| Research Article

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Assessing Availability of Muslim-Friendly Services in Hotels/Guesthouses/Inns of Greater Male' Area Using Crescentrating's Faith-Based Needs Model

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Abstract: Attracting more Muslims tourists has been a challenge for Maldives as less than 5% of tourists are from the Middle East segment and this segment consists of most number of Muslim tourists. Maldives being new to the concept of halal tourism, there is less research and studies conducted to find out the gaps and challenges in the practice of halal tourism in the Maldives, and the fact that Maldives has been catering for the European market for over 40 years, makes it difficult for Maldives to attract more Muslim tourists. This paper is a qualitative paper that conducted telephone interviews with 79 hotels in the Greater Male' area. Purpose of this study is to assess the availability of Muslim-friendly services in the hotels, where the services were adapted from the Crescentrating's faith-based needs model which had services important to Muslim tourists; halal food, prayer facilities, water-friendly washrooms, social causes, Ramadhan services, local Muslim experiences and recreation. Data collected showed that halal food was provided from 92% hotels, prayer facilities from 50% hotels, social causes practiced by 42% hotels, and Ramadhan services being provided from 85% of hotels. In addition, water-friendly washrooms, local Muslim experience and recreation according to Islamic values were being provided by all hotels. The practical implication of this paper is recognizing which Muslim-friendly services are most absent from hotels and can be used by Law making bodies in the Maldives to create regulations to increase the Muslim-friendly services being provided in the hotels.
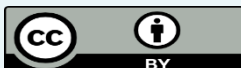
1. Introduction

Muslim travelers recognized globally has gone through significant changes in the recent decade, increasing the annual number of Muslim tourists all over the world from an estimated of 25

million Muslim tourists all over the world to an estimated of 160 million by July 2020, thereby increasing revenue from 45 billion US dollars to 180 billion US dollars by 2020, Muslims has been recorded to travel all over the globe including Islamic and non-Islamic countries (Thomson Reuters, 2020). Crescentrating developed two models to study and rate the Muslim traveler market, Crescentrating access model in 2017 and Crescentrating faith-based needs (2018) and by using Crescentrating access model an index called Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) was developed to study destinations on how accessible are they to the Muslim tourists (Crescentrating, 2020). Annually, using this model destination are assessed by traveling Muslim tourists based on accessibility, ease of communication, ideal of an environment and halal-friendly services available in the destination. As per GMTI index ended 2019, Muslim destination most voted by Muslim travelers was Malaysia while the most voted non-Muslim destination was Singapore. The other model, Crescentrating faith-based needs model can be used to assess a destination for its availability of Muslim-friendly services (Crescentrating, 2020).

Maldives has been a tourism destination known globally for more than 40 years while annually Middle eastern tourists has been traveling to the Maldives for vacation, while Muslim travelers arrive in the Maldives from countries outside Middle East, the numbers are significantly low with less than 5% of the total tourist population being Muslim tourists from Middle East segment (Ministry of Tourism, 2020). While most of the tourists arrive from Europe to Maldives, Middle East segment is the least segment in terms of arrivals annually and until the year 2000, Maldives has been practicing only One-island resort concept, however with the introduction of guesthouses in the greater Male' (Male' ; capital of the Maldives, Hulhumale' and Villimale') area in the early 2000s and introduction of guesthouses to the local islands after 2008, increased tourist inflow by 20% (Ministry of Tourism, 2020) .

The purpose of this paper is to find out the availability of the halal-friendly services in the greater male' area of the Maldives using Crescentrating faith-based needs model and to achieve this, telephone interviews were conducted with all guesthouse and hotels (79) established in the three islands of greater Male' area (Male', Hulhumale' and Villimale').

2. Literature

Crescentrating faith-based needs model was developed for the purpose of recognizing the services most important for Muslim tourists when traveling to destinations and the model has gone through two evolutions while when the model was first developed, most important services for Muslim travelers was halal food, prayer facilities, Ramadhan services, water-friendly washrooms, no non-halal activities and recreational facilities and services with privacy (Crescentrating, 2020). The second evolution to this model recognized three additional services including no Islamophobia, social causes and local Muslim experiences (Crescentrating, 2020). With this evolution, the model identified among these services the services which a Muslim traveler need to have, good to have and nice to have in a destination with halal food, prayer facilities, water-friendly washrooms and no Islamophobia being the services that needs to be present in a destination. Social causes, Ramadhan services and local Muslim experiences were voted good to have but not mandatory and recreational facilities and no non-halal services were voted nice to have (Crescentrating, 2020).

