.4 Laundry & Valet Service	*	*	/	/	/
	4.5 Medical Service	All categories: Medical Practitioner available on call				
	4.6 First Aid Facilities	All categories: Provision of first aid box at front office and kitchen containing medicine, ointment, bandages, etc. (to be replenished, to observe the expiry date of the content and should be checked from time to time)				
5.	SAFETY STANDARDS AND HYGIENE					
	5.1 Fire, Electricity, and Other Safety Facilities, Security	/	/	/	/	/
	5.2 Emergency Power Supply	/	/	/	/	/
	5.3 Kitchen	/	/	/	/	/
	5.4 Separate Compartment	All categories: Where foodstuffs are stored, correct temperature should be maintained and there should be separate compartments for the storage at all category storage compartments (<i>halal</i> and <i>non-halal</i>)				
	5.5 Food Protection	/	/	/	/	/
	5.6 Refuse	/	/	/	/	/

	5.7 Insect and Vermin Protection	/	/	/	/	/
6.	STAFF					
	6.1 Number of Staff	All categories: Adequate number of staff in accordance with expected service in each category. Malaysian citizens and Permanent Residents are allowed to work as frontline staff				
	6.2 Employment					
	6.3 Qualification of The Staff	/	/	/	/	/
	6.3.1 General Qualification	/	/	/	/	/
	6.3.2 Language (Bilingual)	/	/	/	/	/
	6.3.3 Mode of Greeting	Staff should greet guest using Malaysian way of greetings				
	6.4 Staff Uniform	/	/	/	/	/
	6.5 Medical Examination	/	/	/	/	/
	6.6 Staff Facilities	/	/	/	/	/
	6.6.1 Sanitary Installations	/	/	/	/	/
	6.6.2 Rest Area & Changing Rooms	Separate rest room and changing room for male/female				
	6.6.3 Staff Canteen	*	*	/	/	/
6.7 Surau (Prayer room and the indication of Kiblat)	All categories: Every hotel is expected to provide a facility to pray/common pray room (separate for ladies and gentlemen) and in each room the direction of Kiblat should be clearly indicated.					
6.8 Staff Training (HRDF)	/	/	/	/	/	
7.	MINIMUM ROOM RATES	NA	NA	NA	/	/

Source: Adapted from MOTOUR (2017)

The Malaysia government aims to be the global *halal* hub and its policy includes encouraging more providers and suppliers to obtain the *halal* certificate to increase the growth of the *halal* industry. *Halal* supply chain and networking become crucial, participation from many sectors, especially the small and medium size businesses that represent more than 99% of the total business establishment in Malaysia (Abdul et al., 2013), are important. This is true as in hospitality industry, many *halal* certified accommodation providers are from the small and medium size businesses (Samori & Sabtu, 2012). Therefore, the success of the *halal* industry depends on the strong link among providers and suppliers as well as supportive customers that could further influence the demand for *halal* services both in local and international market. Out of 3,207 registered hotels in 2016, about 61.8% are classified as star hotels (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Classification of star-rated hotels

Total Registered	Classification							
	Star	Star-Apartment		Orchid		Grand total		
	Total Hotel	Total Room	Total Hotel	Total Room	Total Hotel	Total Room	Total Hotel	Total Room
3,207	1,167	162,852	21	4,481	793	19,544	1,981	186,877

Source: Tourism Malaysia (2016)

Competition between small size accommodation and international providers are common in Malaysia; however, the bigger players are at an advantage because of their reputation among customers (Euromonitor International, 2015). However, small size providers may have the advantage in providing *halal* hospitality. As of 2011, 67% (87.77 million out of 131 million) of local tourists are Bumiputera (Domestic Tourism Survey, 2011). The Bumiputera ethnic designation represents the Malays and the indigenous groups in Malaysia, by which most Malays are Muslim. Accordingly, there is high possibility for these tourists to choose *halal* hospitality accommodation as to suit their belief and to have that ‘peace of mind’ (Syazwan, Talib, Rubin, & Khor, 2013).

Hospitality accommodation has contributed to providing employment opportunities to many locals and foreigners. However, the hospitality industry is well recognised for its high staff turnover rate (Mkono, 2009), and depends on foreign workers to fulfil the employment vacancies. In Malaysia, there is a shortage of local workers in hospitality especially in food and beverages, front of house, and housekeeping, many of which filled by foreign workers (PEMANDU, 2009). To some providers, it is not easy to comply with the *halal* requirements as it requires Malaysian Muslim employees to work as chefs (in the processing stage) in cafes or restaurants (Halal Malaysia, 2016). Therefore, non-compliance to *halal* requirements may be because of a problem in finding a local Muslim chef and in retaining his/her service. However, the availability of Muslim chefs and/or workers may increase the confidence of Muslim customers to use the accommodation service.

In order to accommodate the growing number of tourist arrivals in Malaysia, more investment has provided the upgrade and increase of the supply of hotels, especially the four and five star hotel, with foreign ownership (MOTOUR, 2013). Arguably, this will not

increase the number of *halal* certified accommodation service, yet it has increased the *halal* claimant offering, as many of these investments derive from non-Muslim countries (ASEAN Tourism Investment Guide, 2008) with operations subject to international SOP. However, investment in the hospitality industry is expected to increase further as Malaysia is developing a strong trade relationship with the Gulf and other Muslim countries (Ab Rahman & Abu Hussin, 2009), and this may have flow-on implications for *halal* certification.

4.3 Accommodation Occupancy

Accommodation providers depend on tourists (i.e. domestic and international tourists) using commercial accommodation. However, the slower economic growth throughout the world has led to caution in spending on travel accommodation by customers (Euromonitor International, 2015). In addition, the disappearance of MH370 has reduced customer' confidence in using Malaysian Airlines (MAS) as a carrier, and contributed to a decrease in overseas tourists' arrivals into Malaysia (Euromonitor International, 2015). Consequently, this has reduced the occupancy levels in hospitality accommodation, especially hotels (Table 4.7). The number of annual international hotel guests between 2010 to 2016 still has not exceeded the 28 million achieved in 2008 and 2009.

Table 4.7: Foreign Hotel Guests (2006 – 2016)

Year	Foreign Guests (Million)
2016	25.91
2015	25.57
2014	26.29
2013	22.86
2012	26.17
2011	26.02
2010	25.60
2009	28.44
2008	28.28
2007	25.39
2006	22.46

Source: Tourism Malaysia web portal (2017), Strategic Planning Division, Tourism Malaysia (based on Hotel Survey) (2016)

As *halal* tourism aims to attract more Muslim tourists to visit Malaysia, it is significant to underpinning the relationship with visitors from Muslim countries, especially

in the Middle East (Ab Rahman & Abu Hussin, 2009). Middle Eastern tourists are characterised as high spending tourists with a long holiday period (Henderson, 2010). Yet, other Muslim countries may also be significant (Table 4.8). However, although data is incomplete in showing the trend of tourist arrivals in Malaysia from Muslim countries, the tourist arrivals from countries that recorded the greatest continuous growth were Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. However, perhaps surprisingly given the interests of Malaysian tourism in attracting Muslim tourists, there is a little knowledge available on Muslim tourists' preferences for *halal* accommodation from these countries.

Table 4.8: Visitor arrivals to Malaysia from majority Muslim countries

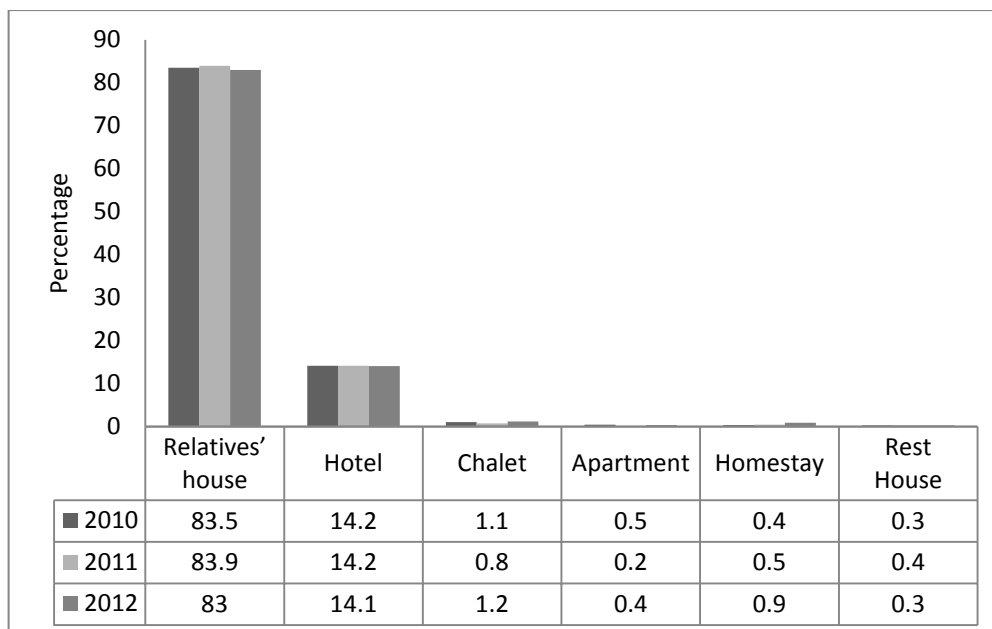
Country of Origin	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bangladesh	86,465	134,663	204,418	147,152	114,607
Brunei Darussalam	1,258,070	1,238,871	1,213,110	1,133,555	1,391,016
Egypt	16,804	21,053	26,222	25,637	30,231
Indonesia	2,382,606	2,548,021	2,827,533	2,788,033	3,049,964
Iran	127,404	78,316	72,264	65,066	47,102
Iraq	21,939	27,869	27,124	20,098	22,533
Kazakhstan	20,188	19,840	18,072	15,410	10,717
Oman	24,977	26,601	34,534	-	-
Pakistan	79,989	81,397	97,144	69,112	58,388
Saudi Arabia	102,365	94,986	113,921	99,754	123,878
Turkey	9,909	12,775	16,493	15,395	13,029
UAE	18,233	19,830	19,772	15,769	14,150
Uzbekistan	10,897	11,591	-	-	-

Source: Strategic Planning Division, Tourism Malaysia with the cooperation of Immigration Department, Malaysia (2016)

Halal tourism is significant for both international and local tourists. However, as illustrated in Figure 4.1, more than 80% of local tourists prefer to stay with friends and relatives' in comparison with staying in other types of commercial accommodation. According to Mura (2015, p. 229) in his study on homestay in Malaysia, "the hosts participate in the production and consumption of tourism experience actively" that present "their 'genuine' intention" in providing hospitality. A friendly hospitality environment in the hotel, for example, cannot readily be compared to private home hospitality. Mura also mentioned that homestay host are considered as 'foster parents' and that they are respectful by the guests (p. 229). It is impossible to gain the same respect and to treat customers as family members in the actual commercial hospitality accommodation unless there is a very long host-guest relationship. In addition to possible cost savings, this could be one of the

reasons why local tourists have little interest in using commercial hospitality accommodation services.

Figure 4.1: Domestic tourists' accommodation consumption by category



Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia & Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (2015)

MOTOUR has undertaken the Industry Partner Programme (IPP) in order to strengthen Malaysia's competitive position in the global business tourism market (Editorial, 2011, p. 6). The IPP involve convention bureaus, tourism organizations, and accommodation providers to cooperate actively in organising business events for both international and local participants. Hospitality providers can take the opportunity to increase occupancy rates by encouraging locals to use their services. Table 4.9 presents the extent of local guest occupancy of hotel accommodation from 2006 to 2015. For domestic tourists, a decline occurred from 2009 to 2013. In 2014 and 2015, the increase has already exceeded 40 million tourists compared to 2008. The IPP may be one of the reasons that triggered the increase in number of local tourists used of hotel accommodation. However, other reasons can also influence the changes such as the availability of more *halal* accommodation and general economic recovery following the global financial crisis.

Table 4.9: Local hotel guest (2006 – 2016)

Year	Number of Domestic Guests per year (Million)
2016	46.44
2015	45.94
2014	45.37
2013	34.27
2012	29.90
2011	27.74
2010	27.53
2009	32.92
2008	40.61
2007	36.25
2006	31.9

Source: Tourism Malaysia web portal (2017), Tourism Malaysia (2016)

The discussion in this section is based on the data available for hotel accommodation. However, it is difficult to find statistical data for other hospitality accommodation such as rest houses, hostels, and chalets as these forms of accommodation may have received less exposure in academic research.

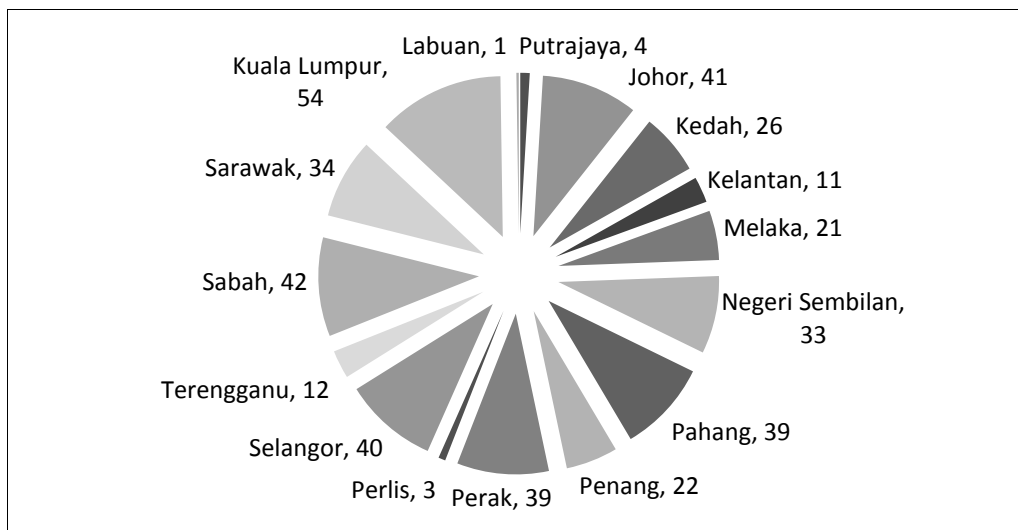
4.4 *Halal* Hospitality Provision to Non-Muslims

A study on *halal* certification by Nooh et al. (2007, para. 31) stated “The non-Malays respondents are small since they are not ready to answer the *Halal* certification issues perhaps due to their misconception on the possible complication regarding about the issues”. As discussed in Chapter Eight this study received the same responses from non-Muslim accommodation providers as they appeared to believe that revealing an incorrect understanding of the *halal* hospitality concept could affect their reputation. However, Aziz and Chok (2013) suggested that more studies on *halal* foods need to be done as the number of non-Muslims is increasing in Malaysia. The perspective from providers on the provision of *halal* food to non-Muslims is significant as food and beverage is one of the crucial aspects in *halal* hospitality service. Moreover, there has been a lack of knowledge in *halal* hospitality understanding on providing services to non-Muslims as these customers do also use the *halal* hospitality service (Razali et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important for *halal* accommodation providers to gain knowledge on those customers who want to experience authentic or spiritual hospitality (Salleh et al., 2014) based on Islamic culture. This may even be a by-product of Malaysia’s international marketing campaign “Truly Asia”

whereby Malaysia is positioned as an authentic Asian tourism experience (Ariffin & Hasim, 2009; Hashim, Murphy, & Muhamad Hashim, 2007; Che Omar et al., 2014) especially for the inexperienced non-Muslim travellers around the world.

In 2014, there were 4072 hotels in Malaysia (MOTAC, 2015). Although all hotels and resorts (rated three to five stars) were expected to become *halal* certified in February 2011 (Editorial, 2011), there were only 422 *halal* certified hotels listed on the HalalMalaysia web portal as of February 9th, 2015. These *halal* certified hotels are scattered around Malaysia with the highest number located in Kuala Lumpur (Figure 4.2). Undoubtedly, the need for *halal* hospitality is significant in light of the growing popularity of *halal* tourism in Malaysia. However, it is important to encourage providers to participate and study their potential offering of the service (Razalli et al., 2009). Moreover, risk associated with the acceptance of *halal* hospitality by non-Muslim customers may increase providers' concern over its value. Some providers may fear a declining occupancy rate and rejection by non-Muslim customers (Laila et al., 2012). Therefore, exploring the providers' perception on whether the *halal* hospitality is acceptable by non-Muslim customers is a significant area of research.

Figure 4.2: *Halal* hotels in Malaysia



Source: HalalMalaysia web portal, 2015

Muslim and non-Muslim providers may have different degrees of religious adherence. Religiosity can influence the providers' decision whether to commit to certain behaviours (Said & Hassan, 2014), for example, provision of *halal* hospitality service. Muhammad and Mizerski (2012) proposed a significant effect of religious motivation towards decision making among customers. A similar effect is expected from the accommodation providers as the extent of religious faith may signify their decision to offer *halal* hospitality authentically; as those "who adopt religion as their way of life differ significantly to those who adopt religious teachings when needed or necessary" (Muhammad & Mizerski, 2012, p. 367). Exploring the providers' feelings on providing *halal* hospitality to customers with different religion, race, or gender is important as this issue may be sensitive but relevant for discussion as it involves Muslim and non-Muslim providers in a multiracial and multi-religious society like Malaysia (Henderson, 2016).

The same context may be different if the study was to be conducted in majority Muslim population countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran, as hospitality in the Gulf region is strongly ritualized (Sobh et al., 2013). For example, with respect to accommodating the domestic customers' privacy, hotels in Gulf countries provide separate family sections, all-female wedding receptions, and female staff for female customers (Sobh et al., 2013). Dissimilarities in *halal* hospitality practices among countries may offer suggestions as to which applicable framework suits the country's tradition. However, the under exploration of the providers' perspective deserves further investigation, not only in Malaysia but also in other countries that have shown interest to comply with *halal* hospitality requirements.

In Muslim countries, males are dominant in many professions (Galloway, 2014, Offenbauer, 2005) including business. In Malaysia, as of 2015, only 560 (12.8%) of accommodation establishments were owned by females (DOSM, 2017). McMillan et al. (2011, p. 193) suggest that hospitality is "particularly effective in addressing issues surrounding subordinated women", as such in *halal* hospitality, the role of female providers may be subject to discussion beyond that of dress code and entertainment issues. To the researcher's knowledge, the role of female providers in *halal* commercial accommodation has never been discussed in any Malaysian study, while there are also limited studies available on female empowerment roles in the hospitality and tourism literature (McMillan et al., 2011). The female providers' role in *halal* accommodation

sector, especially with respect to social relations (i.e. involving business relationship with different gender), is an interesting topic for discussion covering both Muslim and non-Muslim female providers. Acceptance of female providers roles' in *halal* accommodation can be compared among Muslim countries as well as non-Muslim countries worldwide (i.e. restricted to those businesses that complying with *halal* requirements). It is also interesting to consider the different male and female accommodation providers' perspectives of social relations in *halal* hospitality operation, where there are required boundaries between male and female interaction.

Maybe there is still a little of doubt from providers as to who will stay in an Islamic hotel. There are some fears from the management of conventional hotels to change their business to an Islamic hotel. Fear of declining occupancy rates, and rejection by non-Muslim guest or foreign tourists appear critical factors. So far, experience has shown that foreign tourists and non-Muslim guests can both enjoy the Islamic hotel, particularly because it offers a quiet, comfortable, and safe area (Kompasiana, 2011). Moreover, in general, Shariah hotel revenue has also increased quite sharply (Laila et al., 2012).

4.6 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter covers information on four categories of accommodation in Malaysia; rest house (including guesthouse, hostel, bed and beverages, homestay, and campsite), chalet, budget hotel, hotels (including resorts and apartment hotels). The majority of accommodation providers lack *halal* certification. The bigger players with more capability and capacity, do not have general *halal* certification but do usually have *halal* certification in place for their food supply. This approach may have been an outcome of the standardisation of their operations worldwide. Based on these constraints, both of these groups of providers tend to provide *halal* claimant hospitality service. However, there is also substantial non-compliance to *halal* certification as well as many accommodation providers, of all sizes, not seeking to gain certification. An in-depth understanding of providers' perception in providing *halal* hospitality to non-Muslim customers can provide further insights in combating the constraints to implementing *halal* hospitality in the market place.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHOD

5 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods adopted in this thesis to achieve the research objectives and is divided into eight sections. The first section briefly describes the post-positivism paradigm in which this study is embedded. This is followed by a discussion of the methods used in previous research on *halal* hospitality to identify the most common approaches to researching the topic. In section three and four, the location of the study and the qualitative research component are introduced. In section five the quantitative research component of this study is presented, followed by research ethics in section 6. Section seven describes the experience of the researcher as a female conducting research on *halal* hospitality in Malaysia. Section eight explains the limitation of data collection in this study, followed by the chapter summary and conclusions.

As is discussed later in this chapter, the study adopts the mixed-methods as part of the research design. The qualitative component of the mixed-methods is aimed at shedding light on accommodation providers' understanding of *halal* hospitality through their different ideas and interpretations, while the quantitative component offers an overview of how *halal* hospitality is communicated through the providers' websites. The mixed methods design allows researchers to obtain multiple realities of the context and its influencers (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Prayag, 2009). In this study, this means that the initial qualitative study offers insights into how the providers put into practice *halal* hospitality. Further, their own perceptions and personal values in relation to *halal* hospitality is uncovered. In contrast, the quantitative study helps to identify which accommodation attributes are emphasized on their website in their provision of *halal* service. By combining, the results of the phases of the research (qualitative and quantitative), a deeper insight into accommodation providers' understanding of *halal* hospitality emerges.

5.1 Post-positivism

As mentioned before, the main objective of the study is to explore the understanding of *halal* hospitality among accommodation providers and how *halal* hospitality is communicated on their websites. This research is embedded within a post-positivism paradigm. This paradigm interprets meaning, experience and knowledge as ‘multiple, relational and not bounded by reason’ (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1998: xviii). In this approach, reality is constructed in a discussion whereby the meaning and the creation of new knowledge emerge as conflicting interpretations, and action possibilities are discussed during the interview. There is no right or wrong interpretation of meaning and the researcher also observes respondents’ reactions during the interview to infer meaning. The study is not to confirm or disconfirm the interpretation provided, but is more about sharing ideas and finding ways as to how the ideas could be used and spread to others (Richie & Rigano, 2001). As is discussed in the next section, post-positivism relies on the mixed-methods as the research design. Accordingly, this study explored how the providers’ understanding of *halal* hospitality is influenced by personal perception, religious beliefs, and financial considerations in the commercial hospitality setting (Kirillova, Gilmetdinova, & Lehto, 2013) through qualitative research first. The qualitative research phase of the study allows the researcher to uncover how accommodation providers implement *halal* hospitality based on their own understanding of the teachings of Islam and what is commonly practiced in everyday life. Their perspectives are not necessarily the same as to what the government or JAKIM stipulates to the *halal* hospitality business. The stipulations by such authorities are broad in scope and based on the opinion of religious scholars, which is referred to as the study of the hadith. As such, there is potentially differences in interpretation and implemented of the term by accommodation providers. Yet, the standards that are set by such authorities are in line with international standards. Hence, to better understand alignment, or lack thereof, between the stipulations by the government and JAKIM and implementation by accommodation providers, content analysis of accommodation providers’ website are used to obtain complete information on *halal* services offered. In this way, the study is able to highlight any gap between requirements as stipulated by JAKIM and actual services offered to those seeking *halal* hospitality. The information generated from the quantitative phase of the study provides a holistic picture of *halal* services provided by operators in Malaysia. Thus, as will be

discussed in more depth below, the study uses mixed-methods to achieve the research objectives.

5.2 Methods Utilised in Previous Research on *Halal* Hospitality

To help design this study and to identify its contribution to the literature, reference was made to the 15 previous studies that have been explicitly conducted on *halal* hospitality (Table 5.1). These studies use a variety of research approaches, including mixed-methods, qualitative only, and quantitative only. Information on the research focus, sample size, and method of these 15 studies are briefly presented in Table 5.1.

5.2.1 Mixed Methods Research

Mixed-methods research is a process that collects and analyses data using quantitative and qualitative research in a single study or multiphase study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The data types may be different, but useful when combined together in supporting the analysis results. Mixed methods research provides a better understanding of the subject studied (Stewart, 2011). It can also increase the strengths and reduce the weaknesses of each method (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), such as gathering both numerical and interview data to achieve the research purpose. In addition, by using both inductive and deductive forms of knowledge, the mixed-methods can offer a more holistic understanding of the social phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2003; Creswell et al., 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Moreover, mixed methods research offers alternative ways of knowing and doing research that exceeds the limits of the post-positivism paradigm by providing “what works best” in answering the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 23). Therefore, the rationale for using mixed methods research is to provide a more complete understanding of the research problem. Applying only one approach (qualitative or quantitative) in this study is deemed not to be sufficient to address the research problem or answer the research questions. Hence, by combining qualitative and quantitative components of the study, the validity of the research can be increased (Bryman, 2006). Criticisms of mixed methods research include the disagreement on its basic definitions, usefulness in the research process, and the central paradigm of the

methodology (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). However, these criticisms mostly relate to its infancy as a methodological practice. As a growing number of published social science research studies use mixed methods (Bryman, n.d), which are then well executed, the criticisms may diminish over time.

This study is exploratory in nature and cross sectional data has been obtained from 18 accommodation providers (i.e., hotel, budget hotel, homestay/lodge, and chalet. In this study, the qualitative data collection was used first to avoid assumptions of what has been understood of *halal* hospitality in order to support the ideas presented in the quantitative approach. An effort was made to generate ideas on the understanding of *halal* hospitality from the views of providers. In addition, new findings were discovered that have not been highlighted in previous research. The statistical results of the quantitative data analysis provided a general picture and facts relating to the subject of study. Creswell (2003) identified this approach as a sequential exploratory design which is useful when the research question seeks to first understand more about the phenomenon under study. Therefore, in this study the researcher adopts the mixed-methods so that the weaknesses of one approach (qualitative) is complemented by the strengths of the other (quantitative).

Qualitative research methods are often used in sampling experts on their views and perceptions of *halal* provision, *halal* authorities, and accommodation providers as shown in previous studies by Salleh, Hamid, Hashim and Omain (2014) and Saad, Ali and Abdel-ati (2014). Salleh et al. (2014), for example, conducted in-depth interviews with six experts including government officials, hoteliers, and hotel associations' representatives to obtain insights into their understanding of *halal* hospitality as practiced in Malaysia. The reliance on qualitative approaches is not surprising given that *halal* hospitality involves subjective understandings that are personal and context dependent. The qualitative approach normally involves a small number of respondents and is suited for in-depth feedback from respondents that have experienced in a phenomenon; however, the findings cannot be generalized for the entire population (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Onwugbuzie, 2004). In addition to semi-structured interviews and interviews, conceptually oriented research can also be considered as qualitative approach (Table 5.1). The difference is that conceptual research is derived from the author's thoughts on a problem or an issue and is discussed by referring to studies and other resources that are relevant to the issues under investigation.

In contrast, quantitative approaches are growing in popularity among researchers in relation to *halal* research (Fernando et al., 2008; Marzuki et al., 2012b; Razalli et al., 2013; Razzaq et al., 2016). What can be suggested is that when a study involves a large number of respondents, the use of a quantitative approach is potentially more effective and can allow comparisons to be made between groups (Creswell, 2014). However, the quantitative approach may produce too abstract and general knowledge to apply to different situations, contexts, and individuals (Johnson & Onwugbuzie, 2004). Based on Table 5.1, existing studies use questionnaires and also content analysis as part of a quantitative approach. Generally, questionnaires use both closed and open-ended questions when researching the topic while studies using content analysis tend to systematically analyse information presented through media outlets or government/industry reports. Hence, by combining the two approaches, the mixed-methods can help to broaden the understanding of a research study and/or to provide mutual support between the results of the different approaches, such as using the qualitative results to explain more about the results of the quantitative study (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Onwugbuzie, 2004). However, the potential weaknesses of the mixed-methods approach include it being more time consuming, expensive, and creating difficulty in the interpretation of conflicting results and the analysis of data (Johnson & Onwugbuzie, 2004).

Table 5.1: Previous related research on *halal* hospitality

No	Authors	Focus	Sampling Frame/Sample Size/Result	Approach/ Method
1.	Razzaq, Hall & Prayag (2016)	The capacity of New Zealand to accommodate the <i>halal</i> tourism market – Or not	367 hospitality accommodation websites with only 3 mentioning <i>halal</i>	Quantitative (Content Analysis)
2.	Che Omar, Ali Adaha, Abdul Ghaffar, & Mohd Ali (2014)	<i>Shariah</i> compliance using the Islamic tourism product index (Malaysia)	Use various sources of literatures and documents pertaining <i>Shariah</i> compliance hotel operations	Quantitative (Content analysis)
3.	Saad, Ali, & Abdel-ati (2014)	Meaning of the concept and challenges of <i>Shariah</i> compliant hotels (Egypt)	30 experts (12 academic staff, 9 industry consultants, and 9 general hospitality providers and assistant general	Mixed-method (Delphi method – 1 st stage with two open-ended questions; 2 nd stage using Likert-scale)

			hospitality providers from SHC hotels)	Both used email.
4.	Salleh, Hamid, Hashim, & Omain (2014)	Understanding of <i>Shariah</i> Compliance Hotel (SCH) practices (Malaysia)	6 experts (government officials, hoteliers, and hotel associations)	Qualitative (In-depth interviews)
5.	Stephenson (2014)	Deciphering 'Islamic hospitality': Developments, challenges and opportunities	Uses various sources of literature in relation to Islamic hospitality	Conceptual Paper
6.	Razalli, Yusoff, & Roslan (2013)	<i>Halal</i> certification practices model for hotel (Malaysia)	60 hotel staff (With 90% response rate – 54 returned)	Quantitative (Questionnaire-Given personally)
7.	Marzuki, Hall & Ballantine (2012a)	Restaurant manager and <i>halal</i> certification in Malaysia – attributes of <i>halal</i> certification (Malaysia)	643 respondents (31% of response rate) & 33 interviews	Mixed-methods (Questionnaire & Semi-structured interview)
8.	Marzuki, Hall & Ballantine (2012b)	Restaurant managers' perspectives on <i>halal</i> certification – <i>halal</i> certified, <i>halal</i> claimant, and non <i>halal</i> restaurant (Malaysia)	33 interviews	Qualitative Semi-structured interview)
9.	Marzuki (2012)	The restaurant providers' expectations on <i>halal</i> certification (Malaysia)	643 respondents & 33 interviews	Mixed-methods (Questionnaires & Semi-structured interview)
10.	Samori & Sabtu (2012)	<i>Halal</i> standard for Malaysian hotel industry	Library research and relevant authority session from <i>halal</i> industry on policies and framework on <i>halal</i> matters	Conceptual paper (Proposed for qualitative research – personal & focus group interviews)
11.	Battour, Ismail, & Battour (2011)	The impact of destination attributes on Muslim tourist's choice (Malaysia)	15 International PhD students in Malaysia (8 males & 7 females) – Focus group 53 tourists (patrons of international	Qualitative (Semi-structured questions)

			hotel Kuala Lumpur)	
12.	Henderson (2011)	Religious tourism and its management: The hajj in Saudi Arabia	Uses various sources of literature in relation to religious tourism	Conceptual Paper
13.	Marzuki, Hall & Ballantine (2011)	The attitudes of restaurant hospitality providers on <i>halal</i> certification (Malaysia)	33 interviews	Qualitative (Semi-structured interviews)
14.	Zailani, Omar, & Kopong (2011)	Reasons for hoteliers' non-compliance with <i>halal</i> certification (Malaysia)	8 hospitality providers from 8 non-compliance hotels.	Qualitative (In-depth interview)
15.	Fernando, Zailani, & Mohamed (2008)	The hoteliers' intention for not applying the <i>Halal</i> logo (Malaysia)	150 samples from 890 hotels with no <i>halal</i> logo.	Quantitative (Questionnaires -With 61 personally given to hospitality providers & 89 were sent by mail)

There is limited research on *halal* hospitality in Malaysia from the providers' perspective. As shown in Table 5.1, overarching concern in previous studies has been mainly on *halal* certification and requirements (Fernando et al., 2008; Marzuki et al., 2012a; Marzuki et al., 2012b; Marzuki, Hall, & Ballantine, 2011; Saad et al., 2014; Salleh, Hamid, & Hashim, 2014; Samori & Sabtu, 2012; Zailani, Omar, & Kopong, 2011). The present study, attempts to expand knowledge on *halal* hospitality by building on previous studies such as Saad et al. (2014) and Zailani et al. (2011), which as part of their research design included interviews with hospitality providers but these studies have not examined how *halal* hospitality is, thereafter, communicated on providers' websites.

Following Marzuki (2012), this study uses a mixed-method approach to conduct the research. However, unlike Marzuki (2012), this study starts with the qualitative phase prior to the quantitative phase. The findings from these two approaches are presented in different chapters (Chapter Six and Chapter Seven). The integration of the findings from both approaches are discussed in Chapter Eight by presenting relevant quotes from the qualitative study to support the quantitative findings.

The *halal* and accommodation attributes used in this study for the quantitative phase were primarily identified from the studies of Razzaq et al. (2016) who also drew on the studies of Battour et al. (2011), Stephenson (2014), and Henderson (2010). These attributes allow for direct comparisons of the findings of this study with the results of Razzaq et al. (2016). Razzaq et al. (2016) focus on *halal* attributes of the accommodation providers' websites in the context of New Zealand rather than Malaysia. This study thus not only investigates the information on the *halal* attributes presented on the accommodation providers' websites but also looks at relationships between these attributes and whether the accommodation are certified *halal* by JAKIM or not as well as relationships between review scores on different travel websites and *halal* attributes presented on the accommodation providers' websites.

In contrast to Salleh et al. (2014), Saad et al. (2014), Razalli et al. (2013), Zailani et al. (2011), and Fernando et al. (2008) that focus on hoteliers as their respondents, this study uses a broader conceptualisation of accommodation providers. In this study, the respondents include four categories of providers, namely, the rest house/guest house/hostels/bed and breakfast (including homestay and lodge in this thesis); chalet; budget hotel; and hotel (including resort hotel and apartment hotel). These are the four categories used in the statistical annual report for categorising accommodation providers in Malaysia. The selection of accommodation providers from all categories is appropriate due to their potential appeal to different market segments and price categories. Therefore, their perspectives on *halal* hospitality understanding and the practice of information dissemination using the website provide a better representation of *halal* hospitality in Malaysia.

Marzuki (2012) and Saad et al. (2014) conducted their studies in two phases. Marzuki (2012) used a mixed-method approach where she mailed the questionnaires in the first phase, which was then followed by face-to-face interviews in the second phase. Saad et al. (2014) instead used a qualitative approach, by which he emailed two open-ended questions in the first phase, and used a set of Likert scale questions in the second phase. Both sets of questions were emailed to respondents in these two phases. In comparison to these studies, the present study used face-to-face interviews in the first phase, and analysed the content of accommodation providers' websites in the second phase. By doing so, the

current study improves knowledge on a broad base of providers' understanding of *halal* hospitality with specific reference to religious belief as well as aspects of their commercial offering towards Muslim and non-Muslim customers. Moreover, this study also examined the extent to which the providers inform the customers on the *halal* hospitality attributes provided at their accommodation.

In terms of methods of data collection, Marzuki (2012) used mail, Razalli et al. (2013) delivered questionnaires in person, and Fernando et al. (2008) used both mail and delivery of questionnaires to respondents in the second phase of data collection. This suggests diverse ways of collecting data. In the qualitative phase, previous studies such as Salleh et al. (2014) and Zailani et al. (2011) used in-depth interviews with fewer than 12 respondents. Marzuki et al. (2012b) interviewed 33 respondents in a semi-structured interview process. The number of interviewees was not predetermined and the data saturation technique was followed (Patton, 2002). The study stopped after the 18th interview because repetition and redundancy of constructs were found from the 17th interview onwards. Hence, the final sample size was 18 respondents interviewed using the semi-structured interview for the qualitative phase of the study.

5.3 The Location of Study

The researcher has selected Malaysia as the location of study because of its commitment to become the global *halal* hub (see Chapter One on the efforts made by the Malaysian government in promoting the *halal* tourism industry worldwide). This has created the urgency in promoting and expanding the understanding of *halal* matters to many industries, including food manufacturing and production as well as in the provision of services. Tourism and hospitality has been a major focus of the government's *halal* efforts. The official number of *halal* hotels, for example, has increased by 94.8% from 2010 (22 *halal* hotels) to 2015 (422 *halal* hotels) (see Chapter Four). However, the number of *halal* certified accommodation providers is still limited when compared to the overall number accommodation providers in Malaysia, which was 1990 in 2010 as listed on the portal of Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC, 2015).

