

Critical Elements of Shariah-Compliant Hotels: A Case Study of Malaysia

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Abstract

The Islamic hospitality industry in Malaysia is experiencing significant growth in line with increasing demand for Shariah-compliant services. This article explores the essential elements required for a Shariah-compliant hotel based on Islamic principles and the needs of Muslim travelers. The study adopts a qualitative approach using document analysis and literature review, supported by selected case studies in Malaysia. Findings reveal that gender segregation, provision of halal food, prohibition of non-Shariah-compliant activities, and staff training based on Islamic values are among the critical elements that must be emphasized. This study offers implications for policymakers, hoteliers, and authorities in enhancing the implementation guidelines for Shariah-compliant hotels in Malaysia.

1. Introduction

Islamic tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors globally, including in Malaysia. The emergence of this tourism segment has attracted Muslim travelers who prioritize Shariah compliance in their travel experiences, particularly in accommodation that adheres to Islamic principles (Henderson, 2010). Malaysia, as a Muslim-majority country with strong governmental policy support, has taken proactive steps to strengthen the Islamic hospitality industry by introducing the concept of Shariah-compliant hotels.

A Shariah-compliant hotel refers to an accommodation premise that operates and delivers services based on Islamic principles and values. This includes the provision of halal food, gender-segregated spaces, prohibition of activities that contradict Islamic teachings, the availability of prayer facilities, as well as the incorporation of Islamic values in staff training and work ethics (Mohd Fadir, 2011; Md Hamzaimi et al., 2015). This concept not only offers assurance to Muslim travelers but also reflects Malaysia's effort to establish itself as a global hub for Islamic tourism.

However, the implementation of this concept faces several challenges. One major issue is the inconsistency in the interpretation and enforcement of Shariah-compliant elements among industry players. A study by Pitra and Albattat (2021) found gaps in the understanding of Shariah-compliance among hotel operators, resulting in inconsistencies in the services provided, which do not fully meet Shariah requirements. These include insufficient prayer facilities, the use of non-halal products, and the lack of specific training for hotel staff.

Additionally, the absence of widely recognized official standards has contributed to confusion among hotel operators. Although guidelines have been issued by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and related agencies, private sector participation in their implementation remains voluntary (Marzuki et al., 2021). This situation affects the consistency in executing the essential elements of Shariah-compliant hotel operations.

Previous studies also show that Muslim travelers in Malaysia place high importance on spiritual comfort during their stay, including the availability of Qiblah direction, prayer facilities, and Islamic reading materials (Rasit, 2016). Therefore, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive examination of the key elements that should be implemented in Shariah-compliant hotel operations—not only from a Shariah perspective but also from the standpoint of customer experience.

In this regard, this article aims to identify and discuss the main elements that should be present in a Shariah-compliant hotel from an Islamic perspective, using Malaysia as a case study. This approach is expected to assist hoteliers, policymakers, and relevant authorities in improving implementation and enhancing the credibility of the Islamic hospitality industry at both national and international levels..

1.1 Definition of Shariah-Compliant Hotel

A Shariah-compliant hotel is an accommodation establishment that comprehensively applies Islamic principles and laws in all aspects of its operations, encompassing management, customer service, facility provisions, as well as financial and administrative policies. This concept goes beyond merely offering halal food and beverages; it involves full compliance with Shariah guidelines, including gender segregation, appropriate staff dress codes, and prohibition of activities that contradict Islamic teachings, such as the serving of alcohol and inappropriate entertainment (JAKIM, 2015; Razalli et al., 2013).

Furthermore, religious facilities such as prayer rooms, copies of the Qur'an, Qiblah direction indicators, and prayer mats provided in guest rooms are considered essential elements that complete the identity of a Shariah-compliant hotel. The approach also emphasizes Islamic values-based staff training and the fostering of employer-employee relationships that are just and in accordance with Shariah law (Md Hamzaimi et al., 2015; Samori et al., 2016). In the Malaysian context, the implementation of Shariah-compliant hotels is seen as a national effort to support the growing Islamic tourism industry and to meet the needs of both domestic and international Muslim travelers.

Although this concept is gaining increased attention, its implementation continues to face challenges such as the lack of comprehensive official standards and inconsistencies in the interpretation of Shariah guidelines by hotel operators (Marzuki et al., 2021). Therefore, the definition of a Shariah-compliant hotel must be understood holistically—not merely in terms of physical compliance, but also in reflecting spiritual values, ethics, and the higher objectives of Shariah (maqasid al-shariah) throughout the hotel's entire operations (Henderson, 2010). Tables

1.2 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study focus to examine the implementation of Shariah-compliant hotel elements in Malaysia from an Islamic perspective. This approach was chosen as it allows researchers to understand phenomena in their real-life context, particularly within the hospitality industry, which involves diverse operational practices and levels of Shariah compliance (Yin, 2018). The study also integrates document analysis, including Shariah-compliant hotel certification guidelines issued by JAKIM, government policies on Islamic tourism, and operational manuals from certified Shariah-compliant hotels.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five informants comprising JAKIM officers, Shariah-compliant hotel managers, and academic experts in Islamic tourism and Shariah management. Informants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that each respondent had relevant experience and expertise in the topic being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interview questions were developed based on main themes derived from previous literature and the framework of Maqasid al-Shariah, encompassing the dimensions of daruriyyat (essentials), hajiyyat (needs), and tahsiniyyat (enhancements