2.1 Halal food

Explained by Xiong and Chia (2024) research proves that halal food is an integral part of tourist satisfaction among Muslim tourists. According to the data in 2014 from MasterCard and Crescent Rating, Muslim travelers are the biggest spenders when it comes to international travel. Muslim travel market is worth 145 trillion dollars in 2014 (Nisa & Sujono, 2017). Therefore, it could became vital for the destinations, businesses and travel-related entities take the need of this market segment into consideration when devising business models and plans. Muslim travelers like any other tourists have same reasons when they go traveling – to explore the different destinations and

experience their unique culture. However, majority of them do not wish to make any compromise with their beliefs in food (Nisa & Sujono, 2017). They have certain requirements and needs when they go traveling such as praying facilities and the food they will eat must be halal. So, the growing number of Muslim population and Muslim travelers around the world can be seen as a chance to develop and spread halal industry worldwide Mannaa (2020). Asia has the largest Muslim population comprising more than 50 per cent of the global total. As such Asia could become one of the largest contributors in spreading the halal industry in the world (Al-Fatih and Esfandiari, 2020). According to 2015 data, more than half of Muslim travelers reside in Asia (EFE, 2016). Ever since the Halal industry has grown enormously (Al-Fatih and Esfandiari, 2020). A recent report, commissioned by the Dubai government, and prepared by Thompson Reuters and DinarStandard, valued the halal food and beverage market at US$1.37 trillion in 2014 (Hidayat & Rafiki, 2016). That represented 18.2 per cent of the total global food and beverage market and was a 6.2 per cent increase over 2013 figures (Hidayat et al., 2021). Bon and Hussain (2010) elaborates that there are minimal studies that pay attention to the relationships and influences of religious beliefs and tourist food consumption patterns yet anthropologists have focussed on food studies, its social meanings and relevancy to society for decades. Bon and Hussain (2010) further highlight that cuisines, food preferences and practices allow people to make connections and explore controversies that are not necessarily about food, but about religion, culture and a wide variety of social milieus and influences. Communities are influenced by religious socialization in relation to food choices and consumption.

2.2 Prayer facilities

Research has shown the direct relationship between prayer facilities and Muslim tourist satisfaction while prayer facilities according to Crescentrating faith-based needs model is one of the mandatory services chosen by Muslim tourists to be present in a destination for a Muslim tourist to travel to (Dabphet, 2021). Prayer facilities does not necessarily mean having a separate room for praying, however location of Qibla (direction where muslim face while praying) in every room, having a prayer mat and copy of quran can make praying easy for a Muslim tourist. In addition, having a notification send to the Muslim tourist via phone informing the tourist about prayer timings also is important for a Muslim tourist to perform the mandatory five prayers a Muslim has to perform everyday (Dabphet, 2021).

According to Rashid et. al (2019), Muslims are required to dutifully perform their religious commitments in everyday life such as the mandatory five prayers daily, at all circumstances and researchers such as Zamani-farahani and Henderson in 2010, stated that daily five prayers is a mandatory duty for all Muslims which is advised in the Quran: "And be steadfast in prayer; practice regular charity; and bow down your heads with those who bow down in worship". While researchers such as Al-Hamarneh and Steiner in 2004 explained that the prayer facility is one of the pivotal facilities for Muslims tourists as the studies they conducted to examine the relationship between prayer facilities and Muslim tourist satisfaction resulted that there is a strong relationship between prayer facilities and Muslim-tourist satisfaction and that tourists are more drawn towards hotels where prayer facilities are available (Rashid et. al, 2019). Other studies conducted to learn the relationship between prayer facilities and Muslim tourist satisfaction by Battour, Ismail and Battor in 2011, revealed that, easy access to places of worship (Masjid or prayer room) and availability of the Quran and the Qiblah direction pointer are highly prioritized tangible attributes for Muslim tourists and later studies conducted in 2015 by Battour, Ismail, Abodeeb, Wilson and Moyle also gave support that prayer facilities are imperative elements in satisfying a Muslim tourist (Rashid et. al, 2019).

Argued by Antoni and Dwita (2020), attributes of Islam represent the availability of norms, values, and practices of Islam that are relevant to the Islamic faith of the Muslims and that it has been found empirically by the study that Islamic attributes such as prayer facilities play a vital

role in satisfying a Muslim tourist. Antoni and Dwita (2020) further elaborate that that Muslim travelers may not choose the destination is there is an absence of the indicators of worship facilities, unavailability of mosque, unavailability of prayer facilities at tourist areas, it is impossible to hear the call of prayer (azan), placement of direction of Qiblah (qibla sticker / direction to Mecca) in the hotel room is absent, a copy of the Qur'an in not available in hotel room and there is unavailability of water-friendly washrooms in all tourist areas. According to research conducted by Deliana (2022) it is found that Islamic attributes, especially prayer facilities are crucial for a Muslim tourist. Deliana (2022) further explained that Islamic attributes of destination are positive, significant and have direct effect on the destination loyalty and tourist satisfaction while there is a very strong direct relationship between Islamic attributes such as prayer facilities and Muslim tourist satisfaction (Antoni and Dwita, 2020). A study explained the relationship between Islamic facilities and tourist satisfaction saying that there is a significant relationship to the satisfaction of tourist visitors (Antoni and Dwita, 2020).