All accommodation providers were selected from those that had been in operation for at least a year for both phases of the study. The reason for selecting the time period is that the accommodation providers will have more experience in operating their hospitality business. During this period, awareness and knowledge of *halal* related issues will likely have increased and influenced their insights into the concept in light of actual experiences. Providers can gain more knowledge and experiences by joining *halal* workshops and seminars conducted by HDC and other agencies frequently (HDC, 2017). In some cases, this may be accompanied by changes in customer behaviour. The experiences of practitioners are important, as they are the ones that need to understand all matters related to *halal* hospitality to implement the requirements of both the government and JAKIM if they want to be *halal* certified.

To summarize, the criteria for choosing the participants and the websites of this study are listed below:

1. Accommodation providers in Malaysia.
2. Accommodation providers that have been in operation for at least a year.
3. Accommodation providers with functioning (dynamic) website only (for quantitative phase).

In order to understand the *halal* issues of providers and the *halal* hospitality services they offered, the questions asked in previous studies were used as the basis for formulating the interview questions for the qualitative phase of the study. From the outset, it was clear that accommodation providers' understanding of *halal* hospitality was a sensitive topic given its link to religious beliefs and personal values. The questions for the qualitative phase, which are discussed in the next few sections, were particularly designed to allow the researcher to understand the assumptions and beliefs about the real world for these accommodation providers. The methods used in this study are further elaborated in the following sections.

5.4 The Qualitative Research Component

In qualitative research the researcher creates a “complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). In this study, the researcher constructs knowledge based on the post-positivist perspectives (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) by exploring the accommodation providers’ understanding of *halal* hospitality. Semi-structured interviews were used for exploratory purposes given the sensitive issues surrounding the topic in relation to religious beliefs.

This study involved 18 accommodation providers. Of these, 16 were Muslim and two non-Muslim participants. The lack of involvement from non-Muslim participants in this study may be due to their lack of understanding about *halal* but could also be because of the perceptions of one group towards the other. As highlighted in previous studies, issues surrounding *halal* hospitality and requirements can cause conflict, defensive behaviours and scepticism towards one another (Nooh et al., 2007). These providers represent all types of hospitality businesses (e.g., hotels, B&Bs, chalets), as mentioned in the previous sections. Yet, employing the *halal* hospitality concept will require further understanding of Islamic jurisprudence and its requirements as well as different traditions and schools within Islam. As asking individuals’ understanding of religious matters may be sensitive (Creswell, 2007), and involve significant degrees of trust in expressing their actual views, it is very important for the researcher to secure the confidence of the accommodation providers (Marzuki et al., 2012).

Bogdan and Taylor (1975) and Patton (1990) suggested that it is important to create trust by developing strong contacts with respondents prior to the interview. Prior to the face-to-face interviews, the researcher made phone calls to potential respondents to introduce herself and explain the purpose of her research. The researcher then emailed the potential respondents research documents for their reference and did follow-up calls to confirm these potential respondents have received the email and agreed to participate in the study. These strategies developed the initial relationship between the researcher and the respondents. In addition, the researcher made more phone calls to set a date and time for the interviews to be conducted as well as a reminder call one day before the interview took place. More trust developed when the researcher stayed at several accommodations and was involved with the surrounding such as observing the facilities provided and

experiencing the check-in process (i.e., the need to show the marriage card issued by Islamic authority department to prove the marriage status). During the stay, the researcher took also the opportunity to informally interact with the participant, which resulted in more trust between the researcher and the participant. In turn, this lead to a better conversation of *halal* hospitality service during the interview.

The researcher found that it was difficult to obtain cooperation from accommodation providers to participate in this research study. Many requests for interview permissions were rejected for several reasons. These include the policy of some hospitality businesses does not allow for any interviews be conducted among staff; poor experiences from previous interviews that brought a negative reputation to the accommodation provider (e.g., the customers commented for not fully following the *halal* hospitality requirements); the potential respondents do not know much about *halal* hospitality; busy routine or schedule; or data security. None of the rejections mentioned the sensitivity surrounding the topic. The reasons are comparable to those of Marzuki (2012) who stated that rejections given by restaurant managers in not wanting to participate in interviews for her research on *halal* included: busy schedule; sensitive topic; restaurants did not operate during normal working hours; and respondents could not communicate well either in Malay or English. Therefore, in order to secure the cooperation of accommodation providers, the researcher has applied a convenience sampling strategy to obtain participants for the research interview.

As the interview involves the collection data based on the accommodation providers' own words and experiences, it was important to allow the participant to respond in the language that they feel more confident in. This allows the identification of, for example, the complexity of individual beliefs, and conflicts between ideas within and across interviews (Cohen et al., 2003). Accordingly, the interviews were conducted in Bahasa Malaysia and the responses were translated back into English and verified by a qualified translator who is familiar with both languages. The interviews were guided by fixed, but open-ended research questions. This allows the respondents to elaborate on their perspectives and experiences whilst still sticking to the study's main foci. However, one of the drawbacks of this interview approach is that respondents may lack some communication skills which affect their expression of ideas into meaningful statements

(Pullman, McGuire, & Cleveland, 2005). This was evidenced during some of the interviews as a few respondents left sentences incomplete and/or mumbled. Where possible the researcher asked the respondents what they meant if they provided an incomplete answer in order to help clarify their opinion and perceptions.

5.4.1 The Discussion Guide

The three main research questions of the thesis (see Chapter One) were used to guide the questions asked of respondents (as noted in Table 5.2) as well as the subsequent discussion during the interviews. These questions are important to ensure that all areas identified are explored, and during the interview process, the probe questions were modified based on the outcomes from the prior interviews as well as relevant literature. “Probing is useful to ensure the reliability of the data through clarifying relevant issues and inconsistent responses” (Barriball & While, 1994, p. 331). Holistic or religious views on the social, technical and commercial dimensions in the understanding of *halal* hospitality have not been sought in previous studies among hospitality providers (Fernando et al., 2011; Marzuki et al., 2012; Zailani et al., 2011) as their research focused on *halal* certification which is only a part of the broader concept of *halal* hospitality. Therefore, this study sought to explore the possibilities of more detailed interpretations of the understanding of *halal* hospitality in the context of the Malaysian accommodation sector. Responses from different categories of accommodation providers were sought so as to see their similarity or differences in their understanding of *halal* hospitality in a commercial context.

Interview questions were proposed to make sure the respondents can provide opinions on the topic discussed. Interview questions should be neutral to avoid bias in the answers, especially in semi-structured interviews. Although interviews should ideally be conducted by someone without any views on the topic studied, it is virtually impossible to undertake in reality (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997). Therefore, the researcher needs to describe her background in relation to the topic in the research. In this study such bias cannot be avoided as the topic relates to the researcher’s religious belief as she herself is a Muslim. Yet, the bias can be reduced by generating questions that are general enough to be answered by respondents according to their own perspective and knowledge at hand.

Preliminary interviews were conducted to verify the validity of the interview questions. It can help to identify flaws that allowing necessary modification to the interview questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) before conducting the actual interviews. The researcher sent ten emails to potential respondents in Pahang, Johor, Melaka, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya (easy access locations to the researcher) to participate in the preliminary interviews, however only two agreed to participated. These two preliminary interviews involved a male respondent from a budget hotel in Putrajaya and a female respondent from a homestay in Johor. Both participants claimed they were *halal* accommodation providers. Based on their responses, the interview questions were modified as shown in Table 5.2. Their responses were included in the data analysis as they do contribute to the research objective.

Table 5.2: Interview questions

Preliminary Interview Questions	Actual Interview Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does ‘hospitality’ mean to you? • What does ‘<i>halal</i> hospitality’ mean to you? • Why do you think it is important to have <i>halal</i> certification for <i>halal</i> hospitality? • Do you think there are any benefits to practise <i>halal</i> hospitality? Why? • In your opinion, why would <i>halal</i> hospitality services be acceptable to non-Muslim customers? • Why would you provide <i>halal</i> hospitality to non-Muslim customers? • <i>What do you think of religion-based hospitality?</i> • <i>In your religion or belief, is hospitality given different if you do know the customer or you do not know the customer? If yes, how so?</i> • <i>In your opinion, does your religion or belief give you guidelines about how to treat customers who are strangers in your accommodation? If yes, what are they?</i> • <i>Why do you think it is important/not important for the hospitality sector to understand the <i>halal</i> hospitality concept?</i> • <i>What do you think of your current level of understanding of <i>halal</i> hospitality in Malaysia?</i> • Do you think you should improve your 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does ‘hospitality’ mean to you? • What does ‘<i>halal</i> hospitality’ mean to you? • How do you think it is different from how you described hospitality before? • Do you provide <i>halal</i> hospitality or will you provide <i>halal</i> hospitality? Why? • How do your personal beliefs and values influence the provision of hospitality in your business? • Do you think you should improve your understanding of <i>halal</i> hospitality concept? • Who do you think benefits from <i>halal</i> hospitality service (s)? • What role do you think <i>halal</i> hospitality might have outside of your business – if any? • Do you think <i>halal</i> certification is important for a business? Why? • Has a <i>halal</i> certification added any value to your hospitality business? How and Why? • Can <i>halal</i> certification be trusted? Why or why not? • Are <i>halal</i> hospitality services acceptable to non-Muslim customers? Why? • What do you think are the challenges for you in providing <i>halal</i> hospitality to non-Muslim customers? • What do you think will be the future

understanding of *halal* hospitality? Why?
And how?

- Will you continue to provide *halal* hospitality or start to provide *halal* hospitality in the near future? Why?

challenges in complying with *halal* requirements for businesses like yours?

Note: The questions in italic were not used in the actual interview questions.

During the preliminary interviews, the two respondents could not understand some of the questions and therefore gave limited or repeating responses given that many of the initial questions derived from the literature review were overwhelmingly emphasizing the extensive aspects of *halal* hospitality implementation rather than providers' understanding of the religious and commercial contexts within which such implementation happens. The questions were altered to provide broad based answers that take into account the size and scope of the services that the respondents were offering. The modified questions allowed respondents to provide their own perspectives and understanding of *halal* hospitality and issues related to the actual practices of providing *halal* services.

5.4.2 Sampling and Data Collection

The researcher aimed for 15 to 20 respondents to participate in the interviews as per the recommendations in the literature (Bertaux, 1981; Creswell, 2007). Also, if responses received are similar to those who were interviewed before, this indicates that the responses have reached the saturation point. Saturation was reached in this study after the 17th interview when respondents had exhausted ideas on how they fulfil *halal* requirements with respect to the provision of *halal* food, certification, and facilities. Another indication of saturation was when all Muslim respondents were emphasizing their responsibility as well as obligation to religious beliefs in providing *halal* hospitality in order to obtain the God blessing in life.

This study used convenience sampling and the respondents were selected using the criteria stated in the mixed method section above. The objective of these interviews was to gain ideas on respondents' understanding of *halal* hospitality. Email was used to invite 25 accommodation providers to participate in the interview. This email informed the participants of the purpose of the interview and how the interview is conducted within the

duration of 30 to 60 minutes. The time allocated for the interview was considered sufficient to gain enough detail of the participants' perspectives without causing too much disruption to the providers' work schedule. The researcher also considered written responses as an alternative for respondents that preferred to respond in such a way. The information supplied could be useful and of value of this study. Once the invitation to participate was accepted, the researcher obtained the agreement on the date and time to conduct the interview.

To guide the respondents and ease the flow of conversation, it has been suggested that the topics of the interview be provided to the respondents' beforehand (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). This was generally adhered to in this study. In order to gain maximum information from the interviews, the researcher probed the respondents by asking questions that require them to elaborate and clarify on any unclear statements. As this study deals with religious and regulatory matters some of the questions may be sensitive to some respondents, Lee (1993) advised researchers to avoid intimidating and using unfamiliar words during the interviews. The respondents were therefore led to sensitive questions gradually (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Therefore, the discussion guide provided and the actual interview conducted adhered to these principles.

5.4.3 Thematic Analysis

The goal of qualitative data analysis is to uncover emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings (Patton, 2002). Polkinghorne (1983) stated that qualitative data analysis relies on linguistic instead of numerical data and employs meaning-based instead of statistical data analysis by measuring things with words instead of numbers. The importance of meaning-based data analysis is that it focuses on understanding or exploring a phenomena or something new (Elliot, 1999). Thematic analysis is used in this study as it can provide a comprehensive interpretation of meaning from text and interview data that involves people's experiences or views on a subject matter.

The researcher transcribed and analysed the data manually through six phases in thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006): familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among the codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming

themes, and producing the final report. In this study, the researcher read the interview transcripts to familiarize herself with the texts. Then, the texts were coded in a single or several words such as hospitality and *halal* hospitality to help enable understanding before themes can be developed. Themes were developed based on the completed coding stage. The interpretation of these codes can include comparing theme frequencies, identifying theme co-occurrence, and graphically displaying relationships between different themes. For example, Islamic hospitality, *halal* hospitality, and *Shariah* compliance hospitality can be themed together as these words have similar explanation in some points, such as the definitions that are based on Islamic jurisprudence (Muhammed et al., 2014) and the requirements in the implementation of *halal* hospitality services. The selected theme to represent these code words is *halal* hospitality in the accommodation industry. By using deductive approaches, the analysis is less descriptive as overall analysis is limited to the preconceived frames (Braun & Clark, 2006). The results are varied, but still follow the specific focus areas determined prior to data analysis and may also be able to identify items that are not presently reported in the literature. The results were also used to support the analysis of the *halal* hospitality attributes on the websites of accommodation providers in the quantitative research phase.

An example of how a theme was extracted is shown below. From the first question, which was about the providers' understanding of the concept of *halal* hospitality, it was clear from the transcripts that providers' understanding could be divided into several ideas such as their understanding of hospitality in general, their understanding of *halal* hospitality, their perceptions of providers in the *halal* hospitality business as well as the challenges that need to be faced in providing *halal* hospitality services. These ideas were identified from familiarization with the data. At this stage of the data analysis, interview responses were read and re-read to identify the common ideas. The next step involved generating the initials codes, which included codes related to Muslim beliefs, *halal* service, accountability, responsibility, religious obligation, and accomplices etc as shown in the table below. The third step is searching for themes among the codes. Themes are then reviewed and sub-themes are produced in the fourth step. The fifth step involves defining and naming the theme as shown in the next page.

Abstracts	Theme
‘We are Muslims; therefore, we must provide <i>halal</i> services’.	Religious belief
‘We are Muslims and we are accountable to provide the right service to the customers. We have to be answerable in the hereafter for all our acts’.	Religious accountability
‘It is a responsibility of a Muslim to remind other Muslim about religious obligation. Providing <i>halal</i> hospitality is one way of doing <i>dakwah</i> (proselytization) to people’.	Religious obligations and responsibility
‘We do not want to be accomplices for anything <i>haram</i> ’.	Religious doctrine

The next section describes the research design for the quantitative phase of the study. The procedure for identifying *halal* related attributes on the provider’s website is explained in depth.

5.5 The Quantitative Research Component

Content analysis is used to examine the *halal* information on the website of accommodation providers in Malaysia. Law and Chen (2012) use the same method in their study to identify the cultural factors on the website of accommodation providers in Beijing China. Based on their study, the majority of accommodation providers in Beijing showed limited information relating to destination cultural factors such as Temple Fair and Pet Birds, yet the same information is provided by the travel websites. The effectiveness of website performance is influenced by the features provided (Salavati & Hashim, 2015). Key features such as design and information influence purchase intention and customer satisfaction (Law & Bai, 2008). Several methods can be used to evaluate websites effectiveness such as counting elements, user judgement, and automated assessment (Salavati & Hashim, 2015). These authors also state that counting is the most popular method used as it simplifies the data collection process, produces less error, and easy to analyse. However, this method can be limited if a comprehensive checklist is not developed for assessment. For these reasons, this current study used the counting method to analyse the 32 *halal* attributes presented on each of the 781 accommodation websites.

This study obtained the list of accommodation providers in Malaysia from the portal of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia. However, the list did not provide the accommodation provider's website address and it thus required the researcher to search on the Internet for website addresses. Therefore, the first step taken was searching the website addresses on travel and accommodation booking websites. Websites addresses for medium and big size accommodation providers were easy to obtain from the booking websites such as Agoda.com, Booking.com, Expedia, Trivago, and TripAdvisor. The websites addresses for smaller size accommodation providers were more difficult to search for. Therefore, the researcher opted to use search engines such as Google and Yahoo to search for potential accommodation provider website addresses. However, many of the small size accommodation providers appeared not to have a website as many of them used Facebook, blogs or other media to promote their services online.

The second step was to check the functionality of each website. For the purposes of this study a dynamic or functional website that provide extensive information about its products or services (Hoekstra, Huizingh, Bijmolt, & Krawczyk, 2015) was used for content analysis purposes (see also Razzaq et al., 2016). Information potentially available includes accommodation features and characteristics, dining, facilities, location, and contact number and address. Facebook and the blogs were excluded as information provided is generally not well structured and is used more for informal communication with customers.

The third step was the data entry process. Using the accommodation attributes of Razzaq et al. (2016) in Table 5.3 and the dimensions of *halal* friendly hospitality as stipulated in Muslim Friendly Hospitality Requirements (MS 2610:2015) in Table 5.4, a database was created in Excel form. Razzaq et al. (2016) used their *halal* attributes to analyse the websites of accommodation providers' websites in two cities (Auckland, Rotorua) in a non-Islamic country, New Zealand, with a multi-cultural population. This study analysed the websites of accommodation providers in Malaysia, an Islamic country with a multicultural population that is politically dominated by the Islamic Malay population.

Some adjustments were made to the *halal* attributes by Razzaq et al. (2016) to suit the information provided on the websites of accommodation providers in Malaysia. Accommodation attributes such as pet friendly, proximity to 'red light' district, proximity to gambling venues, having a minibar, having a bar onsite, and alcohol served onsite were stated as negative attributes from an Islamic perspective yet remained useful for customers decision making. However, mentioning the proximity to mosques and *halal* food outlets (Battour et al., 2011) may suit better if the purposes to attract Muslim customers in both Islamic and non-Islamic countries. Muslim customers that travel abroad, especially in Western countries, may consider that *halal* foods and places of prayer are the most important attributes to look at during travelling. Of course, in a country like Malaysia with many mosques and *halal* food outlets, access to such facilities is not a problem to foreign Muslim travellers.

Other accommodation attributes that have similar functionality such as satellite, cable TV, TV service, TV channels, and movies were combined to simplify the list. Additional attributes such as *halal* logo or *halal* certificate, free service and security are also included as these attributes are important to discuss in this study. Free service and security system attributes were also added as both are often mentioned on the websites of accommodation providers.

Table 5.3: Attributes used to analyse *halal* accommodation in Razzaq et al. (2016)

<i>Halal</i> Hospitality Attributes	
1. Mention <i>halal</i>	19. Gym onsite
2. Multilingual	20. Proximity to gambling venues
3. Family friendly	21. Serve food on their premises
4. Pet friendly	22. Have in unit cooking facilities
5. Proximity to 'red light' district	23. Have a dining establishment onsite
6. Can cater to specific religious needs	24. Alcohol is served onsite
7. Can provide prayer time	25. Have a bar onsite
8. Can provide a prayer mat	26. Have room service
9. Can provide a copy of the Quran	27. Have a mini bar
10. Provide Sky television (TV service)	28. Certified <i>halal</i> items
11. Provide DVD players	29. Vegetarian options
12. Provide satellite or cable television	30. Gluten free options
13. Provide multilingual TV channels	31. Dairy free options
14. Provide movies	32. Offers off-premises food options
15. Pool onsite	33. Able to cater to special dietary needs
16. Spa bath or pool onsite	34. Have a Qibla marker
17. Day spa onsite	35. Have a special prayer facility onsite
18. Sauna onsite	36. Female only floor
	37. Gender segregated facilities

Source: Razzaq et al. (2016)

The Malaysian Government's Muslim Friendly Hospitality Requirements (MS2610:2015), uses a number of items to represent *halal* hospitality (Table 5.4). Selected Muslim Friendly Hospitality Requirements [MFHR] were used to modify the *halal* attributes organized by Razzaq et al. (2016). However, items number 2, 3, 5, and 11 from Table 5.5 were not included as the items were used during the month of Ramadan (the fasting month for Muslims). Items number 12, 13 and 14 are teamed together as satellite/cable TV/TV in the modified *halal* attributes to represent the same amenity function. Items number 16 and 17 are teamed together under the prayer facility.

Table 5.4: Muslim Friendly Hospitality Requirements (MS 2610:2015)

No.	Items	Explanation
1	Quran	Islamic scripture containing the revealed words of Allah to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) through the medium of Angel Jibrail in Arabic as the primary source of Islamic law.
2.	Fasting	The third pillar of Islam. Muslims are prohibited from eating, drinking (including water) and refrained from smoking, sexual activities and various other desires and encouraged to temper negative emotions such as anger and addiction during fasting hours (from dusk to dawn) in the month of Ramadan.
3.	Ramadan	The holy month in the Hijri calendar when Muslims perform the obligatory practice of fasting from dawn (fajr) to dusk (maghrib).
4.	<i>Halal</i>	An act or product that is lawful and permitted in Islam based on the authoritative sources.
5.	Iftar	The meal taken by Muslims at dusk to break their fast.
6.	Kiblat	Direction of prayer towards the Kaabah in Makkah.
7.	Musalla	Place, space or room that is reserved for solah.
8.	Sajada	A mat generally used by Muslims to perform solah.
9.	Recreation	Social, cultural, sporting and other relevant activities undertaken in leisure time.
10.	Recreational Facilities	Public and private facilities provided for recreational activities.
11.	Sahur	The meal consumed by Muslims before dawn when fasting.
12.	Solah	The ritual worship in Islam, as one of the five pillars of Islam, to be performed five times a day.
13.	Shariah	Overall legal and regulation of Allah pertaining to life and welfare of mankind for the prosperity of life in this world and in the hereafter.
14.	Shariah Compliance	Conformity to Shariah.
15.	Shariah Law	Communication from Allah concerning the conduct of the mukallaf (sane person) which consists of a demand (commandments and prohibitions) and option or an enactment.
16.	Wudhu	The rite or act to wash or wipe the specific parts of the body with water to be pure and clean for the solah.
17.	Wudhu Facility	Appropriate or dedicated area for male and female for wudhu'.

Source: Adapted from Department of Standards Malaysia (2015)

The modified *halal* attributes used for this study are provided in Table 5.5. The information published on the websites were analysed according to this list of modified *halal* hospitality attributes.

Table 5.5: Modified *halal* attributes

No.	<i>Halal</i> Attributes
1	Quran
2	Kiblat direction
3	Prayer room & facility
4	Sejadah/prayer mat
5	Prayer time
6	<i>Halal/halal</i> certified/logo
7	Multilingual staff
8	Family friendly
9	Satellite/Cable TV/TV
10	Pool on-site
11	Spa & sauna/spa/sauna
12	Gym on-site
13	Serve food on premise
14	Special dietary needs
15	Dairy free
16	Gluten free
17	Vegetarian free
18	Dining outlet on-site
19	Alcohol on-site
20	Attribute bar/lounge on-site
21	Mini bar/mini fridge/fridge
22	Room service
23	Female only floor
24	Gender segregated facilities
25	Recreation/sports facilities
26	Room decoration
27	Entertainment
28	Free service
29	Security system
30	Pet friendly
31	Proximity to 'red light' district
32	Proximity to gambling venues

Other than *halal* attributes, data collection was also conducted on the travel websites based on the criteria of *halal* hospitality discussed in Chapter Three. The reason for this is that customers obtain information about accommodation, destinations, food and cuisines, and restaurants from travel websites (Mak, Lumbers, & Eves, 2012). The most common criteria mentioned in studies with regards to *halal* hospitality include cleanliness, friendliness, and comfort (Akhoondnejad, 2015; Dolan, 2010; Marzuki et al., 2012). The same criteria were used by the travel websites to rate accommodation providers based on customers reviews. The travel websites selected for this study were Agoda, Booking.com, Expedia, TripAdvisor, and Trivago. These travel websites were selected based on those that are commonly used by accommodation providers for promotion or marketing purposes (Filieri, 2016; Filieri & McLeay, 2014). Thus, this study also analysed the review criteria available on the booking websites in order to compare against the *halal* related hospitality services provided by the accommodation providers.

To ease the process of identifying the *halal* certified accommodation providers, this study checked the status of accommodation providers through the websites of Halal Malaysia Official Portal (“Halal Malaysia Directory,” 2015) and the Crescent Rating website (“Crescent Rated Hotel,” 2015). The information gathered was then included in the database.

5.5.1 Coding Guide

The *halal* attributes were used to guide the search for words related to *halal* hospitality. This involved searching for *halal* attributes from the entire texts in the web-pages of all accommodation provider websites examined in this study. For reasons of clarity, clear coding units were identified in this study. The initial coding unit used by Razzaq et al. (2016) was 37. After modification, the number of coding units used in this study was reduced to 32 (Table 5.5).

To collect quantitative data, the first thing to do is to identify what needed to be measured for content analysis. In this study, the content analysis was developed in three stages. The first stage created a profile of the accommodation providers. This involved collecting the business characteristics related to zone, state, location, type, size, and star ranking of the accommodation providers. Apart from these profiles, in order to find accommodation that has a *halal* certificate, every business accommodation providers was checked in the list issued by Halal Directory Malaysia. Cross-checking was undertaken by looking at the list of *halal* status on the website CrescentRating.

A coding guide was then developed to undertake the content analysis of the websites of accommodation providers. The coding guide was used for characterising the accommodation providers according to zone, state, location, type, size and star ranking (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6: Coding guide for website content analysis

Code	Zones	State	Location	Type	Size	Star Ranking
1	North (Kedah, Perak, Perlis, Pulau Pinang)	FT Kuala Lumpur	Main City	Hotel (3 star and above)	Large (50 and above rooms)	1 Star
2	South (Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor)	FT Labuan	Municipality and District	Budget Hotel (2 star and below)	Medium (10 - 49 rooms)	2 Star
3	East (Kelantan, Pahang, Terengganu)	FT Putrajaya		Homestay/ Guesthouse/ Resthouse/ Hostel Chalet	Small (0-9 rooms)	3 Star
4	East Malaysia (Sabah & Sarawak)	Johor				4 Star
5		Kedah				5 Star
6		Kelantan				
7		Melaka				
8		Negeri Sembilan				
9		Pahang				
10		Perak				
11		Perlis				
12		Pulau Pinang				
13		Sabah				
14		Sarawak				
15		Selangor				
16		Terengganu				

In the second stage, the content analysis focused on the existence of *halal* attributes on the accommodation providers' websites. Each page in the website was examined by using the revised *halal* attributes proposed by Razzaq et al. (2016). For *halal* attributes in Table 5.6, the presence of a *halal* attribute (unit) on the accommodation providers' websites is marked as '1' and the absence as '0'.

The third stage involved the identification of the ratings of the accommodation on various travel information websites. The information collected is based on the rating of several accommodation attributes on these websites. The review score, based on customers' feedback on the service experienced at the accommodation, for each accommodation provider was identified. These criteria are important as they relate to the general attributes for hospitality services. The criteria selected were cleanliness, location, comfort, staff, facilities, foods, and value for money. This is based on the criteria frequently used by five travel websites; Agoda, Booking.com, Expedia, TripAdvisor, and Trivago (Table 5.7). Similarly, the coding for listing on the travel websites, the listing on Halal Directory Malaysia, and the availability of general attributes (cleanliness, location, comfort, staff, facilities, food, value for money) on the travel website information was coded as '1' and the absence as '0'. The purpose was to obtain the number of accommodation listed on the travel websites as well as those listed in the Halal Directory Malaysia (HDM). The purpose of this was to identify the general attributes presented by all accommodation providers and the *halal* attributes presented by all accommodation providers as well as the attributes presented on the websites by the *halal* certified accommodation only.

Table 5.7: General attributes commonly displayed on the selected travel websites

Criteria	Agoda	Booking.com	Expedia	Trip Advisor	Trivago
Cleanliness	/	/	/	/	/
Location	/	/	-	/	/
Staff & Service	/	/	/	/	/
Comfort/room	/	/	/	/	/
Facilities	/	/	-	-	/
Food	/	-	-	-	/
Value for money	/	/	-	/	/

Note: The right (/) sign represents the published rating criteria while the dash (-) sign signifies those that not presented on the travel websites. The dash indicates that the rating criteria are used in the analysis as food and facilities are the key criteria discussed in the current study.

The next section explains the process to obtain the list of accommodation providers in Malaysia. The list of accommodation providers is obtained from the portal of MOTAC.

5.5.2 Data Collection

There were 1990 accommodation providers listed on MOTAC as in 2010. The list was the most recent available on the MOTAC website. To validate the list, the researcher used the travel websites to confirm the existence of the accommodation providers. Concurrently, the researcher also obtained the websites addresses through these travel websites. Unless the websites addresses are not available on these travel websites, the researcher then searched through the search engines of Google, Yahoo, Bing or Yippy. In fact, most of these accommodation providers were still in the existence.

Some of the things that need to be seen or as tool in determining the functionality of a website include displaying accurate, comprehensive information as well as interesting designs that drive customers to spend more time on the website (Hasan & Abuelrub, 2011). Of these 1990 providers, 1209 were removed for several reasons including: the accommodation providers did not have a website (they used a blog, Facebook or other media to promote their service); the website had only minimal information (e.g. it contained address and phone number only); the websites were blocked because of a virus; the websites did not function properly; the website was used to promote additional or other businesses; the websites addresses have been terminated; or the websites were under construction. The balance of 781 websites were used for the purpose of data entry. The data entry process for these 781 websites was undertaken between 23 March 2016 to 30 September 2016.

5.5.3 Data Analysis

Statistical analysis of the data gathered was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Science, Version 22.0. The information gathered were analysed based on descriptive statistics to summarise, organise and describe the data (Bryman & Bell, 2007) using frequencies and percentages as well as measures of dispersion. The categorical data were

analysed using cross-tabulations and the review scores on different travel websites were analysed using t-tests, ANOVAs and regression analyses.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are important in undertaking research as many issues may arise if research is not conducted appropriately. The researcher negotiated access, promise of confidentiality, and consent from respondents in order to conduct interviews (Collis & Hussey, 2007). Permission was gained from the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee to conduct the interviews and all University ethics guidelines were adhered to (Ref: HEC 2015/146 – Chairperson: Lindsey McDonald). A formal letter from the university was provided during the interviews that showed commitment to the integrity and ethics of conducting research, which included among others the confidentiality agreement between the researcher and the respondents. The researcher informed the respondents about the purpose of the research conducted and how it was to be used. In order to avoid misinterpretation of questions or problem with the English language, the interview questions were prepared in both English and Malay. The questions were translated in Malay by the researcher and then the translation was checked by an English lecturer who is proficient in both languages from the University of Technology MARA for its accuracy in meaning and context. Malay is the national language and some respondents appreciated that the interviews were conducted in Malay.

5.7 Experiences as a Female Researcher in Malaysia

The interview research component requires the researcher to meet respondents face-to-face. The common culture of Malay Islamic culture in Malaysia means that the interview could be done by the interviewer, either alone or accompanied by colleagues from the same university and department. In Malaysia it is commonly regarded as appropriate if Malay Muslims, specifically female Muslims, are accompanied by *mahram* (Wan Hassan, 2012) or female friends when outing, however it is not common for other cultures (i.e., Chinese and Indian) in Malaysia.

The researcher was accompanied by her husband when conducting interviews. The reason was personal preference; the researcher felt comfortable and secure to be with a familiar individual during a meeting with a stranger, especially one of a different gender. However, as Malaysia is a moderate Muslim country with mixed cultures, lifestyles, and beliefs, women are trusted and given permission by husbands or family members to be independent as long as they follow the rules and guidance for conducting interviews such as wear a proper attire, conduct in a good manner and appropriate etiquette (Wan Hassan, 2008). The researcher further indicates that having her husband around help eased the interview process, as male Muslim respondents preferred to communicate with male interviewers than female interviewers (Wan Hassan, 2008). This is another aspect to look upon in order to show respect on the social boundary of Muslims culture and to create trust in any meeting occasion involving male and female counterpart. The researcher felt that male respondents seemed comfortable responding to her husband when she asked them questions and further encouraged their willingness to share the perceptions, opinions and views on the topic.

The interviews were conducted in several locations in Kuala Lumpur and Melaka. Initially, locations for the interviews with accommodation providers were in Kuala Lumpur only. These interviews involved four categories of accommodation providers: hotel, budget hotel, homestay/guesthouse/rest house/hostel/lodge and chalet. However, there were no chalets in Kuala Lumpur and the nearest state with a significant number of chalets was Melaka. The interviews conducted in Kuala Lumpur involved 11 interviews from three categories of accommodation providers: hotel, budget hotel and homestay/lodge. The interviews conducted in Melaka involved only five accommodation providers of chalets. Two pilot interviews were each from Johor and Putrajaya.

Interestingly, the researcher observed that the manner of interacting with the accommodation provider in the two locations was different. This difference may have been due to differences between the customs of city dwellers and those who live in a small town. But it is also possible that the manner of the accommodation provider was suited to the kind of accommodation that was provided i.e. hotel and budget hotel owners or managers were more business-like than chalet owners or managers needed to be. Respondents from Kuala Lumpur were excited and firm during discussions and when giving opinions,

whereas in Melaka, respondents were more like storytellers. All respondents from both locations (i.e., Kuala Lumpur and Melaka) were polite and friendly from the start to the completion of the interview processes. The respondents welcomed the researcher and willingly shared their experiences in managing and operating hospitality businesses. A few interviewees even offered discounts if the researcher had future plans of staying at their accommodation on trips to Kuala Lumpur.

The respondents from Melaka were more approachable than respondents from Kuala Lumpur. The researcher contacted many potential respondents from Kuala Lumpur a few months prior to interview sessions, yet failed to obtain cooperation from many of them. However, when the researcher met and asked for permission to conduct the interviews with either the owners or the managers of the chalets, those interested agreed to be interviewed at any time on the same day at their hospitality accommodation. Thus, the researcher interviewed four respondents in a day during the normal working hours. This may be due to interest and also the respondents' desire to share ideas and views on *halal* service offerings (Laderlah et al., 2011). Moreover, if the owner of the accommodation is an Islamic-oriented person or a person with high religious beliefs, to conduct the hospitality business in an Islamic way is considered a challenge in the sector regarded negatively by some as the hospitality sector by its nature has some activities contrary (e.g., alcohol, prostitution, and gambling) to the teachings of Islam (Battour et al., 2011; Din, 1982; Laila et al., 2012).

Unlike Marzuki (2012) who found that participants were not available for interviews during normal working hours, the researcher in this study was fortunate as interviews could be conducted during or after normal working hours. However, several interviews were rescheduled to suit with respondents' free time. Several interviews were cancelled either because of an emergency, a busy schedule, or simply a no show. The result was that no interviews were conducted on some days and more than two interviews were conducted on other days.

Despite the structured nature of the interview process, the interviews were conducted relatively informally. Although the researcher had suggested conducting interviews at the respondents' offices, some respondents decided to be interviewed in lounges, restaurants, or the front yards of the accommodation. They appeared more relaxed

in these surroundings and cooperatively shared their opinions on *halal* hospitality. However, the interview processes were sometimes disturbed by noises from customers, cooking activities, and traffic. In a few interviews, the respondents offered food and drink to the researcher. Offering hospitality even to a stranger is common in Malaysian culture. In some cases, a few managers shared the office space with other employees. This resulted in their cautiousness in expressing opinions. In one interview, the respondent was monitored by his superior and also disturbed by another employee that kept on answering questions for him. However, in this instance the researcher decided to disregard the interview output and considered it as invalid.

Good communication skills and politeness in asking questions were very important in gaining interviewees' cooperation. Many respondents in this study were helpful and committed in sharing opinions and experiences of conducting hospitality businesses. However, a few respondents did appear to be uncomfortable with the topic. The questions were sensitive to some respondents as the questions may be interpreted as questioning the honesty or accountability of the providers in providing *halal* hospitality. One respondent felt that some customers did not trust her, even though she has a *halal* certificate from JAKIM. For example, on one occasion, she had to change sausages to eggs for breakfast as some customers doubted the *halal* status of the sausages. She had informed the customers that she used sausages that were *halal* certified. Based on the respondent's facial expressions, the researcher could see that she was irritated by the behaviour of the customers. The respondent told the researcher, as a Muslim, it is her religious obligation to prepare *halal* foods to all customers. Somehow, most Muslim respondents in this study felt that simply being a good Muslim, one who practises Islam, is sufficient for operating a *halal* hospitality business even without a *halal* certificate. This finding is similar to the findings of Wan Hassan and Hall (2003) and Marzuki, Hall and Ballantyne (2012b).

As Kuala Lumpur is not the researcher's hometown, the researcher stayed in the accommodation of several providers and had more time to interact with and gain trust from the respondents. In addition, the researcher had the opportunity to observe the delivery of *halal* hospitality at these accommodations. From the observation at these accommodations, prayer mats and direction to Kiblah were the most common elements provided to Muslim customers, either on request or as standard amenities in the rooms. Thus, these *halal*

requirements were still available for customers' perusal at some accommodations even though the providers did not have a *halal* certificate.

The researcher felt grateful for the cooperation of all respondents in this study. Appreciation for respondents' participation in the interview was very important; for this reason, small tokens of tea towels were given to all respondents.

5.8 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology and design of the study, and its mixed methods approach. The study location and targeted accommodation providers were identified. The two phases of data collection and the analytical techniques for each phase was outlined with in-depth interviews with 18 participants in the qualitative phase and 781 websites content analysed in the quantitative phase. The chapter also described the researcher's experience in conducting interviews on the sensitive issue of *halal* hospitality with Muslim and non-Muslim accommodation providers. Opinions and reactions from both groups of accommodation providers are noted in the findings chapter. The chapter also presented a brief account of the ethical considerations of the study. The next chapter will discuss the findings from the in-depth interviews conducted as part of the qualitative phase of this study.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS – INTERVIEWS ANALYSIS

6 Introduction

This chapter analyses the data collected from the 18 interviews. The first section describes the profiles of the participants in the study. The participants are from four categories of accommodation: hotel, budget hotel, homestay/lodge, and chalet. The second section describes the respondents' understanding of hospitality in general, and then gradually focuses on their understanding of *halal* hospitality and the issues associated with the provision of *halal* hospitality. This is important because one of the objectives of this study is to explore the respondents' own understanding of *halal* hospitality. Their perspectives reflect their own practices of *halal* hospitality. The third section describes the respondents' own perspectives of *halal* certification in the form of its importance, benefits, and challenges. The respondents highlight the importance of having a *halal* certificate to support their hospitality operation, and how they have benefited from it, yet there are challenges to be *halal* certified. The fourth section explores how the respondents' put *halal* hospitality in practice in their business. An important finding that emerges from the findings is that the accommodation providers did not fully understand the *halal* certification process in order to obtain the *halal* certificate. A few others considered that *halal* hospitality must comply with Islamic laws even with or without the *halal* certificate, yet getting the *halal* certification means that they must follow the standard set by the JAKIM. The fifth section describes the perspectives of respondents on the provision of *halal* hospitality to non-Muslims. Most respondents indicated that non-Muslim customers do not bother about *halal* or non-*halal* hospitality, and *halal* hospitality specifically related to Muslim customers. The sixth section states the future of *halal* hospitality business from the perspective of the respondents. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings.

6.1 Profile of Respondents

Regardless the type of hospitality offered and whether the providers are Muslim or not, the importance of studying the providers understanding of *halal* hospitality is significant as it involves a growing *halal* market. Participation of Muslim and non-Muslim providers in this research thus contributed to the outcome of the study. Their support and engagement are crucial in promoting the development of *halal* hospitality industry. Hence, the use of term *halal* hospitality is appropriate than *shariah* compliance hospitality (i.e., the entire management and operation of the hospitality services that complies with *shariah* laws – intrinsic and extrinsic values as per Islamic teaching) due to the involvement of Muslim and non-Muslim providers in the industry.

The qualitative component of this study involved a sample of 18 respondents from Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Johor, and Melaka (Table 6.1). Out of the 18 respondents, eight were managers and ten were owners of accommodation businesses. There were 11 male and seven female respondents in this study.

There were four hotel managers, two owners of budget hotels, five owners of homestays, one owner of a lodge/hostel, one manager of a homestay, three managers of chalets and two chalet owners. Five managers were from accommodation businesses in Kuala Lumpur and three managers from Melaka. In total, 11 respondents were from Kuala Lumpur, one Johor, one Putrajaya, and five from Melaka.

There were 16 Muslim and two non-Muslim respondents. Respondents were either *halal* certified, *halal* claimant, or supporting *halal*. This is slightly different to Marzuki (2012) who divided her respondents into three groups: *halal* certified, *halal* claimant, and non-*halal*. Overall, in this study, six respondents were *halal* certified, ten *halal* claimants, and two-supported *halal*. The *halal* certified respondents in this study represented those that have the authorised *halal* certificate from JAKIM. The *halal* claimant respondents did not have a *halal* authorised certificate; however, they claimed their business as *halal* because they themselves were Muslims and/or most of their customers were Muslims. This is similar to the finding of Kirillova et al. (2014) that suggested religious belief influence the way the providers provided hospitality to guests. Given that the *halal* claimant

respondents in this study did provide prayer facilities such as kibrat direction, prayer mat, and prayer place for Muslim customers give credence to Kirillova et al. (2014). The two respondents that mentioned they supported *halal* initiatives were doubtful that their accommodation were providing *halal* hospitality because they did not offer food on site although they provided prayer mat, direction to kiblah and prayer place. Their understanding of *halal* hospitality perhaps show their lack of understanding or confusion about the concept (Mohd Yusof & Muhammad, 2010), where generally people think that *halal* is mostly about providing *halal* food. The quote below illustrates the point.

“Actually, so far we haven’t heard about it. This is the first time I've heard of it from you. This makes me think that our government may not be progressing on *halal* hospitality, if not I would have heard about it. I doubt that ours is *halal* hospitality. Ours is hospitality.” (Respondent F)

“We provide the kibrat direction, the prayer mat, and a musolla with prayer mats. So, we do support [*halal* hospitality]”. (Respondent F)

“If a Muslim customer requests for a prayer mat or direction of kiblah, we can only give that as our lodge is meant for sleep and shower only”. (Respondent J)

Halal certified respondents were represented by four large and two medium size accommodation. The *halal* claimant respondents were represented by one large, six medium and three small size accommodations. One large and one medium size accommodation represented the two respondents that supported *halal*. Generally, six respondents were from large size, nine from medium size and three from small size accommodation units. The large size category refers to hospitality businesses with 50 rooms and above, medium size with 10 to 49 rooms, and small size with 9 rooms and below (DBKL, 2016).

Table 6.1: Profile of respondents

Participant	Position	Gender	Muslim/ Non-Muslim	Type	Location	Certified/ Self-Claim	No. of Room	Size	<i>Halal</i> Attributes
A	Manager	Male	Muslim	Hotel	Kuala Lumpur	<i>Halal</i> Certified	137	Large	Food & prayer facilities
B	Manager	Female	Muslim	Hotel	Kuala Lumpur	<i>Halal</i> Certified	204	Large	Food & prayer facilities
C	Manager	Female	Muslim	Hotel	Kuala Lumpur	<i>Halal</i> Certified	250	Large	Food & prayer facilities
D	Manager	Female	Non-Muslim	Hotel	Kuala Lumpur	<i>Halal</i> Certified	130	Large	Food & prayer facilities
E	Owner	Male	Muslim	Budget Hotel	Putrajaya	<i>Halal</i> Claimant	62	Large	Prayer facilities
F	Owner	Male	Non-Muslim	Budget Hotel	Kuala Lumpur	Supporting <i>Halal</i>	54	Large	Prayer facilities
G	Owner	Female	Muslim	Homestay	Johor	<i>Halal</i> Claimant	3	Small	Prayer facilities
H	Owner	Male	Muslim	Homestay	Kuala Lumpur	<i>Halal</i> Claimant	3	Small	Prayer facilities
I	Owner	Male	Muslim	Homestay	Kuala Lumpur	<i>Halal</i> Claimant	10	Medium	Prayer facilities
J	Manager	Male	Muslim	Homestay	Kuala Lumpur	<i>Halal</i> Claimant	39	Medium	Prayer facilities
K	Owner	Male	Muslim	Lodge	Kuala Lumpur	Supporting <i>Halal</i>	11	Medium	Prayer facilities
L	Owner	Male	Muslim	Homestay	Kuala Lumpur	<i>Halal</i> Claimant	2	Small	Prayer facilities
M	Owner	Female	Muslim	Homestay	Kuala Lumpur	<i>Halal</i> Claimant	11	Medium	Prayer facilities
N	Manager	Male	Muslim	Chalet	Melaka	<i>Halal</i> Certified	24	Medium	Food & prayer facilities
O	Manager	Female	Muslim	Chalet	Melaka	<i>Halal</i> Claimant	15	Medium	Prayer facilities
P	Owner	Male	Muslim	Chalet	Melaka	<i>Halal</i> Claimant	16	Medium	Prayer facilities
Q	Manager	Female	Muslim	Chalet	Melaka	<i>Halal</i> Certified	30	Medium	Food & prayer facilities
R	Owner	Male	Muslim	Chalet	Melaka	<i>Halal</i> Claimant	39	Medium	Prayer facilities

Note: Prayer facilities mentioned refer to prayer place, prayer mat and direction to kiblat.

6.2 The Accommodation Providers' Understanding of Hospitality

Prior to questions on *halal* hospitality, respondents were asked on their overall understanding of the concept of hospitality. Hospitality was regarded as covering a wide range of attributes that often made it difficult for respondents to explain concisely. Further questioning enhanced the respondents' elaboration on other attributes of hospitality that involves customer service, facilities and utilities, and food and beverage.

Although the main goal of any accommodation provider is essentially to make a profit, the host-guest relationship is also important for business success as well as a strategy to satisfy customers and increase loyalty (Han & Jeung, 2013; Kim & Han, 2008). The respondents viewed in this study viewed hospitality as offering customer service, facilities and amenities that guests wanted as well as offering anything that contributes to customer satisfaction. The respondents also considered hospitality as welcoming guests, friendly service, make the guests happy and feel comfortable. The following quotes illustrate these views:

“From a hotel perspective, we're all about customer service, accommodation, and restaurant. So hospitality has a wide range and large scope.” (Respondent A)

“We provide a good accommodation with complete facilities.” (Respondent E)

“Hospitality is about welcoming guests and makes them feel at home.” (Respondent B)

“Hospitality to me is all about the service, friendly service that you rendered to your guests by the employees.” (Respondent A)

“To say that I fully understand, I'm not sure, but if it is just my opinion, then for me it is ensuring that the people staying at my place are happy, comfortable and that they will come again.” (Respondent M)

“Hospitality is a service industry. It is a job or service you give the customers. It is not about us, it is about the customers. They pay us and we give what they want. If they feel happy and comfortable with us, and they feel satisfied, then we are happy.” (Respondent F)

From these quotes, it can be seen that offering hospitality is related mainly to satisfaction of customers but also to some extent to satisfying the accommodation provider with rewards such as profit. Given that respondents emphasized more the social aspects of providing hospitality such as welcoming act and friendliness in order for customers to feel happy and comfortable reflect the customer centric views that permeate hospitality businesses in general. The characteristics of service delivery described by the respondents conform to notions of what hospitality provision should be. In fact, the respondents understanding of the hospitality concept reflects the Western perspective of hospitality.

6.3 The Accommodation Providers’ Understanding of *Halal* Hospitality

Hospitality in Islam reflects a way of life where the goal of offering hospitality is not to meet the needs of guests only but also part of one’s responsibility as a Muslim. From this perspective, offering hospitality is part of one’s religious obligation and encompasses the whole activity of life in seeking the pleasure of God. “From an Islamic perspective, God-consciousness reflects intrinsic intentions of seeking all that is good while forbidding all that is evil, and extrinsic behavior of incorporating ideals that are based on an absolute moral code of conduct set by God in the Holy Qur'an and in authentic prophetic traditions” (El-Bassiouny, 2014, p. 45). In the next section, the respondents' understanding of *halal* hospitality in relation to religion is seen from four angles; faith and belief, spirituality, rewards and punishment, as well as prevention and control.

Faith and belief

The findings from the transcripts indicated that many Muslim respondents understood *halal* hospitality as per Islamic teaching and they interpreted *halal* requirements according to their understanding of such teaching. The Muslim respondents in this study indicated

that they believe all actions are considered worship if performed for the sake of Allah. These respondents believe that as a Muslim, one must provide *halal* hospitality as per religious requirements and if not, there will be punishment in the afterlife. This idea is illustrated in the quotes below:

“We are Muslims; therefore, we must provide *halal* services.” (Respondent N)

“We are Muslims and we are accountable to provide the right service to the customers. We have to be answerable in the hereafter for all our acts.” (Respondent P)

When probed further on the role of *halal* hospitality out of the immediate business context, the respondents elaborated about their responsibilities as a Muslim. In Islam, every Muslim is responsible to remind other Muslims on their obligations to religion. Muslims respondents believed that they must avoid *haram* activities and be responsible to themselves and others. Muslims are responsible to lead their life through religious obligations to remind others on religious obligation including the prayers and avoiding vices. They considered by having signage, giving advice, and preventing *haram* activities could encourage customers to follow Islamic obligations. They also emphasized that accomplices to vices is a sin as illustrated in the quotes below:

“It is a responsibility of a Muslim to remind other Muslim about religious obligation. Providing *halal* hospitality is one way of doing *dakwah* (proselytization) to people.” (Respondent B)

“We do not want to be accomplices for anything *haram*. We monitor the youngsters that come here so that there are no *haram* activities...we do not want to be accomplices...We have to take care of our responsibilities as Muslims.” (Respondent O)

“I do not compromise in letting non-married couples stay together. This is always a problem for any hotel businesses. If we allow them to stay here, then we are also an accomplice to the vice and have to also bear the sin.” (Respondent Q)

“I do not want mixed company in my place that can lead to vice. As the owner I will be responsible too if there is vice in my place and I do not want to feel ashamed to face the neighbours if they call me to complain about seeing such things at my place.” (Respondent H)

“If we see Muslims drinking alcoholic drinks then we advise them and avoid being accomplices to the act.” (Respondent P)

Hence, there is no separation of religious obligation in business or outside of the business. *Dakwah* (proselytization) to employees and customers is part of the responsibility either as an individual Muslim or as the manager of an organisation. As part of the religious obligations, people of Muslim faith should put effort in giving advice to other Muslims or reminding them to remember Allah by *doa* (prayer). Give advice for example, is very encouraging in Islam as the Prophet Muhammad said:

“Whosoever of you sees a wrong (*mungkar*) must change it with his hand. If he is not able to, then with his tongue [advise]. If he is not able to then with his heart [prayer]”.

(Mukmin)

Spirituality

Respondents also believed that avoiding *haram* elements could increase their religiosity or spiritual feeling (intrinsic value) to be closer to Allah. Therefore, some respondents were very concerned on the mixing of *halal* and *haram* sources such as the business income and the contamination of foods and kitchen utensils. The contamination will require ritual cleanliness and if not done correctly, this will affect their religiosity. These respondents

believed that when there is a contamination between *halal* and *haram* in one's life, then it would bring impurity to one's soul as suggested in the quotes below:

“We cannot eat *haram* food, it will generate negativity in oneself, soul, and body, and indirectly in the future, until one dies. If one's eat or is involved with many *haram* things, sin is one part, it is between oneself with God, but if the *haram* thing is already in one's soul, it will be there, it will always have some influence on one's soul as it has become part of our flesh and blood, and will be very difficult to remove.” (Respondent A)

“For me there is a bit of reservation towards non-Muslims. It is all right for them to stay, but no barbeque as I am not confident and such because they may have non-*halal* food. That would be a problem to me.” (Respondent O)

Rewards and Punishments

Similar to other religions like Christianity and Judaism, Muslims respondents believed that there are rewards for good deeds. Good deeds include worship and providing *halal* hospitality. Muslim respondents also believed that if they mixed the *halal* and *haram* activities, they will not be rewarded. Apart from that, as *halal* hospitality is also for non-Muslim customers, the respondents thought it was important to preach to non-Muslims about *halal* and the reasons for doing *halal*. One of the responsibilities of a Muslim is to spread the religion to others. Muslim respondents believed that *halal* means no harms to anybody and both Muslims and non-Muslims gain benefits from *halal* hospitality. These quotes illustrate the argument made above:

“The most important thing is our intention... As a Muslim, you have to believe that when you do good, you are rewarded.” (Respondent N)

“It is one of our intentions to preach to non-Muslims to get them to understand what is *halal* and why do the Muslims do it.” (Respondent E)

“If we carry out our deeds with the intention to do good, this becomes part of worship.” (Respondent H)

“It is all about the sustenance that Allah SWT provides for me. If we mix the *halal* with the *haram*, we won't be rewarded.” (Respondent O)

“*Halal* is not necessarily only for Muslims actually, non-Muslims too, great. Things that are *halal*, means pure right, the way it is clean, the way its handled and all, certainly, there's no doubt.” (Respondent G)

“Because for us, when we serve Muslims, we feel we serve travellers, we feel an unseen reward; for God grants to us right.” (Respondent G)

Prevention and control

Although a Muslim has a duty to advise another Muslim of any vices, in the context of hospitality business in Malaysia, it is difficult to apply this obligation because of several factors such as work environment (e.g., involves multiracial employees and customers) and government policy. However, by declaring that their accommodation offers *halal* hospitality, respondents expected customers to respect the *halal* status and, therefore, not engage in any vices on their premises. In some cases, the respondent said that they cooperate with the Jabatan Agama Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) for inspection and actions to prevent vices from occurring at their premises. These quotes illustrate the argument:

“We do not serve or allow any alcoholic drinks even to non-Muslim foreigners. If the customers bring their own alcoholic drinks without our knowledge, then that is beyond our control.” (Respondent R)

“To avoid vices here, we hope that once people know that this is a *Shariah* compliant hotel, they will stop from doing any vice here. Although we do not allow

them, we do not have the authority to stop them. Only the relevant authority can.”
(Respondent B)

“In Islam, we cannot force people to follow our rules. In my opinion, we only can prevent. We are a business, we need to think of many factors in implementing *halal* requirements, for example, where we work, our government, the laws gazetted, and other factors. We can put up signage to remind about Islamic rules but the most important is the individuals themselves, if they want to go against the rules, we cannot do anything...We have many foreigners, we do not know whether they are Muslims or not, we just need to avoid any activities against our packages.”
(Respondent A)

In the *halal* hospitality context, acts such as providing a prayer room, *halal* food, and Kiblat direction are considered as acts to remind Muslims guests of their religious obligations. However, if they do not want to follow the prescribed religious obligations, several respondents indicated that they could not do anything about that as shown in the quotes below:

“We have all the facilities here such as the musolla, kiblat direction, Quran, and Yasin surah. We provide all these but if the customers do any vice then it is beyond us and the religion.” (Respondent I)

“We are offering *halal* hospitality because we don't allow non-mahram (meaning people who are eligible to marry each other) to stay together in the same room. If we know they are unmarried, we will advise them, and not allow them to stay together...We have a signboard notifying our guests of that and of other prohibition like alcoholic drinks.” (Respondent J)

It is apparent from the transcripts that some respondents are keen on implementing Islamic hospitality throughout their business. However, it seems that accommodation providers have differing opinions on how to implement *halal* hospitality. These differing

opinions seem to be related to their knowledge of Islamic hospitality in the broader sense but also closely tied in to their religious views.

6.4 The Accommodation Providers' Own Perspectives on *Halal* Hospitality

Halal was clearly regarded by participants as being related to Islamic law though they felt that explaining *halal* hospitality in the contexts of business and religion can be difficult. This was an issue also found in the work of Marzuki (2012) and Wan Hassan (2008). The respondents mentioned that hospitality in a commercial context requires them to follow the *Shariah* requirements. Apart from *halal* certification, respondents indicated other requirements of *halal* hospitality such as the funding of the operation, appropriate facility design (*halal* attributes), staff training, entertainment, and the management of the *halal* hospitality business as a whole were also essential.

Shariah compliance

Operating *halal* hospitality and its associated certification processes require that accommodation providers understand many of its formal requirements. This suggests that the motivation to provide *halal* hospitality is grounded beyond immediate religious motivations and may also be related to regulatory and cultural influences. However, without appropriate understanding of Islamic teaching, it may be difficult to comply with the whole concept of *halal* in hospitality. To help the understanding of *halal* in hospitality business, the government and religious institutions regulate rules and requirements that comply with *Shariah* (*Halal* Malaysia, 2014). This is illustrated in the quotes below:

“Hospitality is a service. If you combine it with *halal*, then you must adhere to all the requirements. For us here, for *halal* hospitality, we have to be *Shariah* compliant.” (Respondent A)

“When we talk about *halal* hospitality, its *Shariah* compliant and there are Islamic elements in all our services.” (Respondent B)

“*Halal* hospitality is based on Islamic *Shariah*.” (Respondent C)

“*Halal* is also about providing the prayer facilities like the kiblat direction, prayer mat, even the female prayer garment.” (Respondent L)

Muslim respondents in this study interpreted *halal* hospitality within the context of their own understanding of *shariah*. These respondents interpreted *halal* hospitality practices as per the normal *shariah* practices in their life and in the operation of their business. However, their interpretation of *shariah* requirements are not necessarily the same or as detailed as those provided by JAKIM. The *shariah* requirements by JAKIM consider many aspects of *halal* according to Islamic teaching as well as the international standard applied for business practices such as the ISO9001, Codex Alimentarius, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and Good Hygienic Practices (Talib & Ali, 2009; Zakaria & Talib, 2010). These differences in interpretation and understanding of *shariah* requirements may well explain why accommodation providers have different understandings and interpretations of *halal* hospitality.

Halal Certification

Under the *Trade Description Act 2011*, a *halal* certificate is compulsory for those serving Muslim customers regardless of whether the providers are Muslim or not. Although respondents agreed on the importance of a *halal* certificate, respondents felt that they could not comply with its requirements because of government policies on procurement and trade law. As such, respondents were divided on their opinions with respect to the importance of *halal* certification as shown in the quotes below.

“If the providers want to provide *halal* hospitality, with or without the *halal* certificate, they will follow the Islamic rules and regulations”. (Respondent E)

“For me, I don't really understand... For the hotel, it is compulsory. We must have *halal* certificate. Without this *halal* certificate, we can't progress in our business...So, for a lot of hotels, they feel that they must have the *halal* certificate.

So, they do not know the actual reason why they need to have it. Every hotel will think that *halal* certification is for business purposes.” (Respondent D)

The Importance of Halal Certification

In Malaysia, it is usually regarded as important for accommodation providers to gain *halal* certification in order to meet the high demand for *halal* products and services (Iberahim et al., 2012). For example, respondents require a *halal* certificate in order to organise events related to government and government agencies and for payment purposes as outlined in the quotes below.

“We cannot conduct any programs or events for the government without a *halal* certificate, for example, to hold a reception for the government. The government pays through LO [local order] or the government purchase order. When we receive the purchase order, it involves money. If you do not have a *halal* certificate, then you will not get your payment.” (Respondent N)

“I think all the hotels in Malaysia should have *halal* certification. First, if we have many government clients, this is necessary. When we submit quotes, we have to attach together the *halal* certificate. Only then will the government allow the function to be conducted in this hotel.” (Respondent C)

“Now it is important and has become more important. We must have *halal* certification.” (Respondent D)

Several respondents claimed that a *halal* certificate was not important for them due to a number of reasons such as the size of their accommodation, number of rooms, no food provision on site, accommodation owned by Muslim, and/or they had a Muslim cook that followed the established practices. In addition, a *halal* certificate was unimportant because respondents felt that all of their customers were Muslims and they did not provide facilities for any type of *haram* activities. As such, they believed that they were providing good *halal* hospitality already but they acknowledge that a *halal* certificate is useful when

conducting any activities/business with government agencies and associations. This argument is built on the following quotes:

“The government does not require any *halal* certification for the hotel, for accommodation providers. A restaurant really needs it. It definitely needs the *halal* certification.” (Respondent F)

“Since we don't provide any food here so we don't need a *halal* certificate.” (Respondent J)

“It is important to ensure that the product is really *halal*. In Malaysia though, I do not think it is necessary to have certification if you are a Muslim. Besides, I do not provide food, just lodgings so why do I need a *halal* certificate.” (Respondent H)

“It is important to provide *halal* assurance for the people. As of now, Muslim owned chalets usually do not have the *halal* certificate as Muslims prepare the food, so we do not need the *halal* certificate.” (Respondent O)

“When the service provided is good, the customers will remember and come back, resulting in regular customers. The most important thing is to provide the best possible service to the customers. It is not about depending only on the *halal* certification.” (Respondent R)

“Actually, it is alright not to have the certification since we are Muslims ourselves. The customers that come here request for *halal* certification especially when they are from any statutory bodies or associations... *Halal* certification is important when we deal with the government and it reduces any untoward risks.” (Respondent Q)

“...is more applicable to hotels because they are serving alcoholic drinks... We are Muslims and we have provided an environment that is not conducive for drinking beer or smoking. There is no place for non-*halal* things. For me, it does not make

any difference if there is a *halal* certificate or not as I am catering for only Muslim customers.” (Respondent M)

One respondent suggested that a good Muslim would by default not treat their customers wrongly as the consequence would be punishment in the hereafter according to Islamic teachings. Other research has also previously indicated that providers thought they provided *halal* hospitality because they were good Muslims and that certification may therefore be unwarranted (Wan Hassan & Hall, 2003). A respondent also argued that non-Muslims will avoid providing *halal* hospitality due to their limited knowledge of its requirements and the processes that are involved in securing a *halal* certificate as illustrated in the quotes below.

“I don't think it is important. You do not need it. We are Muslims and we are accountable to provide the right service to the customers. We have to be answerable in the hereafter for all our acts.” (Respondent P)

“*Halal* certification does not bring any value for us. If you have a *halal* certificate, the non-Muslims do not know much about it, and they pull out.” (Respondent M)

However, *halal* certification is not a proof that an individual is a good Muslim or not. Instead, it indicates that certain parameters and conditions in the process of production are *Shariah* compliant; as well as, from a marketing perspective, to convince customers of the *halal* status of products and services.

Trust

Halal certification has been widely regarded as essential in the creation of trust between suppliers and customers, and ensuring that products and services are *halal* (Abdullah et al., 2012; Al-Harran & Low, 2008; Marzuki et al., 2012). As pointed out by one respondent, customers can use online technology to check the status of certified *halal* providers in Malaysia, given that the list of *halal* certified accommodation providers, for example, is

published on the HDM website. The availability of such information can help to create trust between accommodation providers and customers as shown in the following quotes.

“People are reassured as *halal* is not just about the food, but its concerned with the cleanliness, the preparation, the ingredients, even imported ingredients. The first is this assurance, and the second one is the pride of having the *halal* certification as this means that you abide by all the *halal* requirements.” (Respondent N)

“To me if the consumers are not confident with it, then they can always check online because JAKIM and JAIN have listed all the authorized and verified [providers]. So if you are not confident, you can check online to alleviate any misgivings. We have the technology now and it is up to the consumers.” (Respondent B)

“In Malaysia, the Malays trust the certificate. The business people do mind about this. If something goes wrong, they have to face the consequences from the Malaysian government. So definitely, people trust the certificate.” (Respondent F)

“It is good to have *halal* certification as we don’t need to be suspicious about every single thing”. (Respondent P)

Another respondent argued that hawkers or sellers also need to have a *halal* certificate because accommodation providers are getting some of their raw materials for their business from these sellers. To this respondent, the ingredients and cooking practices sold by hawkers, for example, are unlabelled and their *halal* status is questionable. Therefore, according to this respondent, the *halal* certificate is important even for small size suppliers reassure accommodation providers on the *halal* status of the food and ingredients they sell as shown in the quote below.

“The restaurants buy their raw materials from the market. So, even if we see a Malay cook, if the raw material from the market is not *halal*, then their food is actually not *halal* too. Hence, both the restaurant and the sellers at the market need

halal certification. The foods sold at the market usually have no labels. Saying that Malay made it to imply its *halal* is not right. *Halal* certification is needed.” (Respondent R)

Some of the Muslim respondents also condemn unethical conducts with respect to the misuse of the *halal* logo, which questions the ability of some providers to offer *halal* hospitality. For example, one respondent considered that those having the *halal* certificate but not following the requirements were not sincere to themselves as well as to the customers as illustrated in the quote below.

“...in Giant supermarket, the *halal* products are placed really near the non-*halal* products. The products with *halal* logos are also suspicious. We do not know whether the producers or suppliers follow all the *halal* requirements all the time.” (Respondent H)

“We have to be more careful about the misuse of *halal* and the *halal* logo. The authorities say its *halal* but in reality, it is not *halal*, but so many people have eaten or used that thing. They have to answer to that in the hereafter.” (Respondent I)

“Some customers who are very particular with what they eat had some doubts that the sausages were *halal*. We source our sausages from a *halal* supplier but if the customers do not like it (do not trust that sausages were *halal*), then we can compromise and adjust what we offer them. So I gave them something else to eat, I changed the sausage to eggs instead.” (Respondent Q)

“...if we have the certificate, can we adhere to the certification requirements? If we can obtain the certificate, but don't follow it, then it's of no use.” (Respondent E)

The lack of enforcement in *halal*-certified food production has led to many questions on the legitimacy of some products allegedly labelled *halal* (Rezai et al., 2012). The arguments stated specifically questioned the sincere commitment of *halal* certified providers in following the *halal* certification processes. To some respondents, government

enforcement is important in order to avoid violations of *halal* requirements among *halal* certified suppliers or providers.

Halal certification is evidence of compliance to *halal* requirements for particular products (Abdullah et al., 2012). Violations of *halal* procedures damage the credibility and reputation of *halal* certified providers. It has been suggested that violations occur when there is no proper understanding of the *halal* concept (Marzuki et al., 2012). Several respondents indicated that they are less confident with *halal* certificate because they thought that some suppliers do not fully follow *halal* procedures and requirements. Enforcement is important, as there were many issues on violations of *halal* requirements as illustrated in the quotes below.

“I think its good JAKIM has this *halal* concept because if we don't have that people will take things easy and not be strict about following the requirements.”
(Respondent Q)

“However, the providers must adhere to all requirements and not simply doing it just for obtaining the *halal* certificate. Yet, in reality, they do not follow the requirements at all times. The enforcement from government is in need on this matter.” (Respondent E)

“*Halal* certification needs enforcement and constant monitoring from JAKIM and the rest of the relevant government bodies. They have to monitor constantly, as sometimes people do not do what they supposed to, and overlooked some of the *halal* requirements, this leads too many vices at that place.” (Respondent Q)

“With the enforcement by JAKIM and JAIN, people are more confident to come to our hotel, not just locals but also international customer.” (Respondent B)

Therefore, the Trade Description Act (TDA) is useful to promote good trade practices among providers and to protect customers from any false trade descriptions or misconducts (DagangHalal, 2014). In fact, the common response of participants suggests

that both providers and customers gain benefits from *halal* certification but the lack of enforcement leads to accommodation providers questioning its value.

Benefits

Generally, *halal* hospitality is seen by respondents to benefit Muslim more than non-Muslim customers. However, *halal* is not meant for Muslim customers only as non-Muslim customers also do have concerns on *halal* matters such as getting healthy food from *halal* restaurants (Jamal Abdul, Khalique, & Abdul Malek, 2013; Rezai et al., 2012). The following quotes illustrate the importance of providing *halal* hospitality to both Muslims and non-Muslims.

“The benefit is mostly for the Muslims. The non-Muslims actually do not really bother as long as they can eat because they do not have any restrictions...So when its *halal*, everyone is reassured.” (Respondent C)

“It definitely benefits the Muslims. For a practicing Muslim who prays, of course he wants to go to *halal* place, a *halal* store, everything *halal*. With JAKIM and other authorities verifying the *halal* places, food and all sorts of things, people feel its more convenient as they don't need to check for themselves whether its *halal*.” (Respondent I)

“The customer of course, especially the Muslim customers...and it is profitable for us too.” (Respondent Q)

“To me, *halal* hospitality is benefiting both Muslims and non-Muslims. The non-Muslim, for example, they are providing the *halal* business for Muslim and non-Muslims. Wah Tai biscuit company, for example, is already a *halal* business, as without *halal*, this company cannot reach the target market. From there, we know this company get the benefit from *halal*.” (Respondent A)

“It benefits the Muslims and non-Muslims. The non-Muslims are also choosy nowadays. Not just the locals, I think non-Muslims are savvy enough to also look for a place suited for them, they can even want the *halal* certification.” (Respondent B)

“We can provide good hospitality services, and the customers can receive something good as everything is *halal*.” (Respondent N)

Halal in other words may facilitate recognition and choice of accommodation by customers. By emphasizing *halal* attributes offered by an accommodation provider to both Muslim and non-Muslim customers, the accommodation provider increases his or her chance of the accommodation being selected by the customer.

Halal Attributes and Communication with Customers

Some issues highlighted by accommodation providers on the type of *halal* attributes that must be emphasized in communications with customers include female staff attire, staff attitude and training, cleanliness, and entertainment. Some respondents stress on the staff attire and attitudes to ensure that the *halal* hospitality attributes of the accommodation unit adheres to *Shariah law*. The use of hijab by female employees, prayer obligations by employees, and the way employees interact with customers, were emphasized as being important when communicating the *halal* attributes of a hotel for example.

Hijab

There is a difference in the understanding of Islam among Muslim communities worldwide as well as the level of willingness to adhere to and practice the teachings of Islam (Battour et al., 2011). For example, the wearing of a hijab is highly valued by some female Muslims but not by others. In addition, the customer’s own religiosity is often considered as an important element that influences the types of services and expectations of Muslim customers (Battour et al., 2011). Respondents who emphasized the need for female

employees to wear the hijab were formulating this view on their understanding of verses of Quran:

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts and not show of their adornment except only that which is apparent, and draw their veils over their (necks and) bosoms and not reveal their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male servants who lack vigor, or small children who have no knowledge of women's private parts. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn you all to Allah in repentance, O believers, that you may be successful.

(An-Nur, verse 31)

As one respondent mentioned:

“It is necessary for staff to pray, to wear hijab, and to have manners during intermingle between different genders. We have a certain limit that we don't allow to go beyond that.” (Respondent E)

Ritual Cleanliness

Indeed, to the respondents, a ‘complete’ facility is seen as important for customer satisfaction. Two respondents stressed the importance of cleanliness to satisfy customers’ needs and to retain them as loyal customers as illustrated in the quotes below.

“I also make sure the place is really clean so that when the customers come to stay, the place is clean.” (Respondent H)

“In the hospitality business, the most important thing is cleanliness. If the hotel is not clean, customers will not stay there.” (Respondent J)

“I have my own rules and regulations that I enforce at my accommodation... there is a notice of no beer, no liquor, and no pork. We do not want our place to be unclean.” (Respondent M)

Ritual cleanliness is one important aspect to emphasize in the delivery and communication of *halal* hospitality to customers. This ritual cleanliness according to Islamic teaching is different from the Western interpretation of cleanliness. In ritual cleanliness, no sign of prohibited elements is expected to be in the accommodation room such as alcoholic drinks in the mini bar (Battour et al., 2011). The reason is that when the place (room) is ritually unclean, it affects the spiritual aspect of worshipping for Muslim customers. Cleanliness in Islam is part of the faith and Muslims generally need to be physically and spiritually clean continuously (Kamali, 2015). Therefore, it was clear that for some of the respondents, providing a ritually clean place for Muslim customers was important to satisfy the spiritual needs in worshipping for both their customers and themselves.

Staff Welfare and Training

The respondents also believed that the management of a hospitality business must also include the training of staff about *halal* hospitality and their duty as a Muslim. In Islam, leaders are responsible to provide advice to employees on their obligations and responsibilities as Muslims. As such, many of the respondents took a strong view of their responsibility as Muslims to ensure that every employee in their establishment as well as Muslim customers were carrying out their essential duties and religious responsibilities during their stay. These are illustrated in the following quotes:

“It is difficult for me to explain *halal* hospitality. For *halal* hospitality, you need certification, and staffs have to be trained on how to handle the preparation, the process, know the suppliers and things like that.” (Respondent P)

“The owner of this hotel is a Muslim. He doesn't allow a lot of things [anything against the Islamic teaching]. So, we follow his directions.” (Respondent J)

“I am one of the employees that saw the transition since I started working here in 2005, and we started to change in 2006. Before this I worked in Park Royal, Swiss Garden, 17 years in the hospitality business. When I was working in Park Royal, they didn't even have a *musolla* [prayer room]. I had to pray in between the lockers. Then I came here and saw that they had a *musolla*.” (Respondent B)

“We changed the concept to *halal* also because we do not want our staff to leave their Islamic obligations when they are with us, not just our staff but also our guests.” (Respondent B)

“First, we try to follow the Islamic guidelines for *halal*. One example is that when couples come here, they have to show the marriage certificate. The second example is that in our hotel, we train our staff to follow the Islamic guidelines.” (Respondent E)

It can be argued that the implementation of *halal* hospitality should be driven by top management, who should practice leadership by example, as illustrated in the quotes above. The implementation of the concept of *halal* hospitality cannot be the responsibility of employees only. In fact, changes at both management and operational levels are needed so that the services offered to the customers comply with what the respondents believe were about *halal* hospitality.