2.3 Ramadhan services

It has been recorded that Muslims travel less during Ramadhan, however tourists who travel for business or education during Ramadhan look for those destinations which has Ramadhan services available which comprise of 3 meals being provided after breaking of fast which is during the Maghrib prayer; late evening (Putra and Tucunan, 2021). Muslims tend to take a light meal during breaking of fast as they have to perform Maghrib prayer and after Ishaa prayer they go for a big meal. The most special meal for a Muslim during Ramadhan is the meal they take before early morning prayer which is around 3am and hotels if are ready to receive Muslim tourists during the month of Ramadhan should be fully aware of these meal changes and be able to provide Muslims these meals during the month of Ramamdhan (Putra and Tucunan, 2021). According to Mandalia and Hidayat (2022), Muslim traveling is very much limited during the month of Ramadhan as everyday of the month, Muslims will be fasting and traveling while fasting can be a challenge for the Muslims, however, some of the Muslims travel during Ramadhan and search for hotels that has Ramadhan services being provided, because according to the study conducted to find the relationship between Muslim tourist satisfaction and Ramadhan services, it is revealed that Muslim tourists prefer hotels where meals and everything is available for Ramadhan, if they are traveling during the month of Ramamdhan.

2.4 Water-friendly washrooms

Having water-friendly washrooms is another service which is very important for a Muslim tourist according to the Crescentrating faith-based needs model. It is also found out that having water-friendly washrooms in not only hotels or resorts but in Airport and public toilets are also imperative for a Muslim tourist as the initial arrival of a Muslim tourist begins in the airport and depending on the route to the hotel/resort, Muslim tourist might have to use public bathrooms as well (Hariani and Anggraeni, 2022). Water-friendly washrooms according to Muslims should have hand-shower beside the toilet as Muslims use water to clean themselves after using the toilet instead of only toilet paper and aspect is important because while a Muslim has to prayer five times daily, ablution before prayer cannot be completed without oneself being clean using water (Muslim and Harun, 2022).

2.5 No-non-halal activities

Among services available in the tourism industry, Muslims consider nightclubs and gambling as non-halal activities as they are activities prohibited in the Islam. In islam, nightclubs traditionally being a gathering of mixed genders with consumption of Alcohol, both strictly prohibited in Islam (Hanafiah et al., 2021). When Mulsim tourists travel to destinations they prefer hotels and resorts which either do not have nightclubs and gambling casinos or which has these located separately in the hotel premises where Muslims can vacation without having to cross these services. Most

preferred by Muslims are hotels and resorts which do not has these services (Hanafiah et al., 2021).

Recreational facilities and services with privacy

Hotels and resorts with common pools, spas and beauty saloons for both genders does not appeal to a Muslim tourist as Muslims want privacy when these services are being provided to them (Putra and Tucunan, 2021). Swimming pools separate for both genders or having a separate pool with each villa, if in a resort ensures the privacy Muslim tourist is seeking when using the swimming pools and spas or beauty saloons having the same segregation with separate spa for male tourists while separate for female tourists ensures privacy. In addition employees in these spas should also be provided in a way. Male masseuse and beauticians provide services to the male tourists while female masseuse provide services for female tourists (Putra and Tucunan, 2021).

2.6 No Islamophobia

With increasing Western strategy of tarnishing the name of Islam by associating Islam to terrorism, has created a wave of Islamophobia in many countries of the world. However, this is only a minority and it is very important for a Muslim to travel to a destination which is fully aware of the religion Islam and one of the main purposes of Islam; peace (Al-Ansi et al., 2022). In addition, the destination has to be tolerant of Muslim culture and values including the way Muslims dress and not to be harassed on the Muslim attire or race (Al-Ansi et al., 2022). While in some parts of the world Muslims were seen as terrorists, in other parts of the world, Muslims have been subjected to violence due to negative perception of a Muslim created in the mind of a local, similarly, New Zealand, being one of the most peaceful countries in the world was shaken due to the gun violence against Muslims in Christchurch and following this incident, Muslim tourist arrivals decreased due to the fact that Muslims did not feel safe traveling as a Muslim (Akamavi et al., 2022).