Halal Entertainment

Although some forms of entertainment are allowed in Islam, respondents felt that they preferred to remove entertainment activities that were regarded as not following Islamic teaching (refer Al-Qaradawi, 1992). In following their interpretations of Islamic teaching, a few respondents were very firm that their role as a Muslim was to sincerely operate the hospitality business as *halal* and, therefore, music and entertainment, with a few exceptions, should not be offered as shown in the quotes below:

“Previously, we had an in-house band in the upstairs lounge, we had snooker tables. Now we do not have these anymore. There is a TV in every room, but not with all channels. There are news channels, sports, family and films...We have eliminated all alcohol, wine.” (Respondent C)

“...we had some entertainment, and during the fasting month, we had *ghazal* (poetic music with Islamic content). Now, we still have mother's day but we have *tazkirah* instead (lectures with the intent to remind customers of goodness) and we invite Muslim scholars to come over such as Ustaz Kazim one year, then another was Imam Ashraf, Salman and Rahmat, we change every year. During the fasting month now, we have an international qari to come and recite the Quran in our grand ballroom.” (Respondent B)

“At my place, I don't even allow karaoke. We have groups that want to stay here and decided not to when they found out that we didn't allow karaoke.” (Respondent R)

Removal of some entertainment activities and facilities that are interpreted as prohibited in Islam have the aim of avoiding the mixing of *halal* and *haram* elements. This may involve activities that lead to intoxication, obscenity, gambling, intermingling and free mixing of men and women (Al-Qaradawi, 1992). Karaoke activities, for example, will involve a mixing of genders, singing non-Islamic songs, and may involve alcoholic beverages. This situation causes some providers to eliminate the entertainment aspects of their services and subsequently replace them with Islamic entertainment. In addition, some respondents said they provided attributes that conform to Islamic values by following the *Sunnah*. This is illustrated in the quote below:

“We follow the guidance of the Quran and Sunnah, so we try to follow the way of the prophet (s.a.w) as much as possible. We encourage our staff to give the best hospitality that they can or know how to and we equip them with all the small things that we think matter. For example, to give the *salam* greeting, to read the prayer when you serve your guests their meals instead of saying “enjoy your meal”,

and when the guest leaves, the staff will bid them a safe journey to their destination. These are not all small things; there are also the *makruh* (disliked behaviour in Islam) which we used to see happening a lot. So we try to follow as much as we can the prophet's ways. Another example is we know that the prophet likes to eat fruits. Our F&B serves up fruits to our guests before serving the main course for their meals. We also give *zamzam* water (holy water for Muslim) when a group checks in because this water is liked by the prophet and the Muslims. At the conventional hotel, they give chocolates for their touch down service. Here, we give our guests a *hadith*, a new one everyday. We try to be different, and its all these small things that make a difference, following the *sunnah* and avoiding the *makruh*. We have an Islamic floor with azan and 24-hours Quran recital. The azan is live. When you get out of the elevator, you see the dates and raisins, which are both *sunnah*. So what we can follow we do it InsyaAllah. Pray for it.” (Respondent B)

It seems that the extent to which accommodation providers wish to provide *halal* services is dependent on several factors including the financial capability, work force, management support, and the ability to handle all operations in accordance to *halal* requirements.

Business opportunity

The issues associated with reconciling the authenticity of offering hospitality and the monetary demands of any businesses have long been recognised (Telfer, 2000). As well as being part of Islam *halal* hospitality clearly provides opportunities for business (Abdul et al., 2013), thus, also providing opportunities to obtain profit. It was apparent that one of the reasons to offer *halal* hospitality is to cater to the needs of the Muslim market (Wilson et al., 2013). Many respondents viewed *halal* hospitality as an opportunity for them to do business better. They admitted that because of the majority of their customers are Muslims, they have tailored their hospitality business according to *halal* hospitality. This was aimed at attracting and retaining more customers. This is shown in the following quotes.

“The first thing you have to understand is how many billions of Muslims in this world. About 1.8 billion and the count are increasing. In the hospitality sector, the healthiest growth is in Islamic tourism. Now, that being the case, automatically, whether you want to go for religion, or you want to go for the Muslims, it is always a commercial arrangement.” (Respondent B)

“It gives us the opportunity to do business with the government.” (Respondent N)

“We don't have many corporate clients. We are more towards government, so being *halal* is important. Moreover, one more thing, the majority of our staff here are Malay Muslims. Our guests too are local Muslims.” (Respondent C)

“We rarely have non-Muslim customers because this is a predominantly Malay area and non-Muslims rarely come here.” (Respondent N)

“If we do non-*halal*, people won't come. So it is better to orient towards *halal* hospitality because our main customers are Muslims.” (Respondent K)

“Here, we are in a village area where 99% of the population are Muslims. If you do *halal* hospitality where the majority are non-Muslims, for example in the Balakong area which has mostly Chinese populace, then that's not appropriate.” (Respondent J)

“In this business, if you are particularly targeting Muslim customers, then you definitely have to go for *halal*.” (Respondent F)

“Other hotels that have non-Muslims upper management may not be able to do *halal* hospitality like we do. However, the non-Muslims are also seeing the *halal* concept opportunity, for example, Rayani Air. It is owned by a non-Muslim but it is *Shariah* compliant.” (Respondent B)

Halal hospitality offerings are a good business opportunity as more than 60% of Malaysia population are Muslims. Accommodation providers therefore have to consider the importance of going *halal* to gain a competitive advantage in the hospitality business (Abdullah et al., 2011). However, there are needs to understand the concept of *halal* hospitality to ensure the fulfilment of its entire requirements, and for Muslims, it is a part of their religious obligations.

Knowledge Improvement

For some large-scale accommodation providers, service improvements are made through references to a *halal* advisor. The respondents mentioned the availability of *halal* advisors to manage any issues with *halal* certification processes. For small-scale providers, they provided the service based on what they understood as being *halal* hospitality. They believed that if there are no complaints, then the *halal* services provided are adequate for use by Muslim customers as shown in the quotes below:

“We have a panel of *Shariah* advisors, so any enhancements or changes; we have to inform them first. We have these advisors to make sure we are doing the right thing.” (Respondent B)

“No, I don't need to as I don't prepare or provide food. I only provide the utensils and equipment to cook.” (Respondent H)

“I don't think I need to because Alhamdulillah [praise be to God] so far there are none unsatisfied customers with my services. From the way we treat our customers, many come back and are repeat customers...So we know that we are doing right by having all these repeat customers and referrals.” (Respondent L)

From the findings above, it seems that management support is crucial to ensure that knowledge about *halal* hospitality and its implementation is done correctly. It seems that accommodation providers are aware that the provision of *halal* hospitality is not an easy

task and that they need to constantly monitor and improve the *halal* hospitality services they provide.

6.5 Challenges in Operating *Halal* Hospitality

Many respondents indicated that necessary improvements were not so much about the *halal* hospitality concept, but more so about the *halal* certification processes. However, *halal* certification processes mostly relate to food and beverages, and not the other aspects of Islamic values in an accommodation and hospitality context. The Islamic values discussed in previous sections do not necessarily apply to non-Muslim cultures while according to several respondents the hospitality business they are in is meant for both Muslim and non-Muslim customers. Therefore, their perspectives on the challenges of providing the *halal* hospitality were explored further.

Lack of understanding on halal certification

JAKIM has commented that many accommodation providers do not understand the *halal* certification procedures (Noordin et al., 2014). When participants were asked about the need to improve their understanding of *halal* hospitality, they indicated that they had a good understanding of *halal* hospitality, yet the process of getting the *halal* certificate, they felt required better understanding on their behalf as well as the implications of the process on their business. This is shown in the quotes below.

“It is not the concept, but the process that needs to be understood more.”
(Respondent N)

“It is not that we do not understand the concept, we do understand it. However, we are just unable to fulfil all of the requirements.” (Respondent R)

“*Halal* is holistic and encompass many things. So it is not about improving the understanding of the *halal* concept but it is about whether you can comply with the *halal* requirements in all its totality.” (Respondent I)

“We have been taught about Islamic values since we were small. We know what is *halal* and *haram*.” (Respondent Q)

“I am a Muslim, I do what I understand. We serve our customers to the best of our ability.” (Respondent P)

Some of the accommodation providers considered that they were already providing the best *halal* services based on their understanding of the concept and their ability to implement such services. Yet different interpretations and practices of *halal* hospitality was evident from the transcripts and it is clear that these different practices can cause confusion among both customers and providers. The lack of uniform guidelines as to what *halal* hospitality constitutes may affect the standard practices in the context of commercial *halal* hospitality business. It seems that providers agree to some extent on *halal* requirements of their business with respect to areas of food and entertainment. However, it is clear that they do not have a holistic understanding of what the notion of “*halal*” or “*halal* hospitality” is. Therefore, they seemed to be complying to their own standard and understanding of *halal* and for many, they think they are already “*halal*” enough.

Difficulty to comply with halal requirements

The improvements in Malaysian Standard Halal Food (MS1500:2009) has strengthened the practical guidelines with respect to the preparation, processing, handling, packaging, storage and distribution of food and non-food products. However, there were issues with *halal* certification as mentioned by the respondents.

“*Halal* is good, but it is difficult to do. He also commented that “The application process is thorough online and very difficult to understand”. (Respondent N)

“The certification for *halal* is OK for a restaurant, but it is not possible for a hotel. If they have an F&B department, it is difficult for them.” (Respondent F)

“...it is difficult to separate the accommodation by gender with men only or women only rooms. We do not have many rooms, only 38 rooms. So, it is really difficult to have gender specific accommodation.” (Respondent J)

“The process of obtaining the *halal* certificate is difficult and tedious. Take a long period.” (Respondent D)

“The *halal* certification process is very tedious as there are many problems faced to be certified.” (Respondent A)

Halal certification is considered to be advantageous for hospitality businesses in Malaysia. However, the emphasis on *halal* as being solely focused on food has diverted attention away from other aspects of *halal* that matters for a business such as the source of capital, *halal* suppliers and supplies, recognized *halal* logo, 100% *halal* operation, and customers attitudes towards *halal*. These impact some of the problems faced by accommodation providers to implement *halal* hospitality. As admitted by some of the respondents, they faced some problems during the early implementation of what they believe is *halal* hospitality, but they pointed out that these problems were of a temporary nature as illustrated in the quotes below.

“Problems when starting, suppliers increased the price because when applying for *halal*, they have to pay JAKIM, so the prices increased. However, we wanted to go for *halal*, so we have to purchase from suppliers that have *halal* certification. The suppliers that don't have *halal* certification actually have lower prices.” (Respondent C)

“...there is the additional cost of following *halal* because you have to buy the groceries, meat or the frozen meat from the *halal* certified suppliers. When we compare the *halal* suppliers to the normal suppliers, the price is more expensive for *halal*. So running a *halal* business will increase your expenses. However, if you want to be involved in those kinds of market, then you have to go for it.” (Respondent F)

Halal suppliers

The issue of *halal* certification and its implications on the supply chain and producers is clearly a significant issue in *halal* certification as suggested in previous studies (Aziz & Chok, 2013; Badrudin et al., 2012; Buang, 2012; Marzuki et al., 2014; Syazwan et al., 2012). This is also an issue raised by the respondents in this study as shown in the quotes below:

“Previously we have some issues with the *halal* suppliers, but now majority of the suppliers have *halal* certification. The suppliers are also aware of the importance of the *halal* certification and *halal* market.” (Respondent B)

“We cannot go to suppliers that do not have the *halal* certificate. The problems with suppliers (Malay suppliers) are, they do not have enough stock, do not have the rolling capital, many barriers to find *halal* suppliers, some suppliers have stocks, but without the *halal* certificate. Some companies want cash only, so, there are many problems.” (Respondent A)

Costs

Small size businesses in Malaysia are opposed to *halal* certification because it is costly and give burden to the business (Abdul et al., 2013). A few respondents admitted that the cost is prohibitive as shown in the following quotes.

“...for small enterprises, it is difficult to fulfil all the requirements. There are too many requirements. We do not have the capital to fulfil all the requirements.” (Respondent R)

“The cost is not so much a burden; yet, the requirements for *halal* certification involve a lot of things.” (Respondent D)

“The cost to apply for the certification is not expensive because we prepare and submit the application ourselves. It is costly if you use a consultant...The payment for a consultant is RM3, 000 to RM4, 000, which includes the changes needed.” (Respondent N)

“The cost for *halal* certification is expensive if using a consultant. The cost is much cheaper if to handle personally by the hotel staff.” (Respondent C)

Halal logo

Conflict also exists on the *halal* certificate and logo as some products used for cooking are produced by other countries. Therefore, this adds to the confusion of what accommodation providers interpret as *halal* hospitality. For example, some respondents indicated no consistency from JAKIM in terms of “who” and “what” is certified as *halal* as illustrated in the quotes below:

“...sometimes when we check at the JAKIM portal, the Knorr product from Thailand is not certified by JAKIM, but is certified by the Islamic firm in Thailand, sometimes these become a conflict. Can this product be used in Malaysia as it is not registered in Malaysia?” (Respondent A)

“The small-scale producers from remote areas have no support, no proper channel, and no *halal* logo. They have the ‘made in Malaysia’ symbol, however, although they admit their products are *halal*, people will ask for *halal* logo, so it is hard for them to market the products. JAKIM may offer other options to help these small-scale entrepreneurs, once they get the help, they can supply their products to *halal* hotels.” (Respondent A)

In addition, as mentioned in Wan Hassan (2008), *halal* and non-*halal* menus do complicate the operation of a *halal* hotel. Due to the difficulty in obtaining the ingredients with the *halal* logo as prescribed by JAKIM, providers feel the need to reduce the number of menus or replace the dish with other ingredients. This is shown in the quotes below.

“It is just that the process is very tedious, for example, we must have the menu, then you must have all ingredients with the grades and origin, whether the ingredient is *halal*, sometimes we cannot, how to say, recognize whether the *halal* is really *halal*, because the *halal* logo is very confusing.” (Respondent D)

“Just sometimes, rather than go through all the hassle, we cut down the menu, because it will take a longer time. We stick to the menu, if we want to change the menu, then we have to think of the *halal* certification process issue.” (Respondent D)

“We also have a Chinese restaurant, Chinese kitchen, and the majority of the staff are Chinese. So the other staff are reluctant to eat there, but since now all are *halal*, they feel reassured...The recipes modified and all menus have to be submitted to the *halal* submission department [department under JAKIM].” (Respondent C)

“Western food is a bit of a challenge since cooking Western cuisine requires the use of alcohol. So once we became Shariah compliant, we don't include the food that needs to be cooked with alcohol in our menu, and replace them with something else.” (Respondent B)

Participants noted that reports on the misuse of the *halal* logo by hospitality providers have also created suspicions among Muslim consumers as suggested in previous studies (e.g., Nur et al., 2011). Serious commitment to comply with *shariah* requirements is important as it involves religious obligation and is therefore a significant issue for many customers. Hence, these accommodation providers do not fully trust the process of certification and awarding of the logo as shown in the quotes below.

“I don't agree with JAKIM awarding the *halal* certification since *halal* covers a lot of things and in reality is difficult to be completely transparent.” (Respondent I)

“For example, if you have a restaurant that is *halal* certified but your customers have food poisoning due to uncleanliness or something, how can we say that is *halal*? Therefore, we have to understand that *halal* is not only about liquor and pork. That is why for me, *halal* certificate just means there is no liquor and no pork, and not about truly being *halal*.” (Respondent I)

Halal and haram sources

It is complicated when *halal* requirements are subject to the whole aspects of products and services (Fisher, 2008). For example, it is not easy to separate the *halal* and *haram* sources of income in a hospitality business as suggested by some of the respondents

“If one works at a *halal* hotel, at least he knows that his salary is *halal*. If the hotel is not *halal*, how to differentiate the income from liquor, which is *halal* and which is not, this salary is for Muslims, this salary is for non-Muslim, it is still under one roof, of course it is very difficult.” (Respondent A)

“I did rent out per room previously but this just invited the wrong clientele for us. Almost 50% of our customers were unmarried couples and your place end up a hive of vices. Some people may not care about this and just care about the money. I have to admit we did that at the beginning because we wanted the money, but it just invited a lot of bad things for us until we stopped that and changed to a *halal* concept and decided to stop renting out by the room. We have to believe that Allah will provide for us when we do the right things.” (Respondent I)

Halal financing sources

There are various rules according to Islamic remuneration that include the activities and financial resources used to conduct the business (Izberk-Bilgin & Nakata, 2016). Respondents interpreted that mixing of *halal* and *haram* activities in their accommodation business will affect the status of what is considered *halal* income. This point is illustrated in the quotes below.

“When it comes to *halal*, it covers a lot of things, not just about liquor, pork, earnings, smoking, or non-marital relations.” (Respondent I)

“Basically it means not to mix with whatever that is *haram*. So, our income if possible, should not be mixed with *haram* sources.” (Respondent R)

“Firstly, if we really want to do *halal*,...when we start, even from financing, we need to find a *halal* financing. Don't take the conventional financing.” (Respondent E)

Based on these quotes, there were many aspects of *halal* to consider when fully implementing the *halal* hospitality concept. For Muslim accommodation providers, it will require them to clearly identify and differentiate between their *halal* and *haram* sources of income. The use of financial funding (i.e., involving the element of usury), selling of alcoholic drinks, and providing non-Islamic entertainment will affect the *halal* status of income. This interpretation provides space to debate issues related to business finance and economics that are lacking in *halal* hospitality studies in Malaysia and other Islamic countries.

Difficulty to be 100% halal

Participants regard it as being extremely difficult to be a 100% *halal* hospitality business. One respondent doubted about the possibility of mixing religion with hospitality business and another respondent in contrast believed that it is possible to mix religion with business as shown in the quotes below.

“If you want the hospitality to be *halal*, you need all the elements from A to Z to be *halal*. For example, you must have a prayer room, all products in the room must be *halal* certified, even the bath and other amenities, must be *halal*. The dress code must be according to Islamic rule. Then it will be totally *halal*. You must also have *halal* signage, so that people will not come for illicit activities. We have to talk about the whole picture if we want to be 100% *halal*.” (Respondent A).

“If we don't run our business the right way, does not matter how much we charge, for example, if we don't give just measure or weight, then it is against the Quran, it is *haram*. The Quran directs us to give weight or measure that is clear, just, equivalent without giving even a little bit less of the measurement. In the homestay, if you are missing even one light bulb, then you think its *halal*, its up to you and God. However, if because of that missing light bulb, the customer accidentally steps on something or bang on the something, then that is not *halal*. This is not about dollar and cents. You say that its already cheap but its very subjective. For example, for me if the air-conditioning is not working then I will provide a fan and the customer pays half the price. If at the hotel and this happens, the staff there would not give you half price although you cannot stay in the room long since it is hot. In Islam, we have to be fair. So how can people easily say that *Shariah* compliance is worth the money? If you provide any deficient service, how can you be *halal*?” (Respondent I)

The findings indicate that non-Muslim providers considered it difficult to combine hospitality with religion as the aim of a business is to gain profit while Muslim providers were convinced that it is not a matter of combining religious beliefs and business because offering hospitality is part of one's belief as a Muslim. Muslim providers who do not provide Islamic hospitality are considered as damaging the concept of *halal* tourism as it provides the space for Muslim customers to avoid religious obligations (El-Gohary, 2016). These ideas are illustrated in the quotes below.

“*Halal* hospitality is about a religion, a culture. You are trying to put religion into a business. Hospitality is a business. People in the hospitality services are trying to make money. They are not going for social services.” (Respondent F)

“It is not a problem as everything is between us and God although the way we do business may be a bit more difficult.” (Respondent P)

The differences in these views on mixing religious beliefs with the provision of hospitality can perhaps be reconciled within the notion of social responsibility. Hospitality, in fact, originated from the social responsibility of caring and providing for others. Western hospitality then introduced the business aspects of service provision for payment. Hence, it is of no surprise that some of the accommodation providers are of the opinion that religious beliefs and hospitality provision in a commercial context are not necessarily opposites.

Misuse of halal amenities/customers behaviours

Respondents were also very concerned about the misuse of *halal* attributes by non-Muslim customers. This includes the inappropriate use of prayer mats, the use of alcohol in the room as well as the influence of the behaviour of other customers on Muslim family members. Respondents admitted that it was difficult to achieve the wholesomeness associated with the concept of *halal*, as some customers did not understand the culture and the rules stated by the accommodation providers. This is illustrated in the following quotes.

“Previously, we have a few cases where the prayer mat was used as a rug. Some used it as a bath mat, done by those that do not understand the culture.”
(Respondent A)

“When all [guests] are Muslims, it is easier for us to manage, I mean, in the house, we prepare prayer clothes, prayer rug, Koran and the arrangements; we have a guideline for the direction of the Qibla and so on.” (Respondent G)

“I am a family man, and this is a family home. When young people get together, many things can happen... I told them only *halal* food, and that included no alcoholic drinks. I checked during the event and did not find anything amiss. However, the next day I found a couple of beer-cans outside. They may not have drunk inside the house and the friends may have been the ones to bring these over as gifts, I do not know, but I do find it problematic.” (Respondent L)

A few respondents were also worried about contamination of *halal* items and products from those that are *haram* especially on foods and utensils. These respondents believed that when there is a contamination between *halal* and *haram* in one's life, then it would bring impurity to one's soul (Hisham, 2012). One respondent said:

“In my homestay, the non-Muslim customers like the Chinese use their own pots and pans to cook, and they cook outside. They do not use the cooking facilities we provide in the homestay. They cook *halal* food, not *haram* food like pork. We have not seen them bring in any *haram* food or drinks.” (Respondent P)

The difference in service provision to Muslims and non-Muslims is more related to religious regulations. For Muslim providers adherence to the *halal* requirements is essential and must be an integral part of the *halal* hospitality offering. Hence, their perspectives on the provision of *halal* hospitality were different when applied to non-Muslim customers.

Non-Muslim Acceptance of Halal Hospitality

Some respondents did not serve non-Muslim customers thus they did not know what to comment on questions regarding the non-Muslim acceptance of *halal* hospitality. However, these respondents still provided opinion based on their personal opinions and observations of other hospitality providers on the acceptance of *halal* by non-Muslim customers. Those that had experience with non-Muslims customers mentioned that they usually inform such customers that the amenities or facilities are only for Muslim customers as illustrated in the quotes below.

“Non-Muslims are mostly open-minded, liberal, and they can accept *halal* hospitality.” (Respondent I)

“They respect our custom. So they can accept *halal* hospitality.” (Respondent Q)

“We rarely accept non-Muslim customers. We do not promote to non-Muslims since as it is, the rooms we have are always fully occupied.” (Respondent J)

“So, for this homestay, I only rent it to Muslims. I worry that if I rent to non-Muslims, they will not follow the house rules and compromise the *halal* concept of this homestay.” (Respondent H)

Those providers that have experienced in providing *halal* services to non-Muslims considered that there is no issue with respect to what is provided at the accommodation as they had received no negative comments from the customers as shown in the quotes below.

“No issue at all, so far, nobody has complained.” (Respondent F)

“...they do not bother (*halal* or not).” (Respondent C)

“They do not mind whether it is *halal* or not, owned by a Muslim or not, the important is that they have a place to stay.” (Respondent G)

“Usually in a Malay area, the non-Muslims respect the customs and we do not sell liquor. The non-Muslims can accept things related to *halal*.” (Respondent N)

“The non-Muslims have no issues with *halal* hospitality since *halal* is all about cleanliness. With the right understanding that *halal* is all about purity and cleanliness, I think that non-Muslims can accept *halal* hospitality.” (Respondent R)

Nevertheless, some participants commented that non-Muslim customers might not understand Islamic culture; therefore, cautionary measures are usually undertaken by them to avoid any misconduct with respect to *halal* facilities and amenities. Some respondents also believed that some non-Muslim customers also could not care less about *halal* as they have different reasons for staying at accommodation. This is shown in the following quotes.

“They do not understand. We do not leave the prayer mat in the room as non-Muslim customers use it as a rug. They do not understand about our way of praying and such.” (Respondent P)

“They don't really care whether it is *halal* or not, all they want is cheaper accommodation.” (Respondent O)

“Foreigners will abide by whatever house rules you have if they want to stay at your place.” (Respondent M)

“I do not really offer my services to non-Muslims. This is a predominantly Muslim area. Once in a while there are non-Muslim customers but they are usually really busy and just come back to sleep...so there were no issues with them staying in a Muslim homestay.” (Respondent L)

“We have no problem with non-Muslim customers as we have no restriction for them to use our accommodation.” (Respondent K)

When asked about the challenges that the respondents faced in serving non-Muslim customers from a *halal* hospitality perspective, respondents indicated that they have no problems with that as shown below

“The things that we place in the rooms are not sensitive to non-Muslims right. Like the prayer mat, like the Qur'an translation. Those things are not sensitive.” (Respondent E)

“We don't see any problems because even when the azan [call to prayer] is played all over the hotel, they just sit there and continue doing whatever they were doing. Of course, the majority of them are local non-Muslims.” (Respondent B)

Overall, from the perspective of the Muslim providers, non-Muslim customers have no interest on the *halal* facility and amenities as well as the items provided to Muslim customers to fulfil their religious obligations. As suggested in previous studies, the *halal* facility and amenities do not provide any meaning or affect to non-Muslim customers (Battour et al., 2011), therefore, they perceived no harm in having these items in their room. In addition, for non-Muslim providers, they tend to allocate separate areas for smoking and drinking alcohol for non-Muslim customers (Battour et al., 2011).

6.6 The Future of *Halal* Hospitality

Malaysia is actively promoting *halal* tourism and its hospitality industry in the international Islamic tourism market (MOF, 2011). Accommodation providers are expected contribute in a positive way for the country to achieve this aspiration. However, providers have different views on the future of *halal* hospitality within Malaysia. For example, several respondents considered *halal* tourism to be a significant trend but one that will grow slowly. One respondent, despite considering *halal* tourism as a trend, felt that *halal* hospitality will disappear in the long term. These views are illustrated in the quotes below.

“I am not going to provide *halal* hospitality because for a hotel it is ridiculous...So this *halal* thing may fade off. This is my frank opinion about it.” (Respondent F)

“In the future, to really implement the *halal* hospitality, it is seen as a long process.” (Respondent A)

“I think it is becoming more accepted. Most hotels in Malaysia have seen this... We see this hospitality niche as the future trend. That is why we do what we do.” (Respondent B)

“It will grow, as the hotels are so expensive. A cheap room is already RM80 with nothing extra provided and small...I think the hotels will end up catering to the foreigners and the homestay are for the locals”. (Respondent M)

6.7 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter analysed the comments from interview participants on their understanding of *halal* hospitality. The analysis started with their understanding of hospitality in general and moved on to the specific topic of *halal* hospitality. Generally, respondents understood hospitality as being about welcoming guest, being friendly, providing comfort, happiness, and good service. Some respondents also placed an emphasis on the importance of facilities and fulfilling religious obligations.

Some respondents claimed that they had a good *halal* hospitality. The most important aspect of it from their perspective was *shariah* compliance. Most Muslim respondents believed that because of their faith they knew well about *halal* and *haram* in hospitality business. These respondents acknowledged the need to provide *halal* foods, facilities, and amenities to their customers. The most common *halal* requirements provided included food and beverage, kiblata direction, prayer mat and prayer room. A few respondents even considered that being a Muslim is a ‘certificate’ in itself for providing *halal* hospitality and, therefore, there was no need for them to be *halal* certified by JAKIM.

Nevertheless, many respondents admitted the importance of having a *halal* certificate, even if they were reluctant to obtain the *halal* certificate. The reasons for not obtaining a certificate mostly related to cost, tedious processes, timely approval, *halal* suppliers, and *halal* logo. Most respondents considered *halal* certification processes as being difficult to fulfil. Some respondents also argued that *halal* certificate was mainly for those providers that offer food and drinks only. In addition, it was not compulsory to have a *halal* certificate unless to conduct activities that relates to the government and its agencies as then certification was essential for payment purposes when hosting government functions. In addition, for some respondents, *halal* certificates were also important to reach a wider market especially to those targeting Muslim customers, but they were also seen as relevant for non-Muslims as well because of the emphasis on ‘cleanliness’.

There were challenges to operate *halal* hospitality as per Islamic obligation. As *halal* is a way of life, operating *halal* hospitality was regarded as not only potentially contributing to economic advantage but also to gain rewards from Allah through good deeds and behaviour. However, combining religion and business is not easy especially when involving Muslim and non-Muslims (i.e., different behaviours, cultures and religious obligations). Many respondents believed that it is difficult if not impossible to be purely *halal* in the hospitality industry, because of the need to comply with religious obligations.

Although differences existed between cultures and in religious obligations, respondents generally agreed that *halal* hospitality was not a concern for non-Muslim customers. Respondents considered that non-Muslim customers could not be bothered about *halal* requirements as the purposes of staying related to price, convenience or other reasons. Several participants also mentioned that *halal* has no meaning to non-Muslim customers and therefore providing *halal* hospitality to non-Muslims was not a problem to these respondents. In addition, as Islam is the main religion in Malaysia, domestic tourists who were non-Muslims were familiar with Islamic values even if not directly sharing them.

Overall, *halal* hospitality is regarded as a good business opportunity yet requires substantial effort and time to be fully implemented. However, in order to support the government's aim to be a global *halal* hub, as well as to promote *halal* tourism to Malaysia, accommodation providers also need to promote their adoption of *halal* hospitality. Using a cheap, efficient, and effective promotion tool such as the internet or online service is usually regarded as an integral component of accommodation providers' efforts to reach and attract their target market. In order to explore the accommodation providers' effort to promote the *halal* attributes online, the next chapter overviews the analysis conducted on accommodation providers' websites in Malaysia.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FINDINGS – QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

7 Introduction

This chapter analyses the *halal* hospitality attributes published on the websites of accommodation providers in Malaysia and attempts to identify significant relationships between hospitality attributes and other factors such as online ratings of the hotels. It is important to identify the most common *halal* attributes presented online by accommodation providers as this provides an insight into how they communicate *halal* hospitality to their customers. As the findings will highlight, despite accommodation providers showing some knowledge of *halal* hospitality and the attributes that customers are searching for to know if a provider is offering *halal* services, many of the *halal* attributes identified in this study were not communicated on the accommodation websites. The analysis starts by profiling the characteristics of the 781 accommodation providers. These characteristics were then analysed according to state, location, type, size and star ranking. Cross-tabulation was also conducted on accommodation providers' *halal* status using the *Halal* Directory Malaysia (HDM) across state, type, size and star ranking. The HDM lists all *halal* certified businesses in its online directory for ease of checking their *halal* status. Thus, all listed accommodation providers in HDM are considered as having a *halal* certificate or *halal* certified by JAKIM. The total population of providers listed in the *Halal* Directory Malaysia will be referred to as HDM for short.

In the second stage of the data analysis, chi square tests were conducted on the providers listed in the HDM and the *halal* attributes displayed on their websites. Similarly, the chi square test was used to identify any relationship between accommodation providers' published *halal*/*halal* certified/logo and *halal* attributes displayed on their websites. These tests can provide answers to the most common *halal* attributes communicated on the website of *halal* certified accommodation providers, and therefore, highlight any gap between the attributes that convey accommodation providers are offering *halal* services and what is actually communicated on their websites. Regression analysis was used to

predict the star rating of providers based on the *halal* attributes communicated on their website.

In Chapter Six, several accommodation attributes other than those related directly to the delivery of *halal* hospitality were mentioned by respondents such as cleanliness, comfort, and staff treatment. Thus, the third stage of the analysis identifies the relationship between the general attributes of accommodation that can be identified from a website and the travel website rating of the accommodation provider. These general accommodation attributes are used by travel websites, for example, to rate the services provided by an accommodation provider. In this study, the ratings of each of the accommodation provider on five travel websites were selected for analysis: Agoda, Booking.com, Expedia, TripAdvisor, and Trivago. These websites are among the most popular travel websites consulted by consumers globally (Anderson & Han, 2017; Gössling, Hall, & Anderson, 2016; Lee, Guillet, & Law, 2013). As such, the ratings of accommodation providers on these travel websites and the accommodation attributes presented on such websites can be thought of as being influential in the decision making processes of customers when choosing an accommodation. Thus, the information published on these travel websites with respect to the sought after accommodation attributes by consumers are relevant to an understanding of the type and level of services provided by Malaysian accommodation providers. Each travel website has its own quality criteria. However, for the purpose of this study, seven evaluative criteria were selected based on the similarities in their use across the different travel websites: cleanliness, location, staff, comfort, facilities, food and value for money. This selection was based on the most common rating criteria displayed on those five travel websites presented in Table 5.7 in Chapter Five.

The next section presents the characteristics of accommodation providers in the study based on state, location, type, size, star ranking, and *halal* certified accommodation providers by JAKIM (listed in HDM).

7.1 The Characteristics of Accommodation Providers

This section presents the analysis of the characteristics of accommodation providers included in this study (Figure 7.1). The findings showed that many accommodation providers are located in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur (17%), followed by Sabah (11.8%), Selangor (9.5%), Pahang (8.8%), Johor (8.6%), Melaka (7.7%), Pulau Pinang (6.4%), Perak, Sarawak (5.8%), Kedah (5%), Terengganu (4.9%), Negeri Sembilan (3.5%), Kelantan (2%), and the Federal Territory of Putrajaya (1%). The Territory of Labuan and Perlis are each represented by 0.9% accommodation providers respectively. Table 7.1 shows the frequency of accommodation providers for each state in Malaysia.

Figure 7.1: Accommodation providers by state in Malaysia

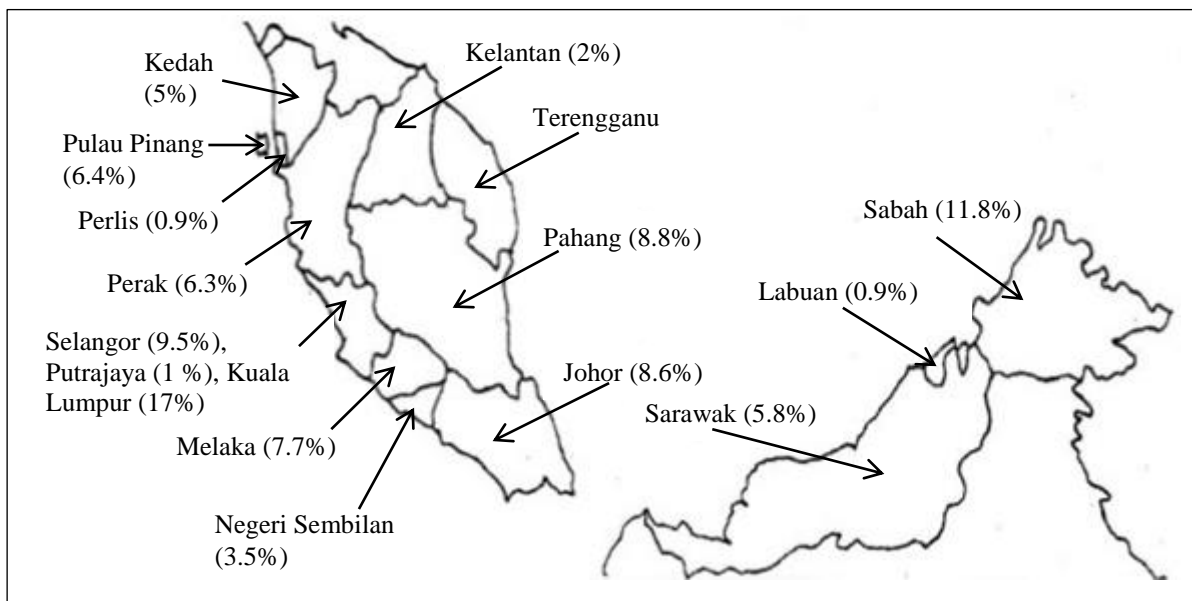


Table 7.1: Characteristics of accommodation providers by state

Demography		Frequency	%
State	FT Kuala Lumpur	133	17.0
	FT Labuan	7	0.9
	FT Putrajaya	8	1.0
	Johor	67	8.6
	Kedah	39	5.0
	Kelantan	16	2.0
	Melaka	60	7.7
	Negeri Sembilan	27	3.5
	Pahang	69	8.8
	Perak	49	6.3
	Perlis	7	0.9
	Pulau Pinang	50	6.4
	Sabah	92	11.8
	Sarawak	45	5.8
	Selangor	74	9.5
	Terengganu	38	4.9
	Total	781	100.0

More than 50% of the accommodation providers in this study are located in a major city (58.9%) with others at the municipal and district (41.1%) levels (Table 7.2). Major cities represented by Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bharu, Kajang, Ipoh, Klang, Subang Jaya, Kuching, Petaling Jaya, Seremban, Georgetown, Bandar Melaka, Kota Bharu, Kota Kinabalu, Kuantan, Sungai Petani, Batu Pahat, Tawau, Sandakan, Alor Setar, and Kuala Terengganu (see Chapter Four for a further discussion of Malaysian accommodation providers).

Table 7.2: Characteristics of accommodation providers by location

Demography		Frequency	%
Location	Major City	460	58.9
	Municipality and District	321	41.1
	Total	781	100.0

Accommodation providers were divided into four types (Table 7.3); hotel, budget hotel, homestay/guesthouse/rest house/hostels, and chalet as mentioned in previous chapters. The hotel category includes resorts and apartments that provide services such as restaurants, swimming pools and fully furnished facilities that ranked as 3 star and above. A budget hotel usually has a 2-star rating or below, while a chalet is a small-scale

accommodation that is usually located near the beach and/or camping grounds. A homestay/guesthouse/rest house/hostel is normally family owned and provides short stay services to visitors. These criteria are based on those provided by DOSM (2011). This study found that more than 50% of accommodation providers are hotels, followed by budget hotels (39.7%), chalets (2.4%) and homestay/guesthouse/rest house/hostels (1.4%).

Table 7.3: Characteristics of accommodation providers by type

Demography		Frequency	%
Type	Hotel (3 star and above)	441	56.5
	Budget Hotel (2 star and below)	310	39.7
	Homestay/Guesthouse/Resthouse/Hostel	11	1.4
	Chalet	19	2.4
	Total	781	100.0

According to DBKL (2016), the large size accommodation category refers to any hospitality business with 50 rooms and above, medium size with 10 to 49 rooms, and small size being any accommodation with nine rooms and below. Based on that standard, more than 70% of accommodation providers belong to large size category. About 29% of accommodation providers belong to medium size (28.8%) and less than 1% is small size (0.7%) as shown in (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4: Characteristics of accommodation providers by size

Demography		Frequency	%
Size	Large (50 & above rooms)	551	70.6
	Medium (10 - 49 rooms)	225	28.8
	Small (0-9 rooms)	5	0.6
	Total	781	100.0

The star-rating of accommodation providers within the sample were categorised according to the criteria stated by MOTOUR (2017). The criteria cover: qualitative and aesthetic requirements, common areas, bedrooms requirements, services offer, safety standard and hygiene, and staff (Table 7. 5).

Table 7.5: Criteria for star rating of accommodation in Malaysia

No.	Criteria for 1 to 5 star ranking categories	
1	Qualitative and Aesthetic Requirements	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The function and aesthetic are based on all equipment 	All categories
2	Common Areas	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reception Area (hall, lounge, lobby, main entrance, facilities for the disable) 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bar, Fine Dining Room/Restaurant/Breakfast Room, Banquet/Conference Hall 	3, 4 & 5 star only
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restaurants categories 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor Area / Indoor Area, Entertainments/ Recreation/ Sports, Sanitary Installation for Common Areas 	3, 4 & 5 star only
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Toilets for the Disabled (OKU), Dustbins, Thermal Conditions for Common Areas, Public Telephone, Lifts, Corridors, Corridors Precautions 	All categories
3	Bedrooms Requirement	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum Size of Bedroom 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedrooms Furniture and Fitting 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical Equipment 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedroom Windows, Bedroom Doors, Thermal Conditions in Bedroom, Ventilation 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ventilation Rooms 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedroom Communication System 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audio –Visual Installations in All Categories 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drinking Water in Bedrooms 	3, 4 & 5 star only
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Material in Bedroom 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stationery in Bedrooms 	3, 4 & 5 star only
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound-Proofing Bedroom - To adhere to the local authority standard 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suite 	4 & 5 star only
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanitary Installation for Bedrooms 	All categories

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Hose - Water hose / bidet or other alternatives (ladle) to be provided for ablutions 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bed linen, Towels 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for the Disabled (OKU) 	All categories
4.	Services	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Floor 	4 & 5 star only
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and Beverage Service - Where there are no restaurants available a breakfast room is provided 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front Desk Service, Safety Deposit Box, Left-Luggage Facilities 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign Exchange and Business Centre 	3, 4 & 5 star only
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet Access Services 	4 & 5 star only
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit Card Facilities and Tourism Service 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping Arcade, Laundry & Valet Service 	3, 4 & 5 star only
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Service - Medical Practitioner available on call 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid Facilities 	All categories
5.	Safety Standards and Hygiene	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire, Electricity, and Other Safety Facilities, Security, Emergency Power Supply 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitchen 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate Compartment 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Protection, Refuse, Insect and Vermin Protection 	All categories
6.	Staff	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Staff, Employment 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification of the Staff, General Qualification, Language (Bilingual) 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mode of Greeting 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Uniform, Medical Examination, Staff Facilities, Sanitary Installations 	All categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest Area & Changing Rooms 	All categories

	• Staff Canteen	3, 4 & 5 star only
	• Surau (Prayer room and the indication of Kiblat)	All categories
	• Staff Training (HRDF)	All categories
7.	Minimum Room Rates	4 & 5 star only

Source: Adapted and summarize from MOTOUR (2017)

Based on the criteria stated above, almost 90% of providers in this sample were star rated (Table 7.6). Many of the accommodation in this sample are rated 3-star (29.1%) and 2-star (21.4%). Other accommodations are rated at 4-star (16.5%), 5-star (12.3%), and 1-star (9.7%). About 11% or 86 accommodation providers were not rated for not fulfilling the criteria mentioned above.

Table 7.6: Characteristics of accommodation providers by star ranking

Demography		Frequency	%
Star Ranking	0 Star	86	11.0
	1 Star	76	9.7
	2 Star	167	21.4
	3 Star	227	29.1
	4 Star	129	16.5
	5 Star	96	12.3
	Total	781	100.0

Although it has been argued that possessing a *halal* certificate has a commercial value for businesses in attracting demand for *halal* products and services from local and international customers (Abdullah et al., 2016), the present study found that only 18.4% of accommodation providers were *halal* certified by JAKIM as shown in Table 7.7. Some potential reasons for non-compliance to *halal* certification were identified in Chapter Six and included personal belief, cost, and the tedious procedures involved in obtaining *halal* certification.

Table 7.7: Characteristics of accommodation providers by listing on the HDM

Demography		Frequency	%
JAKIM <i>halal</i> certified	Yes	144	18.4
	No	637	81.6
	Total	781	100.0

Table 7.8 presents the characteristics of the *halal* certified accommodation providers listed on the HDM. The result reveals that many *halal* certified accommodation providers are located in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur (22.9%) and the state of Pahang (10.4%). The Federation Territory of Labuan recorded no *halal* certified accommodation providers and only one for Perlis.

The analysis conducted on the type of the accommodation listed in the HDM shows that about 15% are hotels (including resort and apartments), 4% are budget hotels and less than 1% are chalets. No homestay/guesthouse/resthouse/hostel in this study was listed on HDM during the period of data collection. This finding suggests that having *halal* certification is more important for larger than smaller accommodation providers. The findings may also reflect that hotels receive more local and international customers and serve foods and drinks that influence the need to have the *halal* certificate. Such certification may also be more affordable by larger providers. The certificate gives additional value to hotel services if the targeted customers are Muslims. For example, as noted in Chapter Six if the hotel is wanting to host government functions they are required to have a *halal* certificate. However, it is also notable that 637 or 81.6% of accommodation providers in this study were not *halal* certified.

Out of the 144 (18.4% of total number of providers) *halal* certified accommodation providers, 130 (90.3%) belong to large size accommodation and 14 (9.7%) belong to medium and small size accommodation providers. The number of large size accommodation providers that are *halal* certified represent 16.6% of the total sample. Large size accommodation such as hotels have more customers to cater for from both local and international markets, having the *halal* certificate may therefore have benefits for Muslim customers who are seeking reassurance on the *halal* nature of the hotel given the presence of non-Muslims. For most large accommodation providers in Malaysia, many of which belong to foreign companies (Samori & Sabtu, 2012) that operated outside of an Islamic business framework, providing *halal* certified food outlets or restaurants on the premises is not a financial burden, yet can provide options for customers in choosing between *halal* and non-*halal* food outlets. Some medium and small size accommodations otherwise have limited financially resources to comply with regulatory requirements (Unit

Pengurusan Prestasi dan Pelaksanaan [PEMANDU], 2016) including the process of gaining *halal* certification.

Many *halal* certified providers belong to 3-star (38.9%) and 4-star (25%) accommodation providers. This finding is similar to that identified in Samori and Rahman (2013) on the many *halal* certified hotels in Malaysia belong to 3 or 4 star rating. This may be explained by the same 3-star and 4-star ranked accommodation providers with *halal* certification being in operation for the last five years, although there has been a gradual increase in the number of *halal* certified accommodation providers over the same period (see Chapter Four).

Table 7.8: The characteristics of *halal* certified accommodation providers (listed in HDM)

Demography		Frequency	%
State	FT Kuala Lumpur	33	22.9
	FT Labuan	0	0.0
	FT Putrajaya	5	3.5
	Johor	10	6.9
	Kedah	9	6.3
	Kelantan	4	2.8
	Melaka	5	3.5
	Negeri Sembilan	5	3.5
	Pahang	15	10.4
	Perak	6	4.2
	Perlis	1	0.7
	Pulau Pinang	8	5.5
	Sabah	11	7.6
	Sarawak	13	9.0
	Selangor	13	9.0
	Terengganu	6	4.2
	Total	144	100.0
Type	Hotel (3 star and above)	115	79.9
	Budget Hotel (2 star and below)	28	19.4
	Homestay/Guesthouse/Resthouse/Hostel	0	0.0
	Chalet	1	0.7
	Total	144	100.0
Size	Large (50 & above rooms)	130	90.3
	Medium (10 - 49 rooms)	10	6.9
	Small (0-9 rooms)	4	2.8
	Total	144	100.0
Star Ranking	0 Star	3	2.1
	1 Star	2	1.4
	2 Star	25	17.3
	3 Star	56	38.9
	4 Star	36	25
	5 Star	22	15.3
	Total	144	100.0

Next, the analysis evaluates the existence of relationship between listing on the HDM and the business characteristics using the chi-square test. Prior to running the chi-square tests, for example, the count of not-rated accommodation were combined with that of 1-star rated accommodation as well as those of the small and the medium size accommodation were combined in order to meet the requirement of at least five cases per cell for the analysis. The findings from the chi-square test ($\chi^2=33.1$, $p<0.001$) show that

there is a relationship between accommodation size and listing on the HDM. As shown in Table 7.9, a greater percentage (16.6%) of larger accommodations tends to be listed on the HDM compared to smaller accommodations (1.8%). In Table 7.9, the results show that there is no relationship between the state and the type of accommodation listed on the HDM. The table also shows that there is a relationship between star-rated accommodations and their listing on the HDM ($\chi^2=41.58$, $p<0.001$). Specifically, the higher the star rating, the greater the number of accommodation listed on the HDM.

Table 7.9: The relationship between the *halal* certified accommodation providers and the demography factors (Chi Square)

		HDM				χ^2	P
		No		Yes			
		N	%	N	%		
State	FT Kuala Lumpur	100	15.7	33	22.9	29.224	0.015
	FT Labuan	7	1.1	0	0.0		
	FT Putrajaya	3	0.5	5	3.5		
	Johor	57	8.9	10	6.9		
	Kedah	30	4.7	9	6.3		
	Kelantan	12	1.9	4	2.8		
	Melaka	55	8.6	5	3.5		
	Negeri Sembilan	22	3.5	5	3.5		
	Pahang	54	8.5	15	10.4		
	Perak	43	6.8	6	4.2		
	Perlis	6	0.9	1	0.7		
	Pulau Pinang	42	6.6	8	5.6		
	Sabah	81	12.7	11	7.6		
	Sarawak	32	5.0	13	9.0		
	Selangor	61	9.6	13	9.0		
	Terengganu	32	5.0	6	4.2		
Type	Hotel (3 star and above)	326	41.7	115	14.7	39.901	0.000
	Budget Hotel (2 star and below)	282	36.1	28	3.6		
	Homestay/Guesthouse/Resthouse/Hotel/Chalet	29	3.7	1	0.1		
Size	Large (50 & above rooms)	421	53.9	130	16.6	33.070	0.000*
	Medium (10 - 49 rooms)	216	27.7	14	1.8		
Star	0 - 1 Star	157	20.1	5	0.6	41.576	0.000*
Ranking	2 Star	142	18.2	25	3.2		
	3 Star	171	21.9	56	7.2		
	4 - 5 Star	167	21.4	58	7.4		

*Significant $P<0.05$

Note: Significant relationships that do not meet the requirements of 5 cases per cell are not being interpreted.

The next section presents the findings on the frequency and the percentage of *halal* attributes provided by the accommodation providers in this study. Following that, the analysis presents the findings on the frequencies and percentages of *halal* attributes communicated on accommodation providers' websites, and those that published the *halal* sign/*halal* certificate/ logo on their websites and their relationship with listing on the HDM. The chi square test was also used to identify any relationship between the *halal* attributes that have being published on the websites of two different *halal* groups of providers (i.e., *halal* certified and *halal* claimant). The purpose is to see the tendency of each group to communicate the *halal* attributes on their websites.

7.2 *Halal* Attributes Analysis

This section reports the findings on *halal* attributes communicated on the accommodation provider websites. The *halal* attributes were analysed by percentages and cross tabulations. There were 32 *halal* attributes analysed. To simplify the analysis, the *halal* attributes have been presented in descending order by frequency (Table 7.10).

Among the most popular general attributes mentioned on the accommodation providers' websites are room decoration (96.7%), free service such as Wi-Fi, toiletries and water bottle (93.5%), satellite/cable TV/TV (83%), security system (72.2%), and dining outlet on-site (70.9%). The other attributes commonly mentioned on the websites are mini bar/mini fridge/fridge (53.8%), room service (51.9%), pool onsite (44%), bar/lounge onsite (43%), serve food on premise (41.9%), gym onsite (32.3%), and spa and sauna (31.8%). However, the segregation of pool, gym, spa and sauna, and sport facilities (1.9%) were rarely mentioned although these attributes have been considered as extremely important to any *shariah* compliant accommodation (Battour et al., 2011; Henderson, 2010; Rosenberge & Choufany, 2009; Saad, Ali, & Abdel-ati, 2014). Only 15 providers (1.9%) stated that they had gender segregated facilities. Alcohol was available in over a quarter of the (27.3%), along with other entertainment (22.8%), and recreational activities (20.9%). Many *halal* attributes such as availability of the Quran, Kiblat direction, and prayer mats were mentioned on the websites by less than 1% of accommodation providers.

Battour et al. (2011) indicate that the most important attributes for *halal* hospitality include gender segregated facilities, *halal* food products, Quran, prayer mats, and direction to kiblah. Looking at the least mentioned *halal* attributes, the results suggested that more than 80% of accommodation websites did not communicate religious related *halal* hospitality attributes on their websites (described as positive *halal* attributes in Razzaq et al., 2016). This study found that the religious *halal* hospitality attributes such as *halal/halal* certified/*halal* logo (13.4%), having a prayer room (8.6%), availability of a sajada/prayer mat (3.3%), gender segregated facilities (1.9%), kiblat direction (0.5%), availability of the Quran (0.4%), information on prayer time (0.4%), and a female only floor (0.1%) were infrequently communicated on providers' websites.

In comparison with the findings of Razzaq et al. (2016), there was not much difference between Malaysia (a majority Muslim population) and New Zealand (a small Muslim population) on the findings of these important *halal* attributes. Based on percentages, attributes such as gender segregated facilities (Malaysia, 1.9% vs. New Zealand, 1.91%), female only floor (Malaysia, 0.1% vs. New Zealand, 0%), and kiblat direction (Malaysia, 0.5% vs. New Zealand, 0%) suggested that these *halal* specific attributes were little communicated on the websites of accommodation providers in both countries. The findings could suggest that businesses in both countries have not adopted such measures to promote *halal* or Muslim friendly tourism, because of a belief that other attributes such as price and the wider accommodation experience, including the capacity of providers to adapt to the needs of guests as necessary, may be more important for their business promotion. These results also raise questions about the way in which information on *halal* hospitality provision is communicated online specifically in a majority Muslim country with an explicit policy to position itself as a global *halal* hub in which *halal* certification acceptance is still limited.

Table 7.10: *Halal* attributes by frequency and percentage

Rank	<i>Halal</i> Attributes	Yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Room Decoration	755	96.7	26	3.3
2	Free Service	730	93.5	51	6.5
3	Satellite/Cable TV	648	83.0	133	17.0
4	Security System	564	72.2	217	27.8
5	Dining Outlet Onsite	554	70.9	227	29.1
6	Mini Bar/mini fridge/fridge	420	53.8	361	46.2
7	Room Service	405	51.9	376	48.1
8	Pool Onsite	344	44.0	437	56.0
9	Bar/ Lounge Onsite	336	43.0	445	57.0
10	Serve Food on Premise	327	41.9	454	58.1
11	Gym Onsite	252	32.3	529	67.7
12	Spa & Sauna	248	31.8	533	68.2
13	Alcohol Onsite	213	27.3	568	72.7
14	Entertainment	178	22.8	603	77.2
15	Recreation/Sport Facilities	163	20.9	618	79.1
16	Family Friendly	133	17.0	648	83.0
17	<i>Halal/Halal</i> Certified/ <i>Halal</i> Logo	105	13.4	676	86.6
18	Prayer Room & Facility	67	8.6	714	91.4
19	Sajada/Prayer Mat	26	3.3	755	96.7
20	Vegetarian	20	2.6	761	97.4
21	Gender Segregated Facilities	15	1.9	766	98.1
22	Multi-lingual Staff	10	1.3	771	98.7
23	Special Dietary Need	8	1.0	773	99.0
24	Proximity to Gambling Venues	8	1.0	773	99.0
25	Kiblat Direction	4	0.5	777	99.5
26	Quran	3	0.4	778	99.6
27	Prayer Time	3	0.4	778	99.6
28	Dairy Free	2	0.3	779	99.7
29	Gluten Free	2	0.3	779	99.7
30	Female Only Floor	1	0.1	780	99.9
31	Pet Friendly	0	0.0	781	100.0
32	Proximity to 'Red Light' District	0	0.0	781	100.0

n=781

The next analysis was conducted on the *halal* attributes listed on the websites versus listing on the HDM (Table 7.11). The reason for this analysis being conducted is to know the most common *halal* attributes presented on the websites of *halal* accommodation providers listed on the HDM. To help ensure customers obtain the right information pertaining to *halal* accommodation, providers should focus on keywords searched by customers when surfing the accommodation websites (Smithson et al., 2010). The findings

indicated that *halal* certified accommodation providers communicate insufficient detail of positive *halal* hospitality attributes on their websites. In fact, none of the *halal* certified accommodation providers in this study published the availability of kiblata direction on their websites. However, almost a quarter of the websites of certified accommodation providers did mention that they were *halal* or include the *halal* logo, 25 had a prayer room, eight communicated that prayer mats were available to guests, and one had a female only floor. It can be suggested that accommodation providers might not be aware of the importance to mention *halal* hospitality attributes on their websites, or possibly that it did not matter to their customers. The accommodation providers might also assume that it was sufficient to be listed on the HDM to confirm their *halal* status to customers.

Other than the positive attributes, the analysis also conducted on the communication of negative *halal* attributes on the accommodation websites. The purpose was to identify if there were differences in percentages between accommodation listed on the HDM and those that were not in terms of communicating the negative *halal* attributes. Although *halal* certified, some accommodation providers in Malaysia provided information on both *halal* and non-*halal* services on their websites, most likely to cater to the needs of different customers (Muslim and non-Muslim). Razzaq et al. (2016) listed pet friendly, proximity to 'red light' district, proximity to gambling venues, mini bar, bar, alcohol serve onsite, and non-segregated facilities (gym, spa bath, and pool onsite) as negative *halal* attributes for New Zealand accommodation providers. Yet, some of these attributes were published on the websites of *halal* certified accommodation providers in Malaysia as well. The availability of alcohol onsite, for example, was mentioned on 52 websites of *halal* certified accommodation providers. This finding suggests that *halal* certification may only represent the *halal* status of foods and drinks provided by the accommodation provider but not the wider aspects of *halal* hospitality according to *shariah* law and custom. However, it also raises significant issues regarding the extent to which many providers that possess *halal* certification can ensure the security of *halal* supply chains and hotel operations in such business environments.

Customers that are keen to find *halal* food also often look for *halal* labels (Abdul, Ismail, Hashim, & Johari, 2009) and other information such as a *halal* sign, certificate and/or logo. A *halal* certificate or logo is mostly displayed at the entrance of restaurants and food outlets to inform customers that the foods provided are *halal*. Some food providers (*halal* claimant, pers. comm.) also use the *halal* sign written in either Arabic or in Malay for the same purpose. However, this study found that out of 144 websites of *halal* certified accommodation providers, only 34 published the *halal* sign or certificate and/or logo. Wan Hassan (2008) found that Muslim foodservice providers in New Zealand feared that if they promoted the *halal* word or certificate in their business, some customers might boycott them as these providers were assumed to be supporting terrorism. Although this will not be the case in an Islamic majority country like Malaysia, even though there are more Muslim customers, relatively little attention is still given by providers to the importance of *halal* sign, certificate or logo published on their websites. One possible reason could be that they take for granted Islam is the main religion, and Muslims are the majority of population, therefore most accommodation, and food outlets will be *halal*. Marzuki (2012) indicates that Muslims in Malaysia tend to think most food outlets were *halal* as the country is predominantly Muslim. Indeed, personal honesty is often regarded as a characteristic of Muslim foodservice providers, a factor identified by Wan Hassan (2008) in New Zealand who found that some Muslim providers believed that because they were 'good Muslims' their customers should trust them and their food and they therefore did not need *halal* certification.

Table 7.11: *Halal* attributes publish on the websites of *halal* certified accommodation providers (HDM) by frequency and percentage

<i>Halal</i> Attributes	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Room Decoration	141	97.9	3	2.1
Free Service	139	96.5	5	3.5
Dining Outlet Onsite	130	90.3	14	9.7
Satellite/Cable TV	112	77.8	32	22.2
Security System	104	72.2	40	27.8
Pool Onsite	101	70.1	43	29.9
Room Service	99	68.8	45	31.3
Mini Bar/mini fridge/fridge	93	64.6	51	35.4
Serve Food on Premise	86	59.7	58	40.3
Bar/ Lounge Onsite	78	54.2	66	45.8
Gym Onsite	72	50.0	72	50.0
Spa & Sauna	52	36.1	92	63.9
Alcohol Onsite	52	36.1	92	63.9
Entertainment	45	31.3	99	68.8
Recreation/Sport Facilities	39	27.1	105	72.9
<i>Halal/Halal</i> Certified/ <i>Halal</i> Logo	34	23.6	110	76.4
Family Friendly	31	21.5	113	78.5
Prayer Room & Facility	25	17.4	119	82.6
Sajada/Prayer Mat	8	5.6	136	94.4
Vegetarian	7	4.9	137	95.1
Multi-lingual Staff	4	2.8	140	97.2
Gender Segregated Facilities	3	2.1	141	97.9
Quran	2	1.4	142	98.6
Prayer Time	1	0.7	143	99.3
Special Dietary Need	1	0.7	143	99.3
Female Only Floor	1	0.7	143	99.3
Proximity to Gambling Venues	1	0.7	143	99.3
Kiblat Direction	0	0.0	144	100.0
Dairy Free	0	0.0	144	100.0
Gluten Free	0	0.0	144	100.0
Pet Friendly	0	0.0	144	100.0
Proximity to 'Red Light' District	0	0.0	144	100.0

n=144

The results of the chi square tests on *halal* attributes communicated on the websites and listing on the HDM are presented in Table 7.12. The findings reveal that out of 32, only 11 *halal* attributes have significant relationships with listing in HDM. These attributes are dining outlet onsite, pool onsite, room service, mini bar/mini fridge/fridge, serve food on premise, bar/lounge onsite, gym onsite, alcohol onsite, entertainment, *halal/halal* certified/*halal* logo, and prayer room and facility. In other words, providing the attributes mentioned above is necessary to the *halal* certified providers that are listed on the HDM. Looking at the positive *halal* attributes, only two out of eight, are statistically significant (*halal/halal* certified/logo with $X^2 = 14.629$, $p = 0.000$ and prayer room and facility with $X^2 = 16.017$, $p = 0.000$). These findings suggest that the *halal* certified providers that are listed on the HDM do not consider *halal* sign or certificate/logo and prayer room and facility as being important to be published on their website. In fact, worship facility is regarded as one of the most important factor that is required as a facility to satisfy Muslim travellers (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004; Battour et al., 2013).

Three out of six negative *halal* attributes considered in this study have also statistically significant relationships with listing on the HDM; mini bar/mini fridge/fridge ($X^2 = 7.769$, $p = 0.005$), bar/lounge onsite ($X^2 = 8.397$, $p = 0.004$) and alcohol onsite ($X^2 = 6.418$, $p = 0.011$). The results suggest that although the providers are *halal* certified, they are not necessarily providing 100% *halal* hospitality or following the *halal* requirements by JAKIM given that 54.2% of those listed on the HDM have bar/lounge on site, and 36.1% offer alcohol on site. These findings may reflect the nature of the hospitality business in Malaysia that allows the separation of *halal* and non-*halal* food outlets in one accommodation business but not necessarily the separation of other attributes. In fact, the *halal* certificate is granted to the *halal* food outlet and restaurant only. Therefore, the display of *halal* sign or certificate/logo does not mean the whole management and operation of the accommodation is purely *halal* but only informs the availability of *halal* foods at the accommodation.

One of the weaknesses in website usage among accommodation providers, as noted in previous studies, is insufficient information about the services offered (Jeong, 2004; Lanier et al., 2000). Therefore, without a clear indication of the separation of *halal* and non-*halal* restaurants or the alcoholic and non-alcoholic bar/lounge/lobby (i.e., for non-Muslim customers only) for example, customers are not sufficiently informed on the *halal* hospitality services offered by Malaysian accommodation providers. In addition, the lack of information provision on the websites may create issues of trust with respect to the authenticity of the status of the *halal* certificate displayed on the providers' websites.

Table 7.12: The relationship between the *halal* attributes and the *halal* certified accommodation providers listed in HDM

	HDM				χ^2	P
	Yes		No			
	N	%	N	%		
Room Decoration	141	97.9	3	2.1	0.443	0.506
Free Service	139	96.5	5	3.5	2.125	0.145
Dining Outlet Onsite	130	90.3	14	9.7	30.900	0.000*
Satellite/Cable TV	112	77.8	32	22.2	2.934	0.087
Security System	104	72.2	40	27.8	0.000	1.000
Pool Onsite	101	70.1	43	29.9	47.483	0.000*
Room Service	99	68.8	45	31.3	19.361	0.000*
Mini Bar/mini fridge/fridge	93	64.6	51	35.4	7.769	0.005*
Serve Food on Premise	86	59.7	58	40.3	22.229	0.000*
Bar/Lounge Onsite	78	54.2	66	45.8	8.397	0.004*
Gym Onsite	72	50.0	72	50.0	24.420	0.000*
Spa & Sauna	52	36.1	92	63.9	1.310	0.252
Alcohol Onsite	52	36.1	92	63.9	6.418	0.011*
Entertainment	45	31.3	99	68.8	6.601	0.010*
Recreation/Sport Facilities	39	27.1	105	72.9	3.678	0.055
<i>Halal/Halal</i> Certified/ <i>Halal</i> Logo	34	23.6	110	76.4	14.629	0.000*
Family Friendly	31	21.5	113	78.5	2.153	0.142
Prayer Room & Facility	25	17.4	119	82.6	16.017	0.000*
Sajada/Prayer Mat	8	5.6	136	94.4	1.937	0.164
Vegetarian	7	4.9	137	95.1	2.699	0.100
Multi-lingual Staff	4	2.8	140	97.2	1.848	0.077
Gender Segregated Facilities	3	2.1	141	97.9	0.000	1.000
Quran	2	1.4	142	98.6	4.658	0.031
Prayer Time	1	0.7	143	99.3	0.000	1.000
Special Dietary Need	1	0.7	143	99.3	0.000	1.000
Female Only Floor	1	0.7	143	99.3	0.663	0.415
Proximity to Gambling Venues	1	0.7	143	99.3	0.000	1.000
Kiblat Direction	0	0.0	144	100.0	0.094	0.759
Dairy Free	0	0.0	144	100.0	0.000	1.000
Gluten Free	0	0.0	144	100.0	0.000	1.000
Pet Friendly	0	0.0	144	100.0	0.000	1.000
Proximity to 'Red Light' District	0	0.0	144	100.0	0.000	1.000

*Significant P<0.05

Note: Significant relationships that do not meet the requirements of 5 cases per cell are not being interpreted.

Table 7.13 shows the relationship between the attributes displayed on the websites and the display of *halal* sign or *halal* certificate or/and *halal* logo on such websites. Only 105 or 13.4% of accommodation providers displayed the *halal/halal* certified/logo on their websites. Out of 105 accommodation providers, 71 or 67.6% were not *halal* certified by JAKIM. *Halal* hospitality attributes such as prayer room, *halal* food and segregated facilities are considered as important hospitality services to Muslim customers specifically when touring in Muslim countries (Battour et al., 2011). Apart from that, their findings also found that Muslim consumers appreciate and feel comfortable with alcohol free environment and decent entertainment programs. The findings of this study highlight that ten *halal* hospitality attributes have significant relationships with the display of *halal/halal* certified/logo on the websites. The findings indicate that the display of the *halal/halal* certified/logo attribute has a strong association with a numbers of positive *halal* attributes including prayer room & facility ($X^2 = 5.04$, $p = 0.025$) and gender segregated facilities ($X^2 = 5.04$, $p = 0.025$), whereby for example, websites that mentioned the accommodation provider had a prayer room/facility were more likely to be *halal* certified/logo (22.4%) than those that did not offer such facility (12.6%). There are also significant relationships between *halal/halal* certified/logo with other attributes, such as having a pool & gym onsite, vegetarian, food on premise, mini bar/mini fridge/fridge, room service, dining outlet onsite and entertainment. Therefore, it can be concluded that the providers featuring *halal* sign on their websites also give consideration to displaying *halal* facilities on their websites.

Table 7.13: *Halal/halal* certified/*halal* logo and other *halal* attributes studied (Chi Square Test)

		<i>Halal/Halal</i> Certified/ <i>Halal</i> Logo				χ^2	P
		No		Yes			
		N	%	N	%		
Quran	No	676	86.9	102	13.1	19.39	0.001
	Yes	0	0.0	3	100.0		
Kiblat Direction	No	673	86.6	104	13.4	0.00	1.000
	Yes	3	75.0	1	25.0		
Prayer Room & Facility	No	624	87.4	90	12.6	5.04	0.025*
	Yes	52	77.6	15	22.4		
Sajada/Prayer Mat	No	655	86.8	100	13.2	0.77	0.379
	Yes	21	80.8	5	19.2		
Prayer Time	No	674	86.6	104	13.4	1.02	0.312
	Yes	2	66.7	1	33.3		
Multi-lingual Staff	No	670	86.9	101	13.1	6.14	0.013
	Yes	6	60.0	4	40.0		
Family Friendly	No	565	87.2	83	12.8	1.32	0.250
	Yes	111	83.5	22	16.5		
Satellite/Cable TV	No	111	83.5	22	16.5	1.32	0.250
	Yes	565	87.2	83	12.8		
Pool Onsite	No	400	91.5	37	8.5	21.12	0.001*
	Yes	276	80.2	68	19.8		
Spa & Sauna	No	465	87.2	68	12.8	0.68	0.410
	Yes	211	85.1	37	14.9		
Gym Onsite	No	481	90.9	48	9.1	26.91	0.001*
	Yes	195	77.4	57	22.6		
Serve Food on Premise	No	410	90.3	44	9.7	13.12	0.001*
	Yes	266	81.3	61	18.7		
Special Dietary Need	No	670	86.7	103	13.3	0.93	0.336
	Yes	6	75.0	2	25.0		
Dairy Free	No	674	86.5	105	13.5	0.31	0.577
	Yes	2	100.0	0	0.0		
Gluten Free	No	674	86.5	105	13.5	0.31	0.577
	Yes	2	100.0	0	0.0		
Vegetarian	No	662	87.0	99	13.0	4.84	0.028*
	Yes	14	70.0	6	30.0		
Dining Outlet Onsite	No	216	95.2	11	4.8	20.33	0.001*
	Yes	460	83.0	94	17.0		
Alcohol Onsite	No	493	86.8	75	13.2	0.10	0.748
	Yes	183	85.9	30	14.1		
Bar/ Lounge Onsite	No	392	88.1	53	11.9	2.09	0.148
	Yes	284	84.5	52	15.5		
Mini Bar/mini	No	337	93.4	24	6.6	26.64	0.001*

fridge/fridge	Yes	339	80.7	81	19.3		
Room Service	No	337	89.6	39	10.4	5.88	0.015*
	Yes	339	83.7	66	16.3		
Female Only Floor	No	676	86.7	104	13.3	6.45	0.011
	Yes	0	0.0	1	100.0		
Gender Segregated Facilities	No	668	87.2	98	12.8	14.51	0.001*
	Yes	8	53.3	7	46.7		
Recreation/Sport Facilities	No	531	85.9	87	14.1	1.02	0.312
	Yes	145	89.0	18	11.0		
Room Decoration	No	20	76.9	6	23.1	2.15	0.143
	Yes	656	86.9	99	13.1		
Entertainment	No	533	88.4	70	11.6	7.66	0.006*
	Yes	143	80.3	35	19.7		
Free Service	No	46	90.2	5	9.8	0.62	0.431
	Yes	630	86.3	100	13.7		
Security System	No	192	88.5	25	11.5	0.96	0.328
	Yes	484	85.8	80	14.2		
Pet Friendly	No	676	86.6	105	13.4	NA	
	Yes	0	0.0	0	0.0		
Proximity to 'Red Light' District	No	676	86.6	105	13.4	NA	
	Yes	0	0.0	0	0.0		
Proximity to Gambling Venues	No	668	86.4	105	13.6	0.36	0.549
	Yes	8	100.0	0	0.0		

*Significant $P < 0.05$

Note: Significant relationships that do not meet the requirements of 5 cases per cell are not being interpreted.

Logistic Regression Analysis

Logistic regression (binary) analysis was used to predict and explain the most influential *halal* attributes that predict an accommodation provider being listed on the HDM or not. This can help accommodation providers that are not currently listed on the HDM to understand some of the core attributes that generally appear on the websites of those that are listed on the HDM. If a *halal* attribute appears on a website then it is categorised as 1 and if it is not, then the attribute is categorised as 0. A two stage model was used. In the first stage the following variables accommodation characteristics were specified as predictors (zone, state, location, type, size and star rating). In the second stage all the 37 accommodation attributes were specified as the predictors. In Table 7.14, stage 1 of the results show that hotel type ($B = -0.683$) is the only variable that significantly ($p = 0.023$) predict listing on the HDM. The model confirms that hotels are more likely to be listed on

the HDM compared to the other categories of hotel. The model explains 6.3% (Cox & Snell R^2) of the variance in the dependent variable and correctly classifies 81.6% of accommodation providers. The Hosmer and Lemeshow test was insignificant suggesting that the model is adequate in predicting the dependent variable. In the second stage of the model, all the attributes that were identified from the websites were entered in the model. The results (Table 7.14) showed that the model explains 15.2% of the variance in the dependent variable (Cox & Snell R^2) and correctly classified 83% of the accommodation providers. Only four attributes could significantly predict listing on the HDM and these are prayer room & facility ($p=0.009$), dining outlet inside ($p=0.019$), pool on site ($p=0.002$) and spa and sauna ($p=0.009$). In essence, having a prayer room/facility ($B=0.863$), dining outlet onsite ($B=0.849$) and pool onsite ($B=0.935$) increases the likelihood for an accommodation provider to be listed on the HDM. However, having a spa/sauna decreases the likelihood to be listed on the HDM ($B=-0.692$). Hence, despite the positive *halal* attributes such as prayer mat, Quran, prayer time, kiblat direction and female only floor are considered as necessary for *halal* hospitality (Henderson, 2011; Razzaq et al., 2016; Saad et al., 2014; Stephenson, 2014), the majority of these attributes were not statistically significant in determining whether an accommodation provider is listed on HDM or not. This raises the question as to what criteria are actually used to give *halal* certification and what accommodation providers communicate on their websites as *halal* attributes. Clearly, the results suggest a gap between attributes required for certification and attributes communicated to customers via websites.