2.7 Social causes

One of the aspects of Muslim belief is also being conscious of the environment and to do as little as harm to the environment and with the increase in education among Muslims, they are being more and more aware of sustainability of the environment. For a Muslim it is good to have a hotel or resort which promotes environmental sustainability and which adopts green initiatives that gives assurance to the Muslim tourist that there is less harm or no harm to the environment by staying or using the services of the hotel/resort (Crescentrating, 2020).

2.8 Local Muslim experiences

For a Muslim, having to experience the life of locals which are Muslims makes them conscious of the Islamic faith that brought all Muslims together. Being able to visit Islamic heritage sites, being able to socialize or learn the local Muslim life can be important as these increase their knowledge on the life of Mulsims who live in other cultures (Crescentrating, 2020).

3. Methodology

This paper elaborate the faith-based needs model and the various literature on the variables of the model and the paper used a qualitative approach where 79 hotels located in the greater male' area which include of three islands, Male', Hulhumale' and Villimale' were interviewed (telephone) for the collection of data. Telephone interviews were used as it saves time and cost since the researcher does not need to travel to the hotel.

4. Faith-based needs model

Need to have (Mandatory)	Halal food
	Prayer facilities
	Water-friendly washrooms
	No Islamophobia
Good to have	Social causes
	Ramadhan services
	Local Muslim experiences
Nice to have	Recreational spaces with privacy
	No non-halal services

5. Findings and conclusion

Within the Male greater area which comprise of three islands; Male', Hulhumale' and Villimale' has a total of 79 guesthouses and hotels catering for tourists and due to the pandemic 85% of the hotels and guesthouses has been closed down with only 15% operating and data was collected with the remaining 15% of the operating guest houses and hotels. To collect data, telephone interviews was conducted as telephone interviews save cost and time and during a pandemic, it was not safe to conduct face-to-face questions.

Research methodology	
Component	Selection
Research method	Qualitative (using telephone interview)
Justification of telephone interview	Saves time and cost
Type of data	Primary data
Study population	79 guesthouses/inns/hotels in Greater Male' area
Unit of analysis	Organization
Sample size	66 (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970)
Expected Response rate	90% (Ministry of Tourism)
Sampling frame	Available list of hotels/inns/guesthouses (Ministry of tourism, 2020)
Sampling technique	Simple random sampling
Time horizon	Cross-sectional (one time interview)
Study setting	Non-contrived (natural setting)
Researcher interference	Minimal (studying as naturally occur)
Instrument development	Telephone interviews (structured and di-chotomous Interview-Adapted

Interview was structured and base questions on the Crescentrating's faith-based needs model and hotels in Greater Male' area was interviewed to check the availability of the Muslim-friendly services in the hotels and the Muslim-friendly services were derived from Crescentrating's faith-based needs model; halal food, prayer facilities, water-friendly services, social causes, Ramadhan services, local Muslim experiences and recreation. Results of the data collected are shown below:

Service	Percentage of hotels which has the service
Halal food	92%
Prayer facilities	50%
Water-friendly washrooms	100%
Social causes	42%

Ramadhan services	85%
Local Muslim experience	100%
Recreation	100%

According to the data collected, all hotels has water-friendly washrooms, local Muslim experiences and recreation according to the Islamic values for the Muslim tourists, while majority of 92% hotels serve halal food, however, only 50% of the hotels has prayer facilities within the hotel or Qibla (direction Muslim's face when praying) located and prayer times notified to the Muslim guests. In addition, while 85% of hotels cater Muslim tourists during Ramadhan, only 42% carry social causes and carry out environment-friendly social causes. According to Crescentrating's faith-based needs model, the most important to have in a hotel for Muslims are halal food, prayer facilities and water-friendly washrooms where, prayer facilities, only half of the hotels have this service. Not having a prayer facility can be difficult for a Muslim as Muslims are expected to perform mandatory five prayers daily and hence, to increase flow of Muslim tourists, it is very important to have facilities to perform prayers. When all the services are taken into account, the service least provided by the hotels is social causes and social causes according to Crescentrating's faith-based needs model is important after the most important services, because Muslim, according to Crescentrating (2020) are becoming more socially aware and is conscious of the environment, therefore prefer hotels which gear more green initiatives. Therefore, the data collected suggest that hotels in Maldives do need to provide prayer facilities and run more green and social-benefit initiatives in order to attract more Muslim tourists.

Limitations of this study is that due to the pandemic, majority of hotels has been closed and therefore, data from all the hotels were not collected. For future research, this study has not attempted to rate the Muslim-friendly services being provided by the tourists and hence, has not been able to learn how satisfied Muslim tourists are with the services being provided and hence, studies can be conducted to examine the satisfaction level of Muslim tourists pertaining to the Muslim-friendly services being provided in the hotels located in Greater Male' area of Maldives.

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