Table 7.14: Influence on the listed in HDM of the factors studied (Logistic Regression)

	B	Wald	p-level	95% C.I		(Exp(B))
				Lower	Upper	
Stage 1	0.070	0.437	0.509	0.871	1.32	1.073
Zone	-0.011	0.252	0.616	0.95	1.031	0.99
State	-0.365	3.011	0.083	0.46	1.048	0.694
Type	-0.683	5.132	0.023	0.28	0.912	0.505
Size	-0.494	2.511	0.113	0.331	1.124	0.61
Star	0.117	1.288	0.256	0.918	1.377	1.124
Stage 2						
Multi-lingual Staff	0.43	0.273	0.601	0.306	7.72	1.538
Family Friendly	-0.264	0.736	0.391	0.42	1.405	0.768
Satellite/Cable TV	-0.582	3.489	0.062	0.304	1.029	0.559

Pool Onsite	0.935	9.674	0.002	1.413	4.595	2.548
Spa & Sauna	-0.692	6.836	0.009	0.298	0.841	0.5
Gym Onsite	0.073	0.065	0.799	0.611	1.895	1.076
Serve Food on Premise	0.049	0.032	0.858	0.612	1.802	1.05
Special Dietary Need	-0.907	0.485	0.486	0.031	5.186	0.404
Dairy Free	-19.174	0	0.999	0	.	0
Vegetarian	0.736	1.653	0.199	0.68	6.409	2.087
Dining Outlet Onsite	0.849	5.541	0.019	1.153	4.74	2.337
Alcohol Onsite	-0.051	0.033	0.856	0.549	1.646	0.95
Bar/ Lounge Onsite	-0.109	0.159	0.690	0.523	1.535	0.896
Mini Bar/mini fridge/fridge	0.191	0.525	0.469	0.722	2.029	1.21
Room Service	0.477	2.997	0.083	0.939	2.766	1.611
Female Only Floor	24.172	0	1	0	.	3145389 1880
Gender Segregated Facilities	-1.928	3.102	0.078	0.017	1.243	0.145
Recreation/Sport Facilities	0.301	0.983	0.321	0.745	2.453	1.352
Room Decoration	0.573	0.752	0.386	0.486	6.481	1.774
Entertainment	0.191	0.57	0.450	0.738	1.985	1.21
Free Service	0.409	0.571	0.450	0.521	4.35	1.505
Security System	-0.413	2.301	0.129	0.388	1.128	0.662
Proximity to Gambling Venues	-0.168	0.022	0.882	0.092	7.781	0.846
Entertainment	0.191	0.273	0.601	0.306	7.72	1.538
Free Service	0.409	0.736	0.391	0.42	1.405	0.768
Security System	-0.413	3.489	0.062	0.304	1.029	0.559
Quran	1.687	1.191	0.275	5.403	0.261	111.766
Kiblat Direction	-19.014	0	0.999	0	0	.
Prayer Room & Facility	0.863	6.844	0.009	2.369	1.242	4.522
Sajada/Prayer Mat	0.615	1.219	0.270	1.85	0.621	5.511
Prayer Time	0.059	0.001	0.978	1.061	0.016	68.708
<i>Halal/Halal</i> Certified/ <i>Halal</i> Logo	0.237	0.72	0.396	1.268	0.733	2.195
Constant	-1.439	1.328	0.249	0.237		

Dependent variable: Listing on *Halal* Directory Malaysia, (Yes = 1, No=0)

The next section presents the analysis on the relationship between the attributes on the accommodation providers' websites and the ratings of such accommodations on various travel websites. Several analyses were conducted in order to identify if any relationship existed between the ratings on such websites and being listed on HDM as well as having a

halal/halal certified/logo or not. Additional analyses were also conducted to identify any relationship between ratings on travel websites and the general attributes of hospitality usually evaluated on such travel rating websites.

7.3 Travel Websites Listing

It is increasingly necessary for accommodation providers to link their businesses to travel websites that can help increase online traffic with the aim of boosting occupancy rate (Gössling et al., 2016; Smithson et al., 2010). Accommodation providers can use travel websites for online booking in order to increase their visibility and sales (Inversini & Masiero, 2014). By linking to travel websites, accommodation providers can obtain reviews about their services and such reviews can assist customers in their decision-making processes (Ekiz, Khoo-Lattimore, & Memarzadeh, 2012). Travel websites like TripAdvisor for example, received almost 400 million visitors every month, and contributed to 435 million customers' reviews on 6.8 million accommodations, restaurants and attractions worldwide (TripAdvisor, 2016).

This study showed that accommodation providers have been actively linking their hospitality businesses to travel websites. Connection to these travel websites could increase traffic flows on accommodation providers' own websites as well as increase awareness on the availability of *halal* hospitality provision to the target customers (Panagopoulos et al., 2011), although some customers may also book via the travel website. More than half of accommodation providers in this study linked their hospitality business to each of the five travel websites surveyed as shown in Table 7.15. This study found that nearly 95% of accommodation providers' were listed on TripAdvisor. More than 80% of accommodation providers were listed on Agoda, 78.2% on Trivago, 74% on Booking.com and 67.6% on Expedia. Thus, links to travel websites appeared to be essential to the accommodation providers in this study.

Table 7.15: Number of accommodation providers listed on travel websites

Travel Websites	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Agoda	657	84.1	124	15.9
Booking.com	578	74.0	203	26.0
Expedia	528	67.6	253	32.4
TripAdvisor	737	94.4	44	5.6
Trivago	611	78.2	170	21.8

Previous studies have shown that the size, type, and star ranking of an accommodation have positive relationships with other characteristics of the business such as the use of Internet for online booking (Khoo-Lattimore & Ekiz, 2014) and provision of better online services (Hashim et al, 2010). With regard to the analysis conducted on the relationship between size, type and star ranking of accommodation and the listing on the travel websites, the findings from this study (see Table 7.16) shows that there is a positive relationship between the size of accommodation and their listing on travel websites. The medium and small size categories were combined to meet the fundamental assumption of at least five observations in each cell for the purpose of this analysis. As can be seen in Table 7.16, the larger the hotel, the more they were listed on Agoda (63.9%), booking.com (58.5%), Trip Advisor (68.2%) and the other travel websites.

Table 7.16: Relationship between size of accommodation providers and the listing on travel websites

				Size		χ^2	P
				Large	Small & Medium		
				(50 & above rooms)	(0 – 49 rooms)		
Listed on Agoda	No	N	52	72	58.093	0.000*	
		%	6.7	9.2			
	Yes	N	499	158			
		%	63.9	20.2			
Listed on Booking.com	No	N	94	109	77.605	0.000*	
		%	12.0	14.0			
	Yes	N	457	121			
		%	58.5	15.5			
Listed on Expedia	No	N	116	137	109.896	0.000*	
		%	14.9	17.5			
	Yes	N	435	93			
		%	55.7	11.9			
Listed on TripAdvisor	No	N	18	26	19.718	0.000*	
		%	2.3	3.3			
	Yes	N	533	204			
		%	68.2	26.1			
Listed on Trivago	No	N	75	91	73.076	0.000*	
		%	9.6	12.2			
	Yes	N	476	170			
		%	60.9	21.8			

*Significant $P < 0.05$

Table 7.17 shows that there are relationships between the different types of accommodation and listing on the various travel websites. To fulfil the fundamental assumption of at least five observations in each cell for the purpose of this analysis the different accommodation types were combined into two categories for more meaningful comparisons; hotel for 3 star and above, and budget hotel including the homestay/guesthouse/resthouse/hostel and chalet for 2 star and below.

The finding suggests that accommodations classified as 3-star hotels and above were listed on all five travel websites more often than those hotels of 2-star and below as well as the other types of accommodation. For example, a higher percentage of 3-star hotels was listed on Agoda (52.2%), Booking.com (48.7%) and Trip Advisor (54.7%) and the other travel websites compared to other types of accommodation.

Table 7.17: Relationship between type of accommodation providers and the listing on travel websites

				Type		χ^2	P
		Hotel	Budget Hotel, Homestay /Guesthouse/Resthouse/ Hostel/Chalet				
		(3 star and above)		(2 star and below)			
Listed on Agoda	No	N	33	91	53.441	0.000*	
		%	4.2	11.7			
	Yes	N	408	249	77.869	0.000*	
		%	52.2	31.9			
Listed on Booking.Com	No	N	61	142	136.866	0.000*	
		%	7.8	18.2			
	Yes	N	380	198	11.523	0.001*	
		%	48.7	25.4			
Listed on Expedia	No	N	67	186	64.702	0.000*	
		%	8.6	23.8			
	Yes	N	374	154			
		%	47.9	19.7			
Listed on Trip-Advisor	No	N	14	30			
		%	1.8	3.8			
	Yes	N	427	310			
		%	54.7	39.7			
Listed on Trivago	No	N	50	120			
		%	6.4	15.4			
	Yes	N	391	220			
		%	50.1	28.2			

*Significant $P < 0.05$

Based on a study by Inversini and Masiero (2014), accommodation providers will choose a well-known travel website as their channel of distribution to inform customers on their hospitality provision. In this study, it can be seen that there is a relationship between the star ranking of accommodation providers and listing on the various travel websites (Table 7.18). However, the 0 to 1 and the 3 to 5 star ranking accommodation were combined to create more meaningful categories so that the chi square test could be conducted without having any cell with less than 5 observations. The findings are interesting in the sense that both star rated accommodation and those that are not rated have significant relationships with listing on the various travel websites. As shown in Table 7.18 the no star/1star rated accommodations had high percentages of listing on

Agoda (15.4%) and Trip Advisor (18.6%). However, it must be noted that accommodations rated 3-star rated and above had higher percentages of listing on all five travel websites compared to the other categories. Typically, accommodation providers in this study may consider that these five well-known travel websites could influence customers for online booking as suggested in previous studies (e.g., Sparks & Browning, 2011). Therefore, whether the accommodation providers are star rated or not, the findings seem to suggest that listing on travel websites is not uncommon.

Table 7.18: Relationship between star ranking and the listing on travel websites

		Star Ranking				χ^2	P
		0 – 1 Star	2 Star	3 Star & above			
Listed on Agoda	No	N	42	42	40	39.712	0.000*
		%	5.4	5.4	5.1		
	Yes	N	120	125	412		
		%	15.4	16.0	52.8		
Listed on Booking. Com	No	N	71	61	71	61.275	0.000*
		%	9.1	7.8	9.1		
	Yes	N	91	106	381		
		%	11.7	13.6	48.8		
Listed on Expedia	No	N	100	75	78	122.890	0.000*
		%	12.8	9.6	10.0		
	Yes	N	62	92	374		
		%	7.9	11.8	47.9		
Listed on Trip-Advisor	No	N	17	11	16	11.211	0.004*
		%	2.2	1.4	2.0		
	Yes	N	145	156	436		
		%	18.6	20.0	55.8		
Listed on Trivago	No	N	67	42	61	55.794	0.000*
		%	8.6	5.4	7.8		
	Yes	N	95	125	391		
		%	12.2	16.0	50.1		

*Significant P<0.05

The results from Table 7.19 and Table 7.20 indicate that significant relationships existed between being listed on the HDM and listing on the various travel websites, as well as having the *halal/halal*certificate/logo and being listed on the various travel websites. As shown in Table 7.19, a higher percentage of those listed on Agoda (67.2%) was not listed on HDM. The same pattern emerges for the other four travel websites suggesting that many of the accommodation providers despite listing on the various travel website did not list their hospitality business on the HDM. This study seem to suggest that listing on travel

websites is more essential for *halal* accommodation providers in order to gain exposure and increase demand for the *halal* service worldwide than listing on HDM and this is probably for commercial reasons as listing on travel websites can support an increase in the number of online booking through portals such as *halaltrips.com* and *halalbookings.com* as suggested in previous studies (Mohsin, Ramli, & Alkhulayfi, 2016).

Table 7.19: Relationship between listed in HDM and the listing on travel websites

		<i>Halal</i> Directory Malaysia		χ^2	P
		No	Yes		
Listed on Agoda	No	N	112	6.846	0.009*
		%	14.3		
	Yes	N	525		
		%	67.2		
Listed on Booking.com	No	N	177	5.287	0.021*
		%	22.7		
	Yes	N	460		
		%	58.9		
Listed on Expedia	No	N	230	20.831	0.000*
		%	29.4		
	Yes	N	407		
		%	52.1		
Listed on TripAdvisor	No	N	43	7.003	0.008
		%	5.5		
	Yes	N	594		
		%	76.1		
Listed on Trivago	No	N	156	14.186	0.000*
		%	20.0		
	Yes	N	481		
		%	61.6		

*Significant $P < 0.05$

In table 7.20, it can be seen that a high percentage of those accommodations listed on all five websites did not have a *halal* logo or was *halal* certified.

Table 7.20: Relationship between the accommodation providers that published the *halal/halal certified/halal* logo and the listing on travel websites

				Halal/Halal Certified/Halal Logo		χ^2	P
		No	Yes				
Listed on Agoda	No	N	116	8	5.500	0.019*	
		%	14.9	1.0			
	Yes	N	560	97			
		%	71.7	12.4			
Listed on Booking.com	No	N	189	14	9.360	0.002*	
		%	24.2	1.8			
	Yes	N	487	91			
		%	62.4	11.7			
Listed on Expedia	No	N	231	22	6.661	0.010*	
		%	29.6	2.8			
	Yes	N	445	83			
		%	57.0	10.6			
Listed on TripAdvisor	No	N	41	3	1.208	0.272	
		%	5.2	0.4			
	Yes	N	635	102			
		%	81.3	13.1			
Listed on Trivago	No	N	160	10	9.864	0.002*	
		%	20.5	1.3			
	Yes	N	516	95			
		%	66.1	12.2			

*Significant $P < 0.05$

Khoo-Lattimore and Ekiz (2014) indicate that online compliments given by customers on the luxury hotels in Malaysia are very useful to accommodation providers as the compliments on room, service, food, location, and value added service (i.e., featured on TripAdvisor) could improve their services to customers. Service improvement can be in the form of providing sufficient information on the website (i.e., accommodation providers' websites and the travel websites) of the *halal* service provision. To identify if the accommodation providers' ratings on various attributes by the travel websites were significantly different for businesses listed on the HDM, t-tests were performed. Table 7.21 shows several statistically significant differences on the basis of the rating criteria of the various travel websites.

Looking at the mean score on Table 7.21, for accommodation providers listed on HDM, Trivago presents the highest mean score for cleanliness (M=7.71), location (M=7.81), comfort (M=7.33), facilities (M=9.02), food (M=7.67) and value for money (M=7.39) than the other travel websites in the study. However, for staff criteria, Trivago (M=7.46) was the second highest score after Booking.com (M=7.50).

For accommodation providers that are not listed in HDM, the highest mean score for each criterion is shown by the Trivago website, with cleanliness (M=7.71), location (M=8.09), staff (M=7.60), comfort (M=7.55), facilities (M=7.37), food (M=7.60), and value for money (M=7.61). To compare, facilities (M=9.02) presents the highest mean score for accommodation providers listed in HDM and location (M=8.09) for not listed. However, only few of the differences in scores are statistically significant. As shown in Table 7.21, on the criteria of cleanliness for Expedia and Trivago, businesses not listed on HDM had higher mean scores compared to that were listed. Further details are provided below.

Based on the independent sample t-test results, only cleanliness (Expedia and Trivago), food (Agoda) and value for money (Trivago) were rated statistically different on the basis of listing on HDM. These results are based on, for example, the maximum score value of 5 for Expedia and 10 for Trivago. The results show that the mean score on food for listing on Agoda was statistically different for accommodation providers listed on HDM (M=6.53) compared to those that were not listed on HDM (M=6.21). There was also a statistically significant difference in the mean score of those listed on HDM (M=7.39) compared to those that were not listed (M=7.61) on the attribute value for money. A study on *halal* tourism in Turkey by Duman (2011) indicates that price and cleanliness were the priority when customers look for *halal* hospitality. Food and facilities are part of the factors that strongly influence customers' satisfaction on their stay at Malaysia's accommodation (Poon & Low, 2005). Facilities are considered as one of the important aspects in many discussions on *halal* hospitality (Battour et al., 2011; Henderson, 2010; Stephenson, 2014). However, the t-test results also show that the mean rating score of facility on the various travel websites is not statistically different for accommodation providers listed on HDM and those that are not listed on HDM.

Table 7.21: Compare mean by *Halal* Directory Malaysia (t test)

	HDM	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Agoda Cleanliness	No	518	7.27	1.01	0.99	0.322
	Yes	132	7.17	0.93		
Booking.com Cleanliness	No	445	7.31	1.01	1.06	0.289
	Yes	115	7.20	1.19		
Expedia Cleanliness	No	398	3.66	0.63	1.97	0.049*
	Yes	121	3.53	0.61		
Trivago Cleanliness	No	301	7.71	1.05	2.34	0.020*
	Yes	102	7.44	0.93		
Agoda Location	No	518	7.71	0.84	0.41	0.684
	Yes	133	7.67	0.68		
Booking.com Location	No	445	7.61	0.87	-0.31	0.760
	Yes	114	7.64	0.80		
Trivago Location	No	299	8.09	4.07	0.71	0.480
	Yes	103	7.81	0.68		
Agoda Staff	No	518	7.30	0.85	0.60	0.551
	Yes	133	7.25	0.73		
Booking.com Staff	No	450	7.51	0.96	0.08	0.935
	Yes	115	7.50	0.97		
Expedia Staff	No	393	3.67	0.55	1.79	0.074
	Yes	121	3.57	0.52		
Trivago Staff	No	300	7.60	0.84	1.53	0.126
	Yes	103	7.46	0.70		
Agoda Comfort	No	515	7.30	0.92	0.34	0.732
	Yes	132	7.27	0.81		
Booking.com Comfort	No	450	7.28	1.11	-0.02	0.986
	Yes	115	7.28	1.19		
Expedia Comfort	No	389	3.61	0.65	1.76	0.080
	Yes	121	3.49	0.66		
Trivago Comfort	No	294	7.55	0.93	1.83	0.068
	Yes	99	7.33	1.27		
Agoda Facilities	No	478	6.58	1.27	0.88	0.379
	Yes	125	6.47	1.50		
Booking.com Facilities	No	446	6.94	1.06	-0.66	0.507
	Yes	112	7.01	1.00		
Trivago Facilities	No	57	7.37	0.47	-1.02	0.311
	Yes	28	9.02	12.25		
Agoda Food	No	506	6.21	1.07	-3.05	0.002*
	Yes	129	6.53	1.04		
Trivago Food	No	118	7.60	0.78	-0.57	0.570
	Yes	56	7.67	0.52		
Agoda Value for Money	No	525	7.22	0.77	0.20	0.841

	Yes	133	7.21	0.69		
Booking.com Value for Money	No	449	7.11	0.75	0.23	0.821
	Yes	116	7.09	0.80		
Trivago Value for Money	No	283	7.61	0.72	2.36	0.019*
	Yes	99	7.39	0.99		

*Significant $p < 0.05$

7.4 Relationships between Overall Score on Travel Websites and Accommodation Attributes Score

Given the popularity of Booking.com and Trip Advisor compared to the other three travel websites, hierarchical regression models were estimated to predict the overall score of the accommodation on these two travel websites. Given that each accommodation provider had an overall score, this was specified as the dependent variable in the model. The following variables (accommodation characteristics such as zone, state, location, type, star-rating, and size; all the *halal* attributes measured in this study; and the individual scores on cleanliness, location, staff, comfort, facilities, and value for money) were specified as the independent variable in model 1 (Booking.com). Hierarchical regression was used to identify how much of the additional variance is explained by the *halal* attributes displayed on the website of accommodation providers while controlling for the business characteristics. Prior to estimating the model, the regression assumptions were tested. Normal probability plots showed that the data were not significantly different from a normal distribution. Multi-collinearity was an issue given that the VIF values were more than 10 for three variables (Booking.com cleanliness, comfort and facilities). Consequently, these variables were eliminated from the model. The remaining variables had VIF values of less than 10 as shown in Table 7.22. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.967 suggests that auto correlation within the model is of an acceptable level. The model was estimated in three blocks. In block 1, the control variables were entered first (zone, state, location, type, star-rating, and size of the accommodation). In block 2, all the *halal* attributes displayed on the website of the accommodation provider was entered in the model and in the last block the remaining individual travel website scores for location, staff and value for money were entered in the model. The results (Table 7.22) show that the final model explains 95.3% of the variance in the overall score (Adjusted $R^2=0.949$). In stage 1, the business characteristics by themselves explained 33% of the variance while in

stage 2 of the model, the business characteristics and the *halal* attributes explained 44.7% of the variance in the overall travel website score. As expected, more than 50% of the additional variance in the overall score is explained by the individual ratings for location, staff and value for money.

In the final model, zone ($B=-0.027$, $p=0.012$) and star ranking ($B=0.085$, $p<0.001$) can significantly predict overall score of the accommodation suggesting that accommodation providers located in places other than the North of Malaysia and those with higher star ratings tend to have higher overall scores on Booking. Com. The availability of a spa/sauna ($B=0.034$, $p=0.009$), alcohol on site ($B=0.028$, $p=0.042$), security system ($B=0.033$, $p=0.004$) and proximity to gambling venues ($B=0.024$, $p=0.022$) also contributed to a higher overall score for the accommodation provider on Booking.com. Higher individual scores on location ($B=0.244$, $p<0.001$), staff ($B=0.408$, $p<0.001$) and value for money ($B=0.355$, $p<0.001$) also led to higher overall score on this travel website. It is clear from the findings that several negative *halal* attributes (alcohol and proximity to gambling venues) and some positive attributes (security system) contribute to higher overall score.

Table 7.22 Model predicting overall score on Booking.com

Model 1 (Booking.com)	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.	Collinearity	
	Coefficients		Coefficients			Statistics	Tolerance
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
Stage 3							
(Constant)	-0.705	0.134		-5.245	0		
Zone	-0.024	0.01	-0.027	-2.508	0.012	0.779	1.284
State	0.004	0.002	0.022	1.972	0.049	0.721	1.386
Location	0.018	0.02	0.011	0.929	0.353	0.695	1.439
Type	0.01	0.024	0.006	0.414	0.679	0.391	2.557
Size	0.001	0.024	0	0.035	0.972	0.588	1.702
Star Ranking	0.049	0.011	0.085	4.401	0	0.25	3.995
<i>Halal</i> Directory Malaysia	-0.026	0.021	-0.013	-1.208	0.228	0.859	1.164
Quran	0.012	0.133	0.001	0.09	0.928	0.663	1.508
Kiblat Direction	-0.036	0.097	-0.004	-0.374	0.709	0.923	1.083
Prayer Room & Facility	-0.04	0.031	-0.014	-1.273	0.204	0.826	1.21
Sajada/Prayer Mat	0.036	0.043	0.009	0.836	0.403	0.802	1.247
Prayer Time	-0.146	0.161	-0.011	-0.905	0.366	0.672	1.488
<i>Halal/Halal Certified/Halal Logo</i>	-0.008	0.024	-0.004	-0.339	0.735	0.788	1.269
Multi-lingual Staff	-0.044	0.076	-0.006	-0.587	0.558	0.775	1.291
Family Friendly	0.018	0.026	0.008	0.699	0.485	0.633	1.579
Satelite/Cable TV	-0.028	0.027	-0.012	-1.042	0.298	0.684	1.463
Pool Onsite	-0.021	0.025	-0.013	-0.841	0.401	0.4	2.5
Spa & Sauna	0.058	0.022	0.034	2.622	0.009	0.564	1.772
Gym Onsite	0.037	0.024	0.022	1.528	0.127	0.441	2.268
Serve Food on Premise	0.005	0.022	0.003	0.221	0.826	0.512	1.952
Special Dietary Need	0.075	0.109	0.009	0.687	0.492	0.494	2.025

Gluten Free	-0.085	0.17	-0.006	-0.496	0.62	0.602	1.66
Vegetarian	0.016	0.056	0.003	0.281	0.779	0.704	1.42
Dining Outlet Onsite	-0.026	0.025	-0.013	-1.059	0.29	0.578	1.731
Alcohol Onsite	0.049	0.024	0.028	2.038	0.042	0.486	2.056
Bar/ Lounge Onsite	0.007	0.022	0.004	0.331	0.741	0.521	1.918
Mini Bar/mini fridge/fridge	0.005	0.02	0.003	0.235	0.814	0.654	1.529
Room Service	-0.02	0.021	-0.012	-0.949	0.343	0.586	1.708
Female Only Floor	0.119	0.219	0.006	0.546	0.585	0.73	1.37
Gender Segregated Facilities	0.014	0.064	0.003	0.222	0.824	0.675	1.482
Recreation/Sport Facilities	-0.002	0.027	-0.001	-0.079	0.937	0.541	1.848
Room Decoration	-0.089	0.05	-0.018	-1.785	0.075	0.911	1.098
Entertainment	-0.02	0.022	-0.01	-0.906	0.365	0.726	1.377
Free Service	0.07	0.047	0.016	1.51	0.132	0.793	1.26
Security System	0.063	0.022	0.033	2.885	0.004	0.724	1.38
Proximity to Gambling Venues	0.177	0.077	0.024	2.295	0.022	0.849	1.177
Booking.com Location	0.238	0.016	0.244	15.307	0	0.365	2.737
Booking.com Layan Staff	0.435	0.021	0.408	20.648	0	0.239	4.191
Booking.com Value for Money	0.385	0.018	0.355	21.727	0	0.349	2.863

Table 7.23 displays the results for the model predicting the overall score for Trip Advisor. Following a similar process as before, a hierarchical regression model was estimated. The independent variables were similar to the previous model except that individual scores were not available for criteria such as cleanliness, location, staff and value for money, among others. Prior to estimating the model, the regression assumptions were tested and the data were not significantly different from a normal distribution. As shown in Table 7.23, all VIF values were less than 10, indicating that multicollinearity is not an issue. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.4 confirms that auto correlation is not a significant issue in this model. The overall model explains 30.6% of the variance in the overall score (Adjusted $R^2=0.270$). The business characteristics by themselves explain 20.9% of the variance in overall score. As shown in Table 7.23, size ($B=0.111$, $p=0.007$) and star rating ($B=0.541$, $p<0.001$) of the hotel significantly predict the overall score, suggesting that larger hotels and higher star rating were linked to higher overall scores. Listing on the HDM was negatively related to a higher overall score ($B=-0.07$, $p=0.042$), with those not listed on HDM having a higher overall score. Accommodation providers that indicated they did not have a prayer room or facility ($B=-0.13$, $p<0.001$), satellite/Cable TV ($B=-0.076$, $p=0.045$), entertainment ($B=-0.083$, $p=0.025$) and pool on site ($B=-0.196$, $p<0.001$) had significantly higher overall scores. However, those that indicated they had a sauna/spa ($B=0.083$, $p=0.048$) and served alcohol on site ($B=0.162$, $p<0.001$) had significantly higher overall scores. Clearly some contradictions exist between the overall rating of an accommodation on these travel websites and the types of facilities that are communicated as part of the *halal* offer. In both models, offering alcohol on site, which is considered a negative *halal* attribute, actually improves the overall rating score of the accommodation. This is possibly due to non-Muslim customers being a significant market for such providers.

Table 7.23: Model for predicting overall score on Trip Advisor

Model 2 (Trip Advisor)	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.59	0.231		11.19	0		
Zone	0.044	0.023	0.066	1.874	0.061	0.812	1.231
State	-0.007	0.005	-0.052	-1.433	0.152	0.768	1.302
Location	0.015	0.05	0.011	0.297	0.767	0.73	1.369
Type	0.081	0.049	0.079	1.652	0.099	0.435	2.301
Size	0.158	0.059	0.111	2.696	0.007	0.586	1.705
Star Ranking	0.244	0.025	0.541	9.578	0	0.314	3.182
<i>Halal</i> Directory Malaysia	-0.116	0.057	-0.07	-2.041	0.042	0.851	1.176
Quran	-0.306	0.379	-0.03	-0.806	0.42	0.735	1.361
Kiblat Direction	0.486	0.287	0.055	1.693	0.091	0.965	1.036
Prayer Room & Facility	-0.304	0.08	-0.13	-3.779	0	0.847	1.181
Sajada/Prayer Mat	-0.02	0.123	-0.006	-0.161	0.872	0.835	1.198
Prayer Time	-0.062	0.37	-0.006	-0.167	0.868	0.774	1.293
<i>Halal/Halal</i> Certified/ <i>Halal</i> Logo	-0.124	0.066	-0.065	-1.869	0.062	0.822	1.216
Multi-lingual Staff	-0.034	0.203	-0.006	-0.166	0.868	0.776	1.289
Family Friendly	-0.064	0.068	-0.037	-0.939	0.348	0.654	1.53
Satelite/Cable TV	-0.133	0.066	-0.076	-2.006	0.045	0.703	1.422
Pool Onsite	-0.258	0.065	-0.196	-4	0	0.418	2.391
Spa & Sauna	0.116	0.059	0.083	1.983	0.048	0.571	1.752
Gym Onsite	0.05	0.064	0.036	0.777	0.437	0.474	2.111
Serve Food on Premise	-0.057	0.06	-0.043	-0.96	0.337	0.498	2.01
Special Dietary Need	0.15	0.267	0.024	0.564	0.573	0.56	1.785
Gluten Free	0.271	0.477	0.022	0.568	0.57	0.697	1.435
Vegetarian	0.07	0.148	0.017	0.471	0.638	0.738	1.355
Dining Outlet Onsite	-0.049	0.061	-0.033	-0.811	0.418	0.601	1.663
Alcohol Onsite	0.236	0.063	0.162	3.725	0	0.528	1.893
Bar/ Lounge Onsite	0.036	0.057	0.028	0.635	0.526	0.529	1.889
Mini Bar/mini fridge/fridge	0.069	0.052	0.052	1.327	0.185	0.657	1.523
Room Service	-0.064	0.055	-0.049	-1.169	0.243	0.581	1.721
Female Only Floor Gender Segregated Facilities	-0.301	0.638	-0.017	-0.471	0.638	0.776	1.288
Recreation/Sport Facilities	0.15	0.167	0.032	0.899	0.369	0.774	1.293
Room Decoration	0.041	0.066	0.026	0.624	0.533	0.583	1.715
Entertainment	-0.21	0.122	-0.057	-1.722	0.086	0.915	1.092
Free Service	-0.128	0.057	-0.083	-2.253	0.025	0.747	1.339
Security System	0.122	0.094	0.045	1.299	0.194	0.825	1.212
Proximity to Gambling Venues	0.073	0.054	0.05	1.346	0.179	0.738	1.354
	-0.343	0.226	-0.051	-1.519	0.129	0.893	1.119

7.5 Summary and Conclusion

Overall, the number of *halal* certified accommodation providers certified in Malaysia is still limited. Of the total 781 Malaysian accommodation provider websites reviewed, only 144 were listed on the HDM. This was extremely surprising given that Malaysia is primarily an Islamic country, is seeking to position itself internationally as a *halal* hub, including as a destination for Muslims, and is also recognized as having high quality *halal* certification (see Chapter One). Nevertheless, there is only a limited engagement among the *halal* accommodation providers in this study to promote themselves as *halal* certified.

Thirty-two attributes of *halal* hospitality were used as indicators to see how *halal* attributes were communicated to the customers. The findings indicated that relatively little *halal* attributes related information was provided on the accommodation providers' websites, which could thus suggest that the accommodation providers do not know what to communicate to customers on *halal* hospitality. At the same time, accommodation providers may also assume that because Malaysia is a predominantly Islamic country, then many of the necessary *halal* services are already personally available for Muslims and they therefore do not need to communicate about them through their websites. This study indicates that positive *halal* hospitality attributes such as availability of the Quran, prayer times, prayer mat, and a *halal* certificate / logo was not often displayed on the websites of accommodation providers, given that only 105 or 13.4% accommodation providers featured the word *halal* or had a *halal* certificate or logo on their websites.

Accommodation providers should inform guests and potential customers about the availability of *halal* facilities and amenities as part of any effort to attract more foreign Muslim tourists as well as provide information to domestic travellers. Furthermore, all customers regardless of being Muslim or not could benefit from further information with respect to the services rendered. However, the findings presented suggest that even when accommodation is *halal* certified little information is provided, including with respect to one of the potentially more important *halal* attributes which is the kibat direction. Out of 781 accommodation websites observed in this study, only four provided kibat direction and none of these were *halal* certified accommodations.

The findings also showed that the communication of the availability of facilities and amenities for consumers on accommodation websites often included both positive and negative *halal* attributes; roughly 71 or 9.1% had both (i.e., *halal* claimant accommodation providers). For some accommodation providers the website content was not just for Muslim customers but also covered the needs of non-Muslim customers. It was clear that being listed on the HDM did not encourage the accommodation providers to display more *halal* attributes. In fact, the findings showed that not being listed on the HDM can lead to higher overall score on the Trip Advisor website. Given that positive *halal* attributes were aimed to devotees of Islam, while many of the neutral and negative (from the perspective of Islam) *halal* attributes such as food and segregated facilities can be used by non-Muslims, could explain partly why some of the overall scores on Booking.com and Trip Advisor were higher for those accommodation providers that offered alcohol on site.

Perhaps remarkably, given Malaysia's tourism positioning and the emphasis on *halal* certification in Malaysia, the findings showed that there was no substantial differences in the online communication of *halal* attributes between Malaysia as an Islamic country that promotes *halal* hospitality widely and Razzaq et al's (2016) results for New Zealand, a non-Muslim country, in promoting Muslim-friendly tourism in terms of publishing the *halal* facilities for customers on the websites. These issues will be discussed further in the next chapter and the conclusion chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION

8 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the interviews and the website content analysis. The findings in Chapter Six are based on the Muslim and non-Muslim respondents personal experiences and perception, religious beliefs, and business experience in operating accommodation business and their exposure to *halal* certification requirements. Chapter Seven discusses the findings from the content analysis of websites on the technical aspects of *halal* hospitality services as well as the ratings of these accommodation on several travel websites. Overall, this chapter discusses the findings based on the research questions stated in Chapter One.

The Interview Findings

The findings of this study showed that Muslim respondents are generally concerned as to how their personal and spiritual beliefs are inter-related to the issues arising from providing accommodation on a commercial basis. They are also concerned about their commitment to religious obligation and social responsibility to other Muslims. Hence, the provision of *halal* hospitality to them is intertwined with religious beliefs and obligations, which to them dictate how they should be providing *halal* services to customers. Overall, they believe that they will receive good rewards for fulfilling their commitment to religious obligations and punishment for non-commitment. However, difficulties exist in the fulfilment of *halal* hospitality concept both intrinsically (e.g., individual belief) and extrinsically (e.g., the nature of the hospitality business and society) as highlighted by some of the respondents. The religious beliefs and obligations of respondents do not always align with the profit and customer orientation required for hospitality businesses. More so, there are also clear differences in what Muslim and non-Muslim customers expect.

A good Muslim will do what the Quran and the Hadith teach. The respondents stressed that they believe that being a good Muslim is sufficient to operate a *halal* hospitality business. This finding is similar to that of Wan Hassan and Hall (2003) and Marzuki et al. (2012), although their studies focus on restaurants and food outlets. The Muslim respondents in the current study meanwhile considered that the teaching of Islam influences their acts and relationship with God and humans, including their customers. In the context of accommodation business, religious beliefs are widely regarded as a guide as to how services should be provided to customers. One of the respondents mentioned that after their hotels converted to overtly providing *halal* hospitality, its top management emphasized the responsibilities incumbent on being a Muslim, which involve both individual and social responsibility (see Chapter Six). Each individual Muslim is responsible to fulfil his religious obligations such as to pray five times a day and to preach about Islam. However, the management of the accommodation provider also stressed the way to treat customers according to the Sunnah. One respondent detailed the way that employees should provide service to customers which include by giving *Salam*; reading a prayer when serving meals; providing *zamzam* or holy water from Mecca, date and raisins (e.g., foods of the Prophet Muhammad) for free; as well as reminding customers for prayer time through the *azan* (call for prayers) five times a day. To the management of the accommodation, it is important to provide *halal* hospitality services in order to earn the pleasure of God and in keeping good relationship with customers although profit is the objective of any business. It is important to note that although these viewpoints came from only one respondent and the majority accommodation providers (as per website analysis) are not conveying the many aspects of *halal* hospitality, this study highlights the potential difference between a fully committed *halal* hospitality provider and the conventional hospitality business. There is a clear gap between what is considered to be the provision of *halal* hospitality and what is implemented in terms of practices.

Halal and Religious Obligation

Religiosity is regarded as influencing attitudes towards guests, tourists and tourism as well as spirituality (Battour et al., 2011; Samori et al., 2016). Respondents in this study felt that meeting the requirements of their religion is very important in *halal* hospitality. Moreover, they explained that holding *halal* status is not solely for business purposes but also reflects a great responsibility and obligation with respect to religious belief. *Halal* is not only about having the *halal* certificate or claim as to providing *halal* services. Instead, it is about the fulfilment of religious obligation through business dealings to reach spiritual pureness in one self. Muslim respondents in this study believe that being a good Muslim will make one have a good spirit/soul. However, to have a good spirit, all acts must comply with religious beliefs. For example, to perform a prayer, a Muslim must pray at a clean place, use a clean cloth, facing the Kiblat, and focus on the prayers. By doing this, a Muslim believes that he could purify his soul. In the context of *halal* accommodation businesses, providing a clean place, a prayer mat, and a direction to kiblat is necessary. The respondents will then have ‘peace of mind’ as not only are they themselves performing the religious obligation but their Muslim customers could do so as well. In their view, other Muslims will practice the same obligation to obtain God’s blessing and to achieve the sanctity of life, therefore, providing the *halal* facilities and amenities is essential. It is important to understand that to Muslim respondents having a good soul will make them become closer to God and therefore drives their wider social practices.

According to Dali et al. (2009), in the context of Malaysia, factors that contribute to *halal* products awareness include *halal* certificate, price, small and medium size enterprise (SME), and clean operation. Similarly, in another study in Turkey, the findings indicate that price and cleanliness are important in the selection of *halal* accommodation (Duman, 2011). Nevertheless, it is important to note that some of the Muslim respondents in this study indicated that they do not need the *halal* certificate to prove they were operating *halal* hospitality or serving *halal* foods and drinks. The respondents believed that they know well about *halal* and *haram* as they have learnt about the teachings since childhood. These respondents specified that in providing hospitality business, they have to conform to cleanliness of the premises, the *halal* foods preparation and processes, the

availability of worshipping facilities and amenities, and also prohibition or prevention to any vices. These respondents have their own interpretation on the concept of *halal* and rules for their accommodation. They expected the customers to abide the rules when staying at the accommodation. It is also important to mention about trust in providing *halal* hospitality. By having Muslim customers staying at their accommodation, the respondents felt that the customers trust them in providing *halal* hospitality. However, some providers are reluctant to accept that customers could violate the rules set (i.e., Muslims or non-Muslims). The element of trust is very important in providing hospitality services but priority is given to the religious aspects of *halal* hospitality. The element of trust is also strong among Muslims, as they believe each individual is responsible for all good (reward) and wrong doings (punishment). If the Muslim customers violate the rules, they are answerable to God as he is entrusted to take care of the welfare of the *ummah* (society) (Kamali, 2015; Ghozali & Kamri, 2015).

Cleanliness

Cleanliness is a subjective matter where cultural and religious differences play an important role in giving meaning to the term 'cleanliness' itself. One of the important issues raised by the respondents is ritual cleanliness. This is important for Muslim providers as well as Muslim customers because if the accommodation is not ritually clean, they believe it will affect worshipping activities. Alcoholic drinks, for example, are considered unclean by many Muslims yet in many conventional accommodation providers, alcoholic drinks are placed in the room (i.e., in the mini fridge/mini bar). Battour et al. (2011) suggested in their study that a Muslim customer prefers alcoholic drinks not to be placed in the refrigerator in his room. It may cause some Muslim customers to feel uncomfortable in performing religious activities such as to perform a prayer in a room that not ritually clean as spiritual assurance will affect the customer's emotion in the use of *halal* service (Tama & Voon, 2014). In addition, many Muslims will feel comfortable in an environment that follows the Islamic requirements (Mohsin et al., 2016).

Some Muslim respondents also considered that it is important to prevent activities such as prohibiting unmarried Muslim couples from sharing a room in order to avoid *shubhah* (i.e., being complicit in activities that are contrary to the teachings of the Islam). These respondents believe that by doing this it will bring a positive impact to their spirituality. Non-Muslim customers in a multi-cultural society with different religious beliefs may not accept these prohibitions. This becomes a dilemma for *halal* hospitality providers who want to adhere to the religious teachings (Henderson, 2003) but get resistance from customers who are often from multicultural societies. While small size accommodation providers can focus on local customers who are mostly Muslim or non-Muslims that are already familiar with the Islamic culture, this may not be the case for larger accommodation providers. In Malaysia, these large size hospitality providers service not only local but also international customers that have difference interest in services offered and may not expect only *halal* services to be offered. Hence, it is difficult for larger accommodation providers to comply with the *halal* requirements if the providers have to cater to the needs of both Muslim and non-Muslim customers (El-Gohary, 2016).

Is it Possible to be 100% Halal?

Despite the concerns and issues raised above, many respondents noted the difficulty in being 100% *halal* (see also Borzooei & Asgari, 2013; Dolan, 2010; Duman, 2011). The respondents in this study indicated that at the current stage in Malaysia, it is difficult for accommodation providers in multicultural countries with different needs and religious beliefs to prevent the mixing of *halal* and *haram* in business activities as ruled in Islamic teaching. Being 100% *halal* or 0% *haram* is seen as impossible if the hospitality activities are still mixing *halal* and *haram* activities. To achieve 100% *halal*, it is not only for the food and facilities to meet the *halal* standard but the entire operation and management of accommodation services must be *halal* (Saad et al., 2014; Samori & Rahman, 2013). Although the providers try to ensure that *haram* activities are not part of their accommodation services, yet customers' behaviour is unpredictable and may lead to engagement with *haram* activities. For example, one respondent stated that some customers secretly brought in prohibited drinks (e.g., alcoholic drinks), which illustrate

why a business is unable to achieve the 100% *halal*. The latter being more of an aspiration rather than an achievement by the accommodation providers.

Some respondents admitted that *halal* hospitality, including *halal* tourism, opens up opportunities to operate accommodation businesses to Muslim customers. Some Muslim customers are so concerned about the *halal* status of the accommodation they use as they prefer to stay at homestays or chalets during travelling. Most of such accommodation businesses belong to Muslim providers. However, less than 1.0% of local customers used these small accommodation service (DOSM, 2011). Despite an increase in the number of small accommodation businesses, their operation is affected by certain factors such as seasonality or the limited additional income that they provide to their operators (Abdullah et al., 2012). Therefore, because of the limited financial returns, some of these small size accommodation providers have only limited interest in applying for *halal* certification because of the economic and time costs involved. Hence, it is clear from the qualitative interviews that size, type as well as location of the provider are all important factors that influence how they implement both the technical and commercial aspects of *halal* hospitality. It almost seems that a pragmatic approach is adopted by the accommodation providers, whereby whatever works under a set of circumstances, is what they will do.

Suppliers for *halal* products and services such as foods, toiletries, and Islamic entertainment are important for the provision of *halal* accommodation and are currently in need in Malaysia (Ibrahim et al., 2012). A small number of respondents argued that they have difficulty to obtain such *halal* products from their local suppliers. These local suppliers were usually not certified *halal* and in some cases, accommodation providers have sought to source from other producers. The commitment of accommodation providers to *halal* hospitality and a *halal* supply chain therefore provides business opportunities to certified local suppliers. However, there are bigger issues in *halal* supply chain that need to be addressed such as in the aspect of networking and structure, logistic control, and supply chain resources (Tieman, 2012). Thus, solving these key issues can increase the number of *halal* suppliers in the local market and move the businesses closer towards providing “full” *halal* hospitality.

Market orientation is important for business direction. Going *halal* potentially means specifically targeting Muslim customers. However, this issue raises substantial difficulties for accommodation that caters to international / non-Muslim guests given the wider global positioning of *halal* tourism in Malaysia. In Malaysia, issues of market orientation particularly involve some medium to large size accommodation providers. *Halal* hospitality does put accommodation providers into a dilemma as non-Muslim international guests come from different cultures that have different needs. Some respondents doubted the possibility of achieving 100% *halal* status based on their experience serving the international guests as these customers' perceived needs somehow contradict the provision of *halal* services (e.g., the need for the alcoholic drinks and non-Islamic entertainments), even if they do not necessarily consume them. It is difficult to be competitive when it involves competition between the *halal* hospitality and the conventional-based hospitality even if the service is offered in a country whose population is Muslim majority. Therefore, in order to gain the competitive edge, the differences that need to be introduced are through segments such as family-friendly tourism, culture, and historic places, while emphasizing a safe and friendly environment (Mohsin et al., 2016).

This situation also created a dilemma for Muslim providers that want to open up *halal* hospitality to international/non-Muslim customers. One of the respondents argued that *halal* might create negative customer perceptions (i.e., many restrictions based on Islamic rules) that causes their customers not to use and/or negatively regard the service they receive. Other respondents who believe that they operate by Islamic principle instead give customers the option to use the *halal* service or not. Nevertheless, many remain concerned over whether non-Muslim customers would decide not to use their services if they only provided *halal* hospitality.

Halal Certification and Halal Hospitality

Business survival is the main aim for some providers especially the small and medium size accommodation (Banki, Ismail, & Muhammad, 2016; Siaw & Rani, 2012). Some respondents from small and medium size accommodation providers in this study viewed that to survive in hospitality they needed to have a *halal* certificate. This was because that

these respondents depend on government functions for business income. Without a *halal* certificate (see Chapter Six), there will be no opportunity to hold government function. Small size business providers in Malaysia have previously acknowledged that possessing a *halal* certificate potentially help increase their market share yet they are difficult to obtain (Abdul et al., 2013). The respondents in this study also noted the importance of having a *halal* certificate yet considered the certification process as difficult and costly.

A few respondents from the small size accommodations in this study indicated that the cost of *halal* certification would be a burden to them not only because of the processing cost *per se* but also because to make available all the *halal* requirements such as segregated facilities and amenities would add a huge cost to their business operations. Other than *halal* certification from JAKIM, accommodation providers also need to have certifications from other authorities such as from the Department of Environment (DOE), the Local Council, and the Ministry of Health (MOH) that all create regulatory costs that are regarded as burdensome by small size business providers (Siaw & Rani, 2012). Many small size business providers simply cannot fulfil these certification requirements (Siaw & Rani, 2012), yet they represent the backbone of economic development in Malaysia (Rohayah, Dawood, Leng, & Yusof, 2014). To complicate matters not complying with the certification regulations means that businesses are potentially subject to penalties under the *Environment Quality Act 127*, *Local Act 176*, and the *Food Act 1983*.

Similarly, the same issues are faced by the small and medium size suppliers of accommodation providers. One of the problems noted above was that where local suppliers have no *halal* certificate then providers who wish to ensure their *halal* status have to obtain their supplies from elsewhere, in some cases these are located out of their state or even Malaysia itself. This therefore increases the high cost of hospitality and accommodation supplies, whereas they could reduce their transportation cost for example by buying from locals. In this context, consideration as to the capacity of small size businesses to obtain certification should be given a higher priority. If not, these providers will be less competitive in the market, hardly contribute to the growth of *halal* business, and supply chains in Malaysia. This will then affect the government plan to be the hub for *halal* products and services worldwide (Kamali, 2011).

One further problem with *halal* is the different interpretations and standards that create confusion among providers. Muslim scholars provide different thoughts on many issues related to *halal* that, in turn, lead to different practices and standards in different countries (Abdul-Talib & Abd-Razak, 2013). Different opinions are given on issues such as the slaughtering process, ritual cleanses, and *halal* standard (see Chapter Three). In Malaysia, differences in the interpretation of *halal* do exist from the perspective of the providers and the government. The respondents in this study argued that they do understand *halal* from the teaching of Islam yet their interpretation of *halal* is often different from the *halal* standard set by JAKIM. For example, to illustrate, in Islam food products are *halal* to eat as long as they have fulfilled the responsibility of being *wajib*, i.e. what is obligatory to be followed, like the ritual of animal slaughtering at a clean place with clean utensils (i.e., providers have their own standard for cleanliness). A simple illustration of this is a Muslim homemaker that cooks and provides hospitality for her family members and any guests using the *halal* materials and ingredients and which clearly require no certificate to prove that the meal is *halal*. Many of the respondents in this study follow similar perspectives where they believe that the products provided is *halal* because they have followed Islamic rulings and guidance in good faith. Some respondents admit that JAKIM has a very high standard of *halal* but they have no capability to fulfil that high standard (see Chapter Six). Nevertheless, they do agree that the authorised Malaysian government *halal* standards are important to confirm the *halal* status of the products produced. However, government consideration of some of the issues involved in *halal* hospitality provision could help the expansion of the *halal* sector. In addition, with respect to regional comparisons, the *halal* standards of countries such as Thailand and Indonesia appear to be less stringent towards the *halal* requirements and yet recognized by JAKIM (JAKIM, 2016).

The Malaysian government *halal* guidelines describe the *halal* concept for commercial activities with the aim to protect customers from any physically and spiritual harm (Abdullah et al., 2016; Buang, 2012). Complying with the *halal* standard may potentially benefit Muslim customers and their providers. Although the Muslim respondents in this study agreed with the objective of the guidelines but still they were reluctant to apply the *halal* certification. Similarly to previous studies (Marzuki, 2012;

Sahida & Sabtu, 2012) the cost, tedious process and timing were part of the reasons for not having the certificate. Furthermore, the trust element contributed to their objection for getting the certification (i.e., a Muslim should trust a Muslim in providing *halal* hospitality). Instead, Muslim respondents argued that it should be the non-Muslim business that must get the certification as they believed that many of them do not understand the *halal* concept, for example, many accommodation providers still sell alcoholic drinks although they provide *halal* food (Razalli et al., 2009). Two hoteliers who have a halal certificate of JAKIM but also offering alcoholic beverages (e.g., separated space for bar or non-halal restaurant) responded that as the owner of the accommodation were non-Muslims, offering the non-halal food and beverages are meant to satisfy the need of non-Muslim customers (personal communication, Mac 20, 2018). In providing halal services, it is difficult for non-believers to follow the rules set by the Islamic religion even more so when it involves spiritual aspect. Therefore, the provision of such halal service is merely to meet the needs of Muslim customers as well as following the government regulation (e.g., Trade Description Act 2011).

The other aim of the *halal* standard from a Malaysian government perspective is to help ensure the marketability of *halal* products (Hassan, 2013). Without the *halal* certificate or logo, less value is potentially presented by the local providers compared to others countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Singapore. From this perspective, the *halal* certificate has both religious and commercial benefits for providers, including a potential commercial value for marketing services within and outside the country (Abdullah et al., 2016). Yet the results of this study suggested that some of the respondents failed to understand the importance of *halal* certification for competing in local and global markets. This is also potentially reflected in the failure of many accommodation providers to include many elements of *halal* accommodation on their websites.

The respondents expressed that the availability of *halal* foods, direction to kiblah, and a prayer room did not distract non-Muslim customers from using *halal* hospitality providers. Instead, the respondents indicated that the large majority of non-Muslim customers could not be bothered about the *halal* requirements but rather they are more concerned with price and the location of the accommodation. Generally, *halal* foods and

amenities will not harm non-Muslim customers. In fact, for those that are concerned with a healthy diet or food quality (Poniman, Purchase, & Sneddon, 2015), and family oriented customers, might highly value *halal* services.

The respondents also indicated that there is no difference in the hospitality given to customers whether they are Muslim or non-Muslims. However, a few respondents mentioned that they would not welcome any Muslim or non-Muslim customers if they came for *haram* activities. To a few religious providers from small size accommodations that are located in smaller cities, preventing Muslim and non-Muslim customers (e.g., that are perceived to come for *haram* activities) from staying at their accommodation is important in order to safeguard ritual cleanliness.

The respondents from the medium and large size accommodation that were located in the major cities also expected customers to respect *halal* status and not to behave against the rules indicated by the respondents. However, to these respondents, as their customers come from diverse backgrounds and cultures (i.e., local and international), they feel that they have no authority to force the customers to follow Islamic rules and regulations. Instead, reminders were given to customers about the *halal* rules and regulations. This does not necessarily mean they have less religiosity compared to small size respondents; yet, looking at the market coverage and the wider context of hospitality business, these respondents prefer to act in such a way that they continue to survive in the market. In addition, they believe that promoting *halal* hospitality indirectly promotes the goodness of Islam.

Respondents believed that Muslim customers were very concerned as to the violation of *halal* logo/certificate and fraud in product ingredients. A number of papers report that Muslim customers blamed JAKIM for lack of enforcement to curb the unethical conducts among providers (Aziz & Sulaiman, 2014; Kamali, 2011; Nooh et al., 2007; Noordin et al., 2009). Improved enforcement of *halal* certification could help avoid violation or fraud in the production of *halal* products and services (Abdullah et al., 2016, Amin & Aziz, 2015; Zulfakar et al., 2014). Respondents in this study, including those that were *halal* claimant, were also concerned about *halal* products and services.

In this study the respondents stressed the importance of continuous monitoring of *halal* certified providers so as to make sure there is no fraud in the production and the delivery of *halal* hospitality. However, JAKIM only has limited work force to monitor the *halal* certified accommodation and to monitor and supervise the whole operation of *halal* products and services (Abdullah et al., 2016; Ahmad Hidayat & Zulzaidi, 2012; Noor Fiteri & Masnisah, 2015). Instead, JAKIM expects the providers to take the responsibility to confirm that they are compliant to *halal* requirements and cooperation and trust are expected by JAKIM of providers once they have been granted the *halal* certificate. Nevertheless, it is also important to have a traceability system to ensure that no violation of *halal* requirements can occur and cooperation from the government, providers, and customers is needed to stop unethical practices in businesses (Poniman et al., 2015).

The Websites Findings

A website is used to inform customers about a business and the information provided must fulfil the needs of customers (Panagopoulus, Kanellopoulos, Karachanidis, & Konstantinidis, 2011). Although the guidelines for *halal* accommodation and its implementation are already in place (Che Omar et al., 2013), accommodation providers appeared unaware about the lack of *halal* information published on their websites. As in Table 7.4, the most mentioned attributes on the accommodation websites were room decoration, free service and satellite channels. More than 80% of providers highlighted these attributes to describe the comfort, enjoyment and safety when customers use their services. However, in the context of *halal* hospitality, the religious facilities must also be part of the promotion of properties as it could attract Muslim customers to use the service. However, the overwhelming finding was the gap between what is communicated on their website and the lack of influence that these attributes have on the overall rating score of these accommodations on various travel websites.

This study found that the accommodation providers whether *halal* certified or not is insufficiently provided information about the positive *halal* attributes on their websites. Only about 24% of *halal* certified providers in this study published the *halal* certificate/logo on the websites. No providers published the availability of kiblata direction

on the websites, highlighting the gap between religious beliefs and actual business practices. Nevertheless, based on the *halal* certification requirements, the availability of prayer rooms, prayer mats, *halal* food, direction to kiblah, and segregated facilities for different genders, for example, are necessary for customers use. This may mean that the facilities are available but customers are not being informed, even by certified properties. In fact, it is very important for the accommodation providers to promote their services to the target market, as informative websites should positively affect the marketing strategy as well as potentially increase the sales volume (Panagopoulos et al., 2011). This study suggests that the providers might not realize the advantage of publishing the *halal* facilities on their websites. To illustrate, one respondent mentioned about publishing the ‘*halal* foods and drinks only’ on his website and possibly expected potential customers to know all about the *halal* hospitality offered. However, this information is insufficiently informing the many attributes of *halal* hospitality especially the other positive/religious attributes such as a prayer room and direction to kiblah.

“In my website, there is a notice that only *halal* food and drinks can be consumed in the homestay. The Muslims will know and be reassured, and for non-Muslims they will know and respect the way of the Muslim home.”

Respondent L

As Table 7.4 indicates, more than 70% of websites inform the customers about room decoration, free services, satellite/cable TV, security system and the dining outlet. It can be seen that the basic needs of accommodation such as the bed, free services, entertainment, security and food (see Chapter Two) were those that were mostly featured on the websites of providers. Information on free services such as toiletries, drinks, and Wi-Fi are useful to show generosity in giving hospitality (Ariffin et al., 2013; Hemmington, 2007). Moreover, information on restricted entertainment channels for Muslim and family oriented customers can be an alternative offering for hospitality products (Fikri & Tibek, 2014; Shari & Mohd Arifin, 2010). The customer can then use the information to consider the hospitality offering. However, the findings also highlighted that having negative *halal* attributes improved their overall score on various travel websites. This is a contradiction that can be explained by the fact that non-Muslim customers are

also involved in rating of various providers on such travel websites. Therefore, the provision of alcohol on site is seen as a positive contributor to the overall score of an accommodation on, for example, Trip Advisor.

Over 40% accommodation websites publish details on the available facilities and amenities of mini bar/mini fridge/fridge, room service, pool onsite, and serve food on premise. More than 20% accommodation websites publish about onsite gym, spa & sauna, alcohol onsite, entertainment, and recreation/sport facilities. It is advisable if the information shown indicating the segregated facilities for male and female such as in terms of time of use or availability of segregated facilities (Henderson, 2010; Saad et al., 2014). Indication on the availability or the absence of alcoholic drink in the fridge and/or minibar is also important to customers. The absence of alcoholic drinks in the room for example can provide peaceful spiritual means to Muslim customers. However, it must also be acknowledged that information on these attributes on the websites of accommodation providers may not necessarily improve their overall score on various travel websites. In fact, attributes related to commercial interests seem to be far more effective at improving overall score rather than religious attributes. This is not surprising, though, when the customer base for these accommodations are both local and international, and Muslim as well as non-Muslim.

Less than 17% websites display family friendly information, *halal/halal* certified/logo, prayer room & facility, prayer mat availability, vegetarian food, gender segregated facilities, multi-lingual staff, special dietary need, proximity to gambling venues, kibrat direction, Quran, prayer time, dairy free, gluten free, female only floor, being pet friendly and proximity to a 'Red Light' district. Despite their importance in interviews with respondents and the focus of the Malaysian government on promoting Islamic tourism, specifically *halal* attributes were not a significant aspect of website information. Providing information on the *halal* hospitality provision is crucial as to market the services to Muslim tourists (Prayag & Hosany, 2014).

A study by Chen, Chen, Tseng, and Chang (2014) with respect to the use of websites among B&B accommodation providers, many of these providers considered that a website is useful and can be a great marketing tool for the operation of the B&B. However, some information may confuse customers on the service provided (Hoekstra et al., 2015). Information such as on alcoholic drinks, minibar, and bar for example, will confuse Muslim customers if the providers are *halal* certified accommodation. Marzuki (2012) also indicates that the providers expect the entire operation to be *halal* compliant if the accommodation is *halal* certified. However, the need of many accommodation businesses in Malaysia to operate their businesses profitably means that they have to satisfy the needs of both Muslim and non-Muslim customers. Thus, with respect to the provision of positive *halal* attributes and the terms of the *Trade Description Act 2011* it is significant to note that in this study (see Table 7.12), that about 36% of *halal* certified accommodation published the availability of alcohol onsite and more than half displayed the a bar or mini bar service.

A website is useful to convey messages or information to customers (Hashim et al., 2007) because of its ability to display a lot of information in various forms of visual aids and texts. Not only can it potentially reach a wider global market effectively, customers could have well-informed information that caters to their needs (i.e., religious needs). Based on Table 7.13, there were significant relationships between *halal* certified providers to dining outlet onsite, pool onsite, room service, mini bar/fridge, serve food on premise, bar/lounge onsite, gym onsite, alcohol onsite, entertainment, *halal* certificate/logo, prayer room and facility, and Quran availability. To avoid confusion, greater transparency in publishing the information is important, for example, so as to mention that the alcoholic drinks and bar should only be for non-Muslims. In the context of Malaysia as many supermarkets and food outlets, for example, display the sign of ‘non-Muslims only’ or ‘non-*halal*’ for the same purpose (Aziz & Sulaiman, 2014). Providing relevant information on the website give a great impression to the customer thus affecting the purchasing process as well as help boosting the performance of a website (Hoekstra et al., 2015).

Based on outputs presented in Table 7.14 and Table 7.15, it is recommended that *halal* certified accommodation providers in Malaysia to give priority to the three positive attributes for display on the website, *halal* / *halal* certified / *halal* logo, gender segregated

facilities and prayer room and facilities. Consequently, conventional hospitality business could also add these same attributes as part of other information provided to customers. This is due to Muslim customers preference to look at these attributes during travelling that fulfil their need in obtaining Muslim friendly services (Abdullah et al., 2011).

The listing of accommodation at travel websites will potentially increase online traffic and sales volumes (see Chapter Seven). In addition, the reviews provided by customers are important to enhance the image of accommodation businesses. Based on Table 7.16, most of the *halal* accommodation providers were listed on the selected travel websites for this study. Out of seven rating criteria selected (see Chapter Six), only cleanliness, food and value for money related to the *halal* accommodation showed on Table 7.21. This finding revealed that the *halal* accommodation benefited from the criteria reviews provided by travel websites. The reviews although positive or negative based on the perspectives of customers could be used for service improvement. However, the selection of *halal* accommodation criteria may also be based on written comments submitted by customers and has the same characteristics, for example cleanliness, food, and facilities (Battour et al., 2011; Stephenson, 2014). Therefore, providers may find those are the criteria that customers want to know and the criteria become the basis of notification on the website. Collectively, these criteria are also the ones most likely to be needed by most customers.

Based on Table 7.22 and 7.23, the finding suggested that the *halal* certified and the *halal* claimant accommodation providers may perceive the positive, neutral and negative *halal* attributes as important to their hospitality business. The reason suggested there are demands for conventional and *halal* hospitality from Muslim and non-Muslim customers. Formal *halal* hospitality is therefore essentially an alternative service (Samori & Sabtu, 2012) offer to Muslim customers that are concerned by the formal constraints of religious teaching, rather than by Muslim, and other, customers that understand the commercial limitations of *halal* in a multi-cultural and modern society (see also Fischer, 1998; Fischer, 2011, Fischer & Lever, 2016; Hefner, 1997; Rudnyckyj, 2010). Such an understanding may potentially provide insights into the development of improved marketing strategies for those businesses that wish to focus solely on the Muslim market, especially smaller size

accommodation providers, but also shed light on the need to disentangle *halal* hospitality as a social and religious commitment, from the commercial necessities of a globalised economy and a purely “technical” approach to *halal* provision and certification.

8.1 Summary and Conclusion

The findings from this study stress that the understanding of *halal* hospitality covers religious, social and commercial dimensions. Religious belief, spiritual, and personal justification become the key aspects in describing the understanding of *halal* hospitality among the Muslim respondents. Differences in interpretation of *halal* hospitality between the Muslim respondents and the government do exist. Both parties interpret *halal* based on Islamic teaching yet the government rules on *halal* certification are far from an international standard that commercially adds value to Malaysian tourism and hospitality products and services in the global market, no matter how good their intention. Furthermore, 100% *halal* hospitality in terms of religious understanding is extremely difficult to implement from the perspective of Muslim respondents in Malaysia. As the website survey indicates, even many of the accommodation that promote their *halal* certification also promote services that would not usually be regarded as compatible with such certification.

According to respondents, Muslim customers trust the hospitality offered by Muslim providers as being *halal* with or without the *halal* certificate. This reflects the Islamic belief that a Muslim acts according to *halal* rulings in order to gain the blessing from God in their life. In terms of the provision of *halal* hospitality to non-Muslim customers, most respondents perceived that *halal* hospitality provides no harm and is accepted by non-Muslim customers in the context of Malaysia, and may be an alternative for customers that seek family oriented services.

This study also suggests that respondents do note the importance of *halal* certification for providing business opportunities, especially given that it is a requirement for hosting government functions. For large size accommodation, *halal* certification potential provides business opportunities to cater to local and overseas Muslim customers and may be important in order to be competitive in the local and international market. However, other factors such as price, services and location may be as or even more important for many customers.

Many small accommodation operators noted that their failure to obtain *halal* certification was primarily due to the high cost. The small business respondents claimed that they were unable to afford the whole cost involved in complying with the *halal* requirements and were thus reluctant to apply for *halal* certification. In addition, they argued there were limited numbers of *halal* suppliers in Malaysia because of strict certification requirements. Limited access to *halal* suppliers, hospitality providers need to source from other suppliers from other regions and countries with significant additional costs. Therefore, to boost the growth of *halal* supply chains and the hospitality sector, Malaysia needs to develop more *halal* certified suppliers and providers in order to support the local *halal* industry.

There are also issues with *halal* certification noted by respondents such as with providers violating *halal* requirements and the lack of enforcement from the government. Respondents believe that unethical providers take advantage of this lack of enforcement, an issue noted in other studies (Ibrahim & Othman, 2014; Shaari & Ariffin, 2010; Shafie, & Othman, 2006; Zulfakar et al., 2014). The limited numbers of government staff available to monitor compliance to *halal* requirements is also believed to contribute to the violation of *halal* requirements.

The Malaysian government's ambitious policy to promote the *halal* hub globally is part of a plan to increase Malaysian economic growth. Malaysian businesses are encouraged to support the policy and gain its benefits. However, most accommodation websites in this study insufficiently promote *halal* hospitality globally. Insufficient *halal* information is provided on the websites of accommodation providers. The lack of information published on *halal* attributes and the lack of transparency of the mixing of *halal* and *haram* attributes likely creates confusion about and misunderstanding of the *halal* alternative services offer. Accommodation providers could better utilize their websites to market *halal* hospitality effectively to the Muslim customers globally. Linking to popular travel websites is also important to most accommodation providers in this study not only to increase the online traffic and sales volume but also to support the government effort to be the *halal* hub and to increase the country's economic growth.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9 Introduction

This study has explored the concept of *halal* hospitality from the perspective of accommodation providers in Malaysia. The focus of this thesis has been the examination of how the concept of *halal* hospitality is understood, communicated and represented by Malaysian accommodation providers. This has been undertaken via a content analysis of accommodation web sites and interviews with accommodation providers. The interview findings show how the different interpretation of *halal* hospitality affects provider perceptions of the need to obtain *halal* certification for their operations. Some respondents firmly indicate the importance of following Islamic laws in operating their hospitality service as they regard it as a way of life for a Muslim that is intrinsic that all they do, including their business activities. In contrast, some respondents indicate that because their hospitality service is a business that is offered to both Muslim and non-Muslim customers, it cannot be operated strictly as per Islamic rules and regulations. In addition, some providers considered the *halal* requirements set by the Malaysian government as important to protecting customers, especially Muslims, from dishonest business providers, while other providers regard the government's *halal* requirements as being too rigid and hardly fulfilled.

The findings from the content analysis on the accommodation providers' website indicated how the attributes of *halal* hospitality are being communicated on their major online advertising platform. Although a number of providers have *halal* certification, some of them still also promote the availability of alcoholic drinks on their website, a situation which contradicts a significant understanding of what constitutes *halal* hospitality. Potentially, displaying *halal* certification on their website could be meant to attract Muslim customers while having the availability of alcoholic drinks promoted may be to acknowledge to non-Muslim customers that their perceived needs are taken care of too.

Although Malaysia's credibility with respect to *halal* certification is internationally recognized (Noordin et al., 2009), its requirements are nevertheless criticized by some of the accommodation providers interviewed in this study. These providers considered that *halal* certification was not important so long as the providers are Muslims or/and as they are the small size accommodation providers. This perspective may reflect their own interpretation of *halal* in hospitality and their particular understanding of the *halal* hospitality concept based on the principles outlined by JAKIM. The providers' understanding of *halal* certification (Marzuki et al., 2012; Syazwan et al., 2012) partly contributes to their low level of interest in obtaining authorized *halal* certification. Such providers self-claim their *halal* status in providing *halal* hospitality and in informing customers of their service offering.

Providers are not allowed to display the authorised *halal* logo on their restaurants or/and food outlets without an official *halal* certificate (Ab Talib et al., 2015). If there is no logo, many customers will question the *halal* status of the foods provided in commercial accommodation (Mohd Sharif & Lah, 2014; Mohsin et al., 2016). However, respondents often considered that *halal* certification requirements were not easy to comply with. The interviews indicated that a number of accommodation providers considered *halal* certification requirements as burdensome because of the constraints that exist with respect to: capital (i.e., to build the infrastructure according to the requirements); workforce (i.e., difficulty in retaining a Muslim chef); and *halal* suppliers (i.e., to obtain supplies from limited *halal* certified suppliers).

This study adds to knowledge of the provision of *halal* hospitality in Malaysia. The aim of this chapter is to draw conclusions from the findings and discuss the implications of the study for the *halal* hospitality industry, as well as policy-makers and researchers. Finally, the study highlights the limitations and recommendations for further research.

9.1 Overview of Thesis

This study focuses on the understanding of *halal* hospitality from the perspectives of Muslim accommodation providers in Malaysia. For a Muslim, it is important that their business conduct is in accordance with their beliefs. Somehow, differences may exist in the interpretation of *halal* in the commercial context between the individual Muslim provider and the *halal* requirements set by JAKIM. Although many Muslim providers have substantial knowledge about *halal* and provide *halal* food, facilities and amenities, the provision of *halal* services was often not well communicated on their websites. The website content analysis suggests that less religious *halal* attributes were the ones displayed on accommodation providers' websites.

Chapter One describes the concept of hospitality and its importance to *halal* tourism in an Islamic majority country like Malaysia. The Malaysian government's policy to be a global *halal* hub and the active promotion of *halal* tourism targeting Middle Eastern tourists and travellers have positively influenced the increase in numbers of visits of Muslim tourists to the country. However, a lack of understanding of the concept of *halal* hospitality can pose a wide range of negative issues including violation of *halal* requirements, contamination, and fraud. The rejection of *halal* certification by hospitality businesses is also possibly influenced by a lack of understanding of the *halal* hospitality concept. In this chapter, the understanding of *halal* hospitality is discussed in three dimensions: social (religious), technical, and commercial. Three research questions were outlined that this thesis would investigate in relation to *halal* hospitality: accommodation providers' understanding of *halal* hospitality; the social, religious and technical dimensions of providing *halal* hospitality; and the *halal* attributes information concerning the provision of hospitality service that is relayed to customers on the websites of accommodation providers.

Chapter Two describes the development of the hospitality service industry, particularly in relation to globalisation. Increases in both short (tourism) and long-term mobility (migration) has led to the need to supply foods and facilities that caters to a more diverse range of consumer foodways, such as offers of *halal*, kosher, and vegetarian foods.

Such changes also create new challenges for hospitality providers, not only with respect to direct provision of food, but also the way in which different foodways and the religious rules that may be attached to them, affect food preparation, supply chains and the eating experience.

Chapter Three describes *halal* hospitality in Malaysia in terms of common practices of *halal* hospitality service, *halal* certification and requirements, problems and challenges, and business opportunities. There are similarities and differences in the operation of accommodation businesses whether they are *halal* or conventional (Abdullah & Mukhtar, 2014). General attributes, such as cleanliness, staff hospitality and food provision, are common to any hospitality service. However, significant differences exist when the practices involve meeting religious requirements such as ritual cleanliness, Islamic courtesy in hospitality, and *halal* food. In Malaysia, JAKIM sets the rules and regulations as well as oversees *halal* hospitality business implementation and operations. However, the implementation of purely *halal* hospitality as per Islamic teaching is difficult due to the mixing of *halal* and *haram* activities in economic practices, especially in a religious and culturally pluralistic society such as Malaysia. The introduction of *halal* hospitality and associated certification may therefore require efforts to ensure that accommodation providers (both Muslims and non-Muslims) effectively understand religious and commercial aspects of *halal* hospitality practices.

Chapter Four provides an overview of accommodation sector in Malaysia. There are four types of accommodation: hotels (including resorts and apartment hotels), budget hotel, rest house (including guesthouse, hostel, bed and breakfasts, and homestay), and chalet. Accommodation providers face a range of constraints in offering *halal* hospitality. Complying with *halal* requirements can incur additional costs for accommodation providers especially in medium and small size accommodation businesses. Many of these accommodation providers have limitations in terms of capital, facilities and room capacity to comply with *halal* certification requirements. The large size accommodation providers have more to offer yet provide conventional hospitality service with some activities that are not suited to the *halal* certification requirements, such as serving alcohol. Many of the small, medium and large size accommodation providers in Malaysia do provide the key

attributes of *halal* hospitality such as *halal* food and prayer facilities. However, there is little research on the communication of *halal* hospitality attributes online, including the websites of accommodation providers, even for a majority Muslim country like Malaysia. Therefore, this study sought to examine provider understanding of *halal* hospitality both directly and via an examination of what information is given on the provision of *halal* hospitality on their websites.

Chapter Five outlined the methodology and design of the study, and its mixed methods research approach. The location of the study, the target accommodation providers, and their relevance to *halal* hospitality were presented. Two phases of data collection were conducted and the analytical techniques explained, with special focus on the qualitative nature of the interviews and the quantitative aspect of the content analysis. The numbers of respondents and the websites reviewed were also noted. The findings from the interviews were presented in Chapter Six and the findings from the content analysis were presented in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Six describes the results of the interviews. Many larger accommodation providers are *halal* certified with smaller businesses tending to be *halal* claimant. The term supporting *halal* accommodation providers was used in this study to refer to those providers who were not willing to claim themselves as being a *halal* business (*halal* claimant) or a non-*halal* business, although they do provide very limited *halal* requirements such as a prayer mat and direction to kiblah for customers. The understanding of the concept of *halal* hospitality by such providers, may mean that they refuse to claim the business as *halal*. Although Muslim accommodation providers tend to have a clear understanding of religious requirements for *halal* hospitality, some respondents suggest that a 100% *halal* business is difficult to achieve, as it is interpreted as a religious obligation rather than a business activity. Both Muslim and non-Muslim accommodation providers agree on the difficulties involved in following *halal* certification requirements, and compliance to the certification process is regarded as a burden to small size accommodation providers. Although many accommodation providers agree that there is no technical problem in the provision of *halal* hospitality to non-Muslim customers, they

perceive problems existing with respect to different behaviour of Muslim and non-Muslim customers that may go against *halal* hospitality rules and regulations.

Chapter Seven indicates the results of a quantitative content analysis of accommodation providers' websites. Surprisingly, given the push by the Malaysian government to position the country as a *halal* tourism hub, the results show that there were limited *halal* hospitality attributes published on the websites of the accommodation providers studied. Although various attributes have been indicated in the guidelines provided to accommodation providers by MOTOUR and JAKIM, there is still a huge gap in the dissemination of appropriate information on the provision of *halal* hospitality to consumers through provider's websites. This potentially indicates that accommodation providers are either not aware of the importance of promoting their *halal* hospitality services or otherwise may indicate only a limited availability of *halal* services. From a Malaysian government perspective, there would therefore appear to be a need to create awareness (Fernando et al., 2008) on the value of publishing *halal* hospitality attributes on the websites for both *halal* certified and non-*halal* certified accommodation providers for *halal* tourists. Additional findings are also presented in this chapter on the rating criteria of accommodation providers. These rating criteria also reflect the general hospitality attributes that relate to *halal* hospitality.

Chapter Eight discusses the findings of the study. The discussion covers several significant issues include the mixing of *halal* and *haram* sources; ritual cleanliness; awareness and knowledge of *halal* hospitality; accommodation providers' versus the governmental interpretation of *halal* requirements; issues of market orientation; certification and the size of accommodation providers; the difficulties associated with being 100% *halal* in the modern era; and the positioning of *halal* hospitality towards non-Muslims. The discussion emphasizes the importance of displaying the attributes of *halal* hospitality on accommodation providers' websites as well as overall improved communication between stakeholders (government, business and consumers) with respect to *halal* certification, business and consumer needs, and service products.

9.2 Answering the Research Questions

This study aimed to improve understanding of *halal* hospitality and how accommodation providers in Malaysia inform customers on their *halal* services. Although technically oriented *halal* hospitality mainly caters to the needs of Muslim customers that prioritize their religious requirements, differences exist in the understanding of *halal* hospitality from the perspective of accommodation providers, especially with respect to its implementation in commercial practices as well as in the provision of *halal* hospitality to non-Muslim customers in Malaysia. Such issues have emerged in part because of the inherent tensions that exist between personal religious commitment to *halal* hospitality and the formalisation of *halal* in regulations and as a distinct product. These tensions are then played out within the operations of accommodation providers, including both the direct services they provide as well as their communication strategies to consumers. This has also meant that significant differences of opinion exist between the providers and government agencies with respect to the implementation of the *halal* hospitality concept. This section provides an outline of the findings in relation to the research questions of this thesis.

1. What is Malaysian accommodation providers' understanding of the concept of *halal* hospitality?

Most Muslim accommodation providers understand the provision of hospitality within the context of adherence to the teachings of Islam. However, these respondents often have different interpretations about *halal* between their religious understanding and in relation to JAKIM requirements. They understand their responsibility as a Muslim, as well as the need to comply with the instructions laid down by religion. Importantly, respondents emphasise the significance of the trust that should exist between Muslims as they are obligated to take care of each other as per Islamic teaching. The respondents considered that what they are doing is therefore meeting the *halal* rules and regulations as laid out in relevant teachings. Most of them believe that providing food, shelter, and protection is part of their religious obligation and also fulfils their business responsibility. Most Muslim respondents also indicated that following religious rules and regulations is important to avoid punishment in the afterlife. Thus, they have to provide *halal* services and avoid the *haram* activities in

order to achieve this goal. The respondents also viewed that following their religious obligations will also strengthen their religiosity or spirituality. Fundamentally, Muslim respondents believe that the purpose of compliance with religious rules is to be closer to God. Nevertheless, a tension exists between what they see as the trust that should reside with them as good Muslims versus the formalised trust that exists in certification processes and in JAKIM regulations.

From the perspectives of Muslim respondents, *halal* hospitality is seen as causing no harm to non-Muslim customers. They perceive that *halal* foods and beverages provided, for example, can be consumed by non-Muslims for hygienic and health reasons. To some respondents, the facilities and amenities provided to Muslim customers, such as the direction of Kiblah, prayer mat, prayer room, Islamic entertainment, decent attire, and ritual cleanliness were also not regarded as a concern to non-Muslim customers (see Din, 1982; Henderson, 2010; Sahidaet al., 2011). Thus, *halal* hospitality is regarded by some as an option or alternative for both Muslim and non-Muslim customers to choose for hospitality service. Nevertheless, some respondents clearly find it difficult to provide *halal* hospitality services to non-Muslim customers. This is because they believe that non-Muslim customers do not understand the regulations made in accordance with the belief and culture of the Muslim community. Therefore, they see a conflict with the behaviours of some non-Muslim customers and being a *halal* hospitality provider with respect to issues such as the consumption of alcoholic drinks at the premise and the misuse of prayer mats as a foot mat. Respondents felt it was difficult to be a 'pure' *halal* business or to reach 100% *halal* hospitality. The reason is not only because of customer behaviour, but also other factors such business funding (non-Islamic financial principles), facility design (inappropriate features), and entertainment (nightclubs, bars and television services) will also affect the wholesomeness of *halal* hospitality service. Hence, from the perspective of several respondents, having a *halal* certificate does not necessarily mean the hospitality business is 100% *halal*.

The *Trade Description Act 2011* requires all businesses in Malaysia that serve both Muslim and non-Muslim customers to obtain *halal* certification from JAKIM. Some Muslim and non-Muslim respondents considered that compliance to *halal* certification

assisted their business survival. However, respondents from small-scale accommodation businesses were not interested in obtaining *halal* certification as they only operate for a limited time (usually during school holidays). They also do not have many customers. Likewise, for respondents who do not provide food services, they also feel that there is no need to obtain the *halal* certificate given that it is specifically to verify the foods provided are *halal*. The respondents also felt the *halal* requirements set by the government as too rigid and, as such, are a financial burden to them. Some respondents suggest that the government places a high standard for *halal* certification so as to ensure that the country's products and services are at par with international quality standards but that it is a challenge for them to comply with such requirements.

Respondents suggested that there were challenges in complying with the *halal* requirements set by JAKIM. From a personal religious perspective respondents have their own opinions as to when to comply with government *halal* requirements, with several respondents regarding their sense of religious obligation and social responsibility in hospitality being more important in obtaining God's blessing than JAKIM. From a business perspective, significant concerns were expressed as to the supply chain for *halal*. In order to provide certified *halal* services, respondents indicated that they also have to obtain supplies from *halal* certified suppliers. The raw materials and ingredients are the most important aspect of *halal* foods. However, the respondents claimed that there were limited numbers of *halal* suppliers in Malaysia primarily as a result of the cost of certification. Respondents also claimed that some of the overseas *halal* suppliers that are certified in their own country were not recognised as *halal* by JAKIM. Nearly 80% of their suppliers are small and medium sized business operators. The respondents revealed that the inability of small size business operators that supply the hospitality sector to obtain authorised *halal* certification is also a major problem contributing to the lack of recognised *halal* accommodation in Malaysia.

2. What are the social, technical and commercial means by which providers provide *halal* hospitality?

In Islamic hospitality, the main interests of the service offered can be broadly categorised according to their social, religious and technical dimensions. Although these categories overlap they nevertheless provide a useful way of analysing many of the issues associated with *halal* hospitality. Islam requires Muslims to enhance relationships through their religion and to emphasize unity. Therefore, ideally, the social, religious, and technical aspects of *halal* hospitality should be able to be combined in order to convey *halal* hospitality to Muslim and non-Muslim customers alike.

The findings of the qualitative interviews showed that, with respect to social relationships, Muslim respondents felt that it is important to provide good services while recognising they must adhere to the Islamic rules and regulations. The respondents argued that although their business goal is to gain profit they also believe that by giving good customer services and facilities will satisfy customers' needs and contributed to customers' satisfaction. They generally see this goal as being complimentary to *halal* hospitality. Welcoming customers and friendly service can clearly make customers' happy and comfortable staying in accommodation with customer satisfaction being integral to successful business relationships (Han and Jeung, 2013; Kim and Han, 2008). Nevertheless, several respondents believe that such satisfaction is easier with Muslim customers than non-Muslims.

Muslim respondents highlighted that elements such as *halal* food, prayer room, kiblat direction, prayer mat, and *halal* certificate and logo, are important means in providing *halal* hospitality. Muslim respondents also believed that Islamic entertainment and religious activities added value to the religious aspect of *halal* hospitality. In comparison the quantitative content analysis of 32 *halal* attributes potentially listed on accommodation websites found that the most common attributes communicated on the *halal* certified accommodation websites were room, free service, dining out onsite, satellite/cable TV, security system and pool onsite.

With respect to commercial forms of *halal* hospitality, respondents strongly emphasized the provision of *halal* food. Both Muslim and non-Muslim respondents agreed that a *halal* certificate is very useful and important in convincing customers (Abdullah et al., 2012; Al-Harran & Low, 2008; Marzuki et al., 2012a) of the *halal* status of their food as well as to gain financial benefits from being able to host government events (Ibrahim et al., 2012). Other facilities and amenities such as availability of prayer room or prayer place, direction to kiblah, and prayer mat were also regarded as important in promoting and marketing *halal* hospitality. Nevertheless, contradictions between religious and business aspects of *halal* hospitality can be recognised in that although *halal* certified, some providers do promote the availability of alcoholic drinks on their websites. The intention possibly being to provide information on the services offered to both Muslim and non-Muslim customers.

3. How do accommodation providers communicate the social, technical and commercial dimensions of *halal* hospitality on their websites?

Halal hospitality attributes have been identified in a number of studies (Battour et al., 2011; Henderson, 2010; Rosenberge & Choufany, 2009; Saad et al., 2014). More than 30 *halal* attributes were identified in this study and applied to the analysis of accommodation provider web sites, yet the positive *halal* attributes (Razzaq et al., 2016) were generally absent from the web sites. According to Lashley (2008), hospitality emphasizes social relationships through the provision of food, shelter, and protection. The findings of this study found that the most popular attributes communicated on the websites of accommodation providers were room decorations, free service, satellite/cable TV, security systems and a dining outlet available on site, which may provide a more contemporary perspective of what customers are seeking their accommodation experience. Significantly, more than 70% of providers communicated these hospitality attributes on their websites. The results show that accommodation providers are concerned with communicating the social aspect of hospitality i.e. food, shelter and protection but entertainment is also emphasised. The study found that free service was the second most communicated attribute on accommodation websites suggesting that accommodation providers consider that free services can be a great attraction in encouraging customers to use their services, although

given its widespread adoption this may not be that significant point of difference in reality but may reinforce a notion that hospitality is generous.

This study found that the technical or religious aspects of *halal* hospitality attributes such as *halal/halal* certified/*halal* logo, having a prayer room, availability of a *sajada*/prayer mat, gender segregated facilities, *kiblat* direction, Quran, information on prayer time, and a female only floor were infrequently communicated on provider's websites. Among the most commonly communicated attributes are room decoration, free service, satellite / cable TV / TV, security system, and dining outlet on-site. Between 30% - 53% of providers display mini bar / mini fridge / fridge, room service, pool onsite, bar / lounge onsite, serve food on premise, gym onsite, and spa and sauna on their website. Another 20% - 27% providers display alcohol onsite, entertainment, and recreational activities. Gender segregated facilities are only mentioned on 1.9% of accommodation websites, with the display of the Quran, *Kiblat* direction, and prayer mats less than 1% even though these attributes are considered important in the provision of *halal* hospitality (Battour et al., 2011; Henderson, 2010; Rosenberge & Choufany, 2009; Saad, Ali, & Abdel-ati, 2014). It is possible that these attributes are not promoted because they are taken as a given part of hospitality in Malaysia, however this finding was still unexpected, especially given the Malaysian government's promotion of the country as a *halal* tourism destination. Therefore, surprisingly, this study found that there is no significant difference in the communication of *halal* attributes on the websites of accommodation providers between Malaysia, which is a Muslim-majority country, and New Zealand, a country with only a small Muslim population (Razzaq et al., 2016).

The study found that the *halal* certified accommodation providers provide only limited information on positive *halal* hospitality attributes. Of the 144 *halal* certified accommodation websites, only 34 communicated the *halal* sign/certified *halal* certificates and/or logo, 25 displayed they had prayer rooms, eight stated that they had prayer mats available for guests, one had women's floor, and none mentioned they could provide the direction of *Kiblat*. It is possible that providers are not aware of the need to display such information or that they assume that customers do not need such information because Muslim customers would have their own direction of *Kiblat*, access to a prayer room, and a

prayer mat. This latter possibility may also reflect that such providers have been listed in HDM and therefore there is sufficient information here for customers on *halal* services. Overall, the findings show that there are 19 positive and negative *halal* attributes that are commonly communicated on *halal* certified accommodation websites which reflects the likelihood that such *halal* certified properties are serving both Muslim and non-Muslim customers.

9.3 Limitations of the Study

As discussed in Chapter Six, the understanding of *halal* hospitality was limited to Muslim accommodation providers' interpretations only. These accommodation providers broadly shared the same understandings (e.g., permitting what is *halal* and prohibiting what is *haram*) in their hospitality practices. There is no perspective provided on the understanding of *halal* hospitality from non-Muslim respondents as they were reluctant to comment on their religious understanding of a different belief system, although non-Muslim providers admitted that they have limited knowledge on Islamic law that regulate the Muslim way of life.

The problem of unwillingness to participate in the interviews was recognized during the phone calls made to accommodation managers during the invitation to participate in the study. Many invitations made prior to the interview processes were turned down because the potential participants admitted that they had little knowledge on *halal* hospitality and its requirements. The topic was also considered sensitive as it involves Malaysian religious matters that the potential respondents were not keen to comment on even though anonymity was provided. It is interesting to note that not only non-Muslims but also some Muslim accommodation providers gave these same reasons for their unwillingness to participate in the interviews. The sensitivity of discussing religious issues (Henderson, 2016) and uncertainty about the *halal* concept can create confusion and frustration among people (Yusof & Muhammad, 2013). In addition, any discussion on *halal* hospitality also involves opinions on *halal* certification issues and enforcement. Disagreements over the *halal* certification requirements may mean criticizing government policy, an issue which also arose in some interview responses with regard to the

enforcement of *halal* certificate on accommodation providers. The responses showed that some respondents were not happy with the enforcement and regulatory process. These respondents consider that *halal* certification potentially limits their business operations by preventing both Muslims and non-Muslim customers (e.g., those customers that are not willing to follow *halal* restrictions) from using their services. One respondent considered that it is burdensome to restrict what should be worn (e.g., not allowed to wear skirts) and felt that certification was virtually a form of censorship, while the process of obtaining *halal* certification was also regarded as tedious.

I don't think you should enforce this thing. Its enough with our own laws and requirements. You are limiting yourself to so many things. I have my own rules and regulations that I enforce at my accommodation. There are no non-Muslim customers, there is a notice of no beer, no liquor, no pork. We don't want our place to be unclean. I think that is sufficient. I hope there is no further enforcement. It's just like the airline that wanted to be Islamic compliant. Do you not allow people wearing skirts onto the plane? What should you do? Its enough for us to do our own censorship. We have enough of a loss, and I am not happy at all. Do not further limit us.

(Respondent Z)

If the government wants to enforce *halal* requirements, from getting a headache going through the process I prefer terminating the homestay service and renting out the place for long-term renters. For homestays, the government should not enforce *halal* requirements. It is seasonal, and not a full-time service with fixed income. Most of our income [comes] during school holidays, and weekends or when there is an event like a wedding.

(Respondent L)

This study examined the rating criteria used by travel booking websites that may relate to *halal* hospitality generally. However, many homestays/guesthouses/resthouses /hostels and chalets do not have websites and rely on other online marketing tools such as Facebook and blogs to inform customers about their services, or have no online presence at

all. Therefore, the interpretation of online information provided by smaller operations needs to be treated with caution.

9.4 Research Implications

This study offers some practical implications with respect to *halal* hospitality. First, in the Malaysian context, it is very important for providers to improve their understanding of *halal* hospitality and its implications, particularly with respect to certification requirements. Misunderstandings of the concept will affect service processes and customer relationships, while there is a possibility of legal action being taken against hospitality providers if they do not follow government-defined policy and regulation with respect to *halal* accommodation and hospitality. However, a further point that emerges from interviews and from the analysis of accommodation web sites is that a substantial gap exists between many of the religious and socially constructed understandings of what constitutes *halal*, and more technical approaches that reflect official certification processes. In this space there are a number of areas that create uncertainty over what constitutes *halal* accommodation, especially when, for example, it is possible for some properties to also offer alcohol. These issues are also significant given the Malaysian government's desire to promote the country as a *halal* destination. However, as has been discussed above, there is no significant difference between these research findings on website content and those identified in New Zealand (Razzaq et al., 2016), which raises some issues as to the importance of *halal* for hospitality and accommodation providers and its promotion. The huge question is why it is here a gap between the encouragement of *halal* hospitality from the government and the promotion of *halal* hospitality services among providers? Future research is required to ascertain whether it is due to limited provider awareness or lack of knowledge on what should be promoted on *halal* hospitality, or whether *halal* hospitality itself is, in reality, a neglected service from the perspective of providers.

This study provides some insights as to what *halal* attributes could be disseminated to customers on accommodation providers' websites. Accommodation providers could display the key attributes of *halal* hospitality such as prayer room, *halal* food, and direction to kiblah. The idea is to make known about the *halal* offering to those that are looking for

such services. Even those accommodation providers that seek to attract both Muslims and non-Muslims could promote *halal* hospitality attributes further, as for some Muslim customers the most important concerns are the availability of *halal* food and facilities in order for them to perform their religious routines.

Other than the *halal* attributes mentioned, this study highlights the important of conveying additional information for the *halal* market on ritual cleanliness, Islamic funding and insurance, and *zakat* (e.g., charity given to societies, religious school, and religious activities) to promote accommodation business' contribution to the society. The use of Islamic funding for example could create exposure for the *halal* hospitality operation in a wider dimension than only food and facilities. It also indirectly categorises the difference between the *halal* and the conventional hospitality. Accommodation providers should also use Islamic terms for familiarity and consistency in attracting customers of *halal* hospitality services.

9.5 Recommendations for Accommodation Providers and *Halal* Authorities in Malaysia

Halal Hospitality Awareness

This study found that awareness of on the *halal* certification requirements for hospitality services was limited among providers, a finding that reinforces previous research. As noted by Said et al. (2014), knowledge, information and education about *halal* hospitality matters promoted by Malaysian government agencies are still limited among hospitality businesses. Such a situation may be due to a lack of effectiveness in communicating information on the Malaysian government's *halal* requirements to stakeholders, including accommodation providers. In order to increase the understanding of governmental *halal* hospitality requirements, distribution of *halal* related information should be conducted through appropriate media (Rajagopal, Ramanan, Visvanathan, & Satapathy, 2011) and in cooperation with associations such as MHA accommodation, chalets associations, accommodation providers, and consumer associations. Improved use of web sites and social media could also convey *halal* messages more broadly to consumers as well as

potentially reinforce the value of such information to accommodation providers. Accommodation websites, for example, could be hyperlinked to the Crescent Rating and the website of JAKIM for easy customer access to *halal* hospitality information, particularly for international visitors.

Regardless of the promotion of *halal* an awareness and sensitivity to Muslim customers' needs and knowledge of Islamic law and regulation on what is permissible under Islam is essential in offering *halal* hospitality services. Although personal interpretation of *halal* is often different from government interpretation, providers should consider improving their *halal* hospitality businesses to meet certification requirements. In order to cater to the needs of the *halal* industry, it is essential for the providers to understand the principles and to be practicing the *halal* concept as well as having the hands-on knowledge of the needs and demands of the industry involved (Alina et al., 2013). Nevertheless, problems exist from a Malaysian government perspective because of the limited implementation of *halal* hospitality according to the standard set by JAKIM versus individual understanding and the common practices of *halal* hospitality. This is despite the JAKIM *halal* standard following other certification standards such as those for Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practice (GHP) (Said et al., 2014). In addition, respondents noted issues with the *halal* supply chain and recognition of *halal* certification from other countries, which are issues that require government action.

Halal Hospitality Training, Workshop, and Seminar

It is important for management to ensure that employees undertake *halal* certification training and are trained in respect of key principles of the *halal* concept as set out in the *Malaysian Halal Certification Manual*, and ensure implementation of each service delivery process involved (Razalli et al., 2013; Samori & Rahman, 2013; Mohsin et al., 2016). *Halal* hospitality training requires a clear explanation of the compliance issues with respect to the social and religious aspects of *halal*. This is because without a clear comprehension of such requirements and their interpretations in different markets, any understanding of *halal* is incomplete. Contamination problems, for example, can be understood in terms not only of the physical dimensions, but also the spirituality of Islamic believers. Descriptions

of the overall process must cover the religious consequences that need to be understood by providers of *halal* products and services. However, the financial dimensions of *halal* need further analysis and discussion in order to provide broader knowledge of *halal* in relation to the wider religious aspects of hospitality businesses.

Enforcement

With respect to certification compliance, government agencies must enforce codes of conduct and ethical standards on businesses to be effective (Prayag, 2009). Lack of enforcement is regularly debated in many *halal* studies (e.g. Marzuki et al., 2012; Wan Hassan, 2008). A lack of understanding of *halal* hospitality requirements can also contribute to fraud, violation and mixing of *halal* and *haram* attributes in hospitality businesses (Fadzlillah, Che Man, Jamaludin, Ab. Rahman, & Al-Kahtani, 2011). JAKIM must improve the monitoring and implementation processes to make sure certified accommodation providers follow requirements (Abdul et al., 2013). Although the possibility of achieving 100% *halal* is impossible for some accommodation providers, especially the medium and the large size accommodation providers that serve international visitors, providing positive *halal* attributes to cater to the needs of Muslim customers could be the best approach for meeting Islamic religious attributes in hospitality service. Conforming to the most needed *halal* attributes, for example, by providing the prayer mat, kiblah direction, and *halal* foods could be the first step towards providing Muslim friendly hospitality service. Removing non-*halal* activities such as public bars, access to prostitution, and the sharing of rooms by unmarried couples could also help improve the *halal* hospitality business reputation in some Islamic markets, but would, it is acknowledged, not necessarily be welcomed by many non-Muslim guests. However, such issues highlight the importance of marketing positioning for *halal* compliant hotels and accommodation services. Although the economic and financial aspects of *halal* are not as important in *halal* certification as other aspects, providers may be able to obtain *halal* financing from Islamic financial institution to finance their hospitality operation (Shaharuddin et al., 2012).

JAKIM needs to be more serious in *halal* enforcement. Providers will potentially ignore the policies made in the absence of serious enforcement. Providers who commit repeat offenses, can potentially be forced to close down or have a high financial penalty imposed on them. Action by JAKIM' on breaches of *halal* standards will help ensure providers comply with *halal* requirements if they decided to provide *halal* services under the *Trade Description Act 2011*. Better enforcement may affect the number of *halal* suppliers temporarily; yet, those providers that can see the importance of having the *halal* certificate may benefit and positively reinforce the certification process. At the very least, customer cooperation can also help JAKIM oversee providers who do not comply with *halal* requirements by reporting any misconduct of *halal* certified accommodation providers. The conduct of regular monitoring exercises could also increase commitment to *halal* compliance and could increase confidence in the consumption of *halal* products and services (Rezai et al., 2012).

Hospitality providers should also take advantage of the Internet to better promote their *halal* hospitality services, including linking to the HDM website. Informing potential customers about their *halal* services offering will help providers gain exposure and indirectly allowing them to compete in the local market in an Islamic country, where conventional hospitality dominates the hospitality business (Mohsin et al., 2016).

Proactive Use of Online Promotional Tools

Information on *halal* hospitality attributes are important for customers. As noted above, *halal* attributes could be better highlighted on online promotional tools (i.e., websites, blog, and Facebook). In addition, the display of the authorized *halal* certificate on the website may help increase customers' trust in accommodation providers provision of *halal* hospitality to them. Beside TripAdvisor and Agoda.com, accommodation providers can also be listed on CrescentRating.com and Halalbooking.com. These two *halal* travel websites specifically promote *halal* hospitality business in many countries including Malaysia, United Kingdom, and Japan. *Halal* accommodation providers should also take the opportunity to prioritize positive *halal* attributes as well as clearly stating the availability of the segregated facilities such as male or female swimming pools, female

only gym or specific time and day for female and male use of facilities, where such facilities exist.

Improvements in the *halal* certificate application system have been implemented by JAKIM such as by enabling accommodation providers to apply for the *halal* status online (JAKIM, 2017). However, the system is not regarded by respondents as being user friendly and it is difficult for providers to understand the requirements of the online application form. Providing samples of completed forms for different types of *halal* business application, for example, may improve applicants understanding of the requirements.

The Needs of Small Scale Accommodation Providers

More than 90% of Malaysia's economy depends on small-scale businesses (MOF, 2011). Small size businesses from the food and raw material sectors play an important role in providing supplies to many other industries including the hospitality sector. However, small size accommodation businesses have limitations in terms of capital availability in fulfilling *halal* requirements (PEMANDU, 2017). To help ease the burden of small size businesses the Malaysian government have been able to provide micro-loan schemes such as the Tabung Ekonomi Kumpulan Usaha Niaga (TEKUN) that can be approved promptly within a week upon application (MOF, 2011). Therefore, the accommodation providers should be encouraged to apply to the scheme to ensure that the *halal* hospitality services can be developed according to the government's stated goals in the fulfilment of the *halal* certification requirements.

9.6 Further Research

Further studies need to be conducted on the understanding of *halal* hospitality based on the accommodation providers' point of view. Accommodation providers noted the difficulty in achieving 100% *halal*. This is very true for example in avoiding mixing financial sources from *halal* and *haram* elements either from financing bodies or banks. Many banks in Malaysia offer Islamic financing services, however non-Muslim accommodation providers may fund their business using non-*halal* finance, even though they may have *halal*

elements in other aspects of their services, e.g. food. Moreover, before the presence of Islamic bank or financing body in Malaysia, many accommodation providers obtained their financing from conventional banks during the early stage of establishment. Thus, it is also important to investigate the role of Islamic funding like *zakat* as part of ritual cleansing processes to achieve Muslim spiritual purity in *halal* hospitality businesses. It is also important to investigate to what extent a Muslim accommodation provider is willing to reach this degree of *halal* wholesomeness. The level of religiosity, for example, does influence the interest to provide the pure *halal* hospitality business. Although there are constraints in the provision of *halal* hospitality, some respondents are willing to change their entire business management and operations including the staffing, financing, training, religious preaching, and other activities (see interview findings in Chapter Six on what the providers have done) to achieve the highest possible level of *halal* hospitality.

In addition, experience in operating *halal* hospitality businesses for example, may construct ideas on what attributes to offer to customers, either Muslims or non-Muslims. There could be certain levels of commitments that accommodation providers could consider in providing *halal* hospitality, either from the aspect of religion or the government standard or both. It is expected that the longer the accommodation providers are involved in *halal* hospitality business the more providers are willing to provide *halal* hospitality attributes. One of the reasons is possibly the increased understanding of *halal* hospitality requirements. It is also important to investigate the time taken to fulfil the *halal* requirements from the experience of existing accommodation providers as well as the possibility of having different pricing to cover the costs involved (the reason given for *halal* products being more expensive than non-*halal*) and the willingness of customers to pay for the *halal* services.

It is also important to investigate the ethical reasons for providing *halal* hospitality among accommodation businesses, as non-Muslim accommodation providers *halal* may have nothing to do with their own religious belief. An improved understanding of the differences between Muslim and non-Muslim owned accommodation business perspectives in operating *halal* hospitality may also bring further contributions to the *halal* industry (Mohsin et al., 2016).

Further study is required of the complaints of some providers with respect to the difficulties in meeting JAKIM's *halal* hospitality requirements. The views of providers that emphasize the importance of a Muslim's fulfilling the demands of the religious obligation to achieve Allah's revelations are somewhat inconsistent with the refusal to comply with the *halal* requirements standard set by JAKIM. Some providers have the perspective that they understand *halal* appropriately, perceive that they are providing *halal* hospitality, and consider that they do not need to get the recognition from JAKIM to ensure the services offered are *halal*. The Muslim providers perceive that different perspectives on *halal* understanding and practices do not make their services non-*halal* in terms of Islamic teaching. Therefore, *halal* hospitality needs to be understood potentially as a continuum of different degrees of adherence rather than being a black and white situation, which is how it is treated as a certification issue.

The acceptance of *halal* hospitality by travellers also needs further examination. This is because the acceptance of any form of tourism offered is subject to certain interpretations of Islam, the culture of the local community, and the government's intervention in religious and cultural affairs (Ghani, 2016). In the context of Malaysia, elements of *halal* and *haram* can be combined or separated according to the provider's ability to follow Islamic teaching or/and the government regulations. The findings from this study show that some *halal* certified accommodation providers for example do provide alcoholic drinks in separate restaurants or lounges. Battour et al. (2011) suggests the need to isolate *halal* and non-*halal* services in order to meet the demand of Muslim and non-Muslim customers. However, the extent to which this is required or acceptable to different markets.

9.7 Summary and Conclusion

Muslim respondents considered they have a well-versed understanding of the religious aspects of *halal* hospitality as a whole. Muslim respondents believe that *halal* is a way of life and, therefore, all elements in *halal* hospitality such as social relationship and commercial activities must follow religious obligations and requirements. Muslims who are exposed to Islamic teaching from their early childhood are expected to provide *halal*

hospitality with or without *halal* certification. *Halal* certification serves as a guide to indicate compliance to the standards for *halal* hospitality provision set by the government or the *halal* authorized authority for the whole operation of business activities. However, there are differences in the interpretation of *halal* requirements based on accommodation providers' perspectives and government requirements. The accommodation providers' perspectives were based on religious teachings and the government requirements were detailed to the extent of following other certification requirements in business management and operations although they also emphasize the religious particulars for the production of products or in the provision of services.

The accommodation providers are not aware of the importance of publishing the attributes of *halal* hospitality online, even though international customers are both Muslim and non-Muslim and the Malaysian government is promoting *halal* tourism extensively in some international markets. The possession of a *halal* certificate can be advantageous to accommodation providers, publishing the availability of other *halal* hospitality attributes could further increase interest from Muslim customers in using their services. Lack of awareness or knowledge of *halal* hospitality attributes seemingly contributes to less information provided on the websites about the *halal* hospitality provision to customers. Knowing and identifying the key attributes of *halal* hospitality could help providers to inform appropriate *halal* hospitality is attributes to customers. Although the provision of *halal* hospitality is primarily aimed at Muslim customers, information regarding associated elements such as availability of vegetarian food, being family friendly and multi-lingual staff could attract non-Muslim customers to experience *halal* hospitality offerings.

Halal hospitality is an emerging topic of interest in marketing literature due to the significance and growth of the Muslim consumer market (e.g., Abdullah & Mukhtar, 2014; Battour et al., 2011; Mohsin, 2005). This study has provided new insights into the dimensions of *halal* hospitality applied in Malaysia. In doing so it has identified the tensions that exist between related but different understandings of *halal* from religious, social and technical approaches. It has also noted that while some areas, such as *halal* food, are common to all approaches other elements, such as sources of financing, *zakat*, and purity of soul, are not incorporated into certification processes although are significant

religious elements of *halal*. Therefore, this thesis highlights that, unlike previous research, the application of *halal* principles in contemporary hospitality is best understood not as a simple black and white situation but as a complex continuum of religious beliefs with varying degrees of acceptance and implementation by hospitality businesses.

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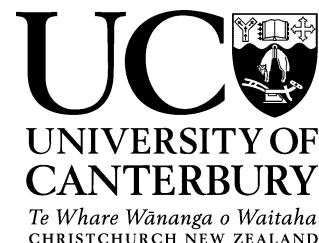
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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Information Sheet

Nor Hidayatun Abdul Razak
PhD Candidate
 Department of Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurship
 University of Canterbury
 Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand
 Email: nor.abdulrazak@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Research:

“Malaysian Accommodation Providers’ Understanding of Halal Hospitality”

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

My name is Nor Hidayatun Abdul Razak and I am a PhD student in the College of Business and Law at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. My research is about understanding the concept of *halal* hospitality among accommodation providers in the hospitality industry of Malaysia.

There are four main research questions for my study:

- a. What is Malaysian hospitality providers’ understanding of the concept of *halal* hospitality?
- b. What is their understanding of the social and the religious dimensions of *halal* hospitality?
- c. What sources are used by hospitality providers to enhance their understanding of *halal*?
- d. What are the relationships, if any, between *halal* hospitality and the provision of hospitality to non-Muslims?

As part of this research, I am collecting data from several categories of accommodation in Malaysia including rest house, homestay, chalet, and hotel. I am contacting you to request your participation in my study. Your participation is voluntary. If you agree to take part in this study, I will contact you for further arrangements. The interview will take about 45 to 60 minutes. With your permission, the interviews will be audio recorded. You can choose to be interviewed either in English or Malay for this study.

Your participation in this research is greatly appreciated. However, if you decide not to participate, there is no disadvantage to you and I appreciate the time taken to consider this invitation. Also, if you agree to participate, you may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

All data generated during this project will be securely stored either through password protection on my computer or locked in my supervisors’ offices. These data will only be accessed by me and my supervisors and will be held for 10 years, and destroyed after that time period.

This research has been approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. The material collected from this project will be treated as confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to

protect your identity in publications of the results. You will have the opportunity to review the interview transcript if you so desire. You will also be able to request feedback on the overall results of the study by contacting me on the email address provided in this information sheet.

I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration in participating in this research study. Please feel free to contact me or my supervisors for any questions.

Contact Person for this Project:

Nor Hidayatun Abdul Razak, *PhD Candidate*

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Appendix B. Consent Form

Nor Hidayatun Abdul Razak
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 Department of Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurship
 University of Canterbury
 Mobile: +64 0220172591
 Email: nor.abdulrazak@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



“Malaysian Accommodation Providers’ Understanding of Halal Hospitality” Consent Form for Research Participants

I have been given a full explanation of this project and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the project.

I understand that participation is voluntary and I must give consent to be able to participate.

I understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time and without penalty.

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and her supervisors.

I understand that any published or reported results will neither identify my name or organization I represented.

I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the University of Canterbury. The data in electronic form will be password protected. All data will be destroyed after ten years.

I agree that my information or opinion in this study will be audio-recorded.

I understand that I am able to receive and request a report on the findings of the study by contacting the researcher at the end of the study (approximately before 31 August 2016) on the email address provided above.

I would like to receive a copy of the result of the project. Yes No

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher or her supervisors.

I understand that I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee at human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz if I have any questions.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

.....
 (Participant Signature)

Name :
 Company :
 Date :

Please mail or email this completed consent form within 30 days after you received it.

University of Canterbury Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand. www.canterbury.ac.nz

Appendix C. Letter of Conduct



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Dear Sir/Madam,

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study on Halal Hospitality

My name is Nor Hidayatun Abdul Razak and I am a PhD student from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. I am conducting a study as part of the requirements for my degree in Doctor of Philosophy. I would like to invite you to participate in my study on Malaysian accommodation providers' understanding of halal hospitality.

The aim of this research is to obtain ideas on hospitality providers' understanding of halal hospitality. The current trend of halal hospitality offering in many hospitality accommodations has triggered my interest in understanding provider's perceptions and opinions on the meaning of halal hospitality. I believe that your experience and know-how of the management and operations of your hospitality accommodation could be a great contribution to my study.

Participation in this study is voluntary and the duration of the interview is about 45-60 minutes. This interview will be recorded for transcribing purpose and will only be reviewed by my supervisors and me. All responses are confidential and I will ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and writing up of the findings of the study. Findings from the analysis will be used in a PhD thesis, journals and conference articles. If you decide to participate in the study, you can request to review the transcripts by sending an email on the address provided in this letter.

You may also request a copy of the findings of the study once my study is completed. If you are willing to participate, please suggest a day and time that suits you and I will do my best to be available. I enclosed the information sheet and consent form for your perusal. Please feel free to contact me at nor.abdulrazak@pg.canterbury.ac.nz or call +64 0220172591 for any questions.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this research study. Your response and time is greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,

Nor Hidayatun Abdul Razak
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 Department of Management, Marketing & Entrepreneurship
 University of Canterbury
 New Zealand
 Email: nor.abdulrazak@pg.canterbury.ac.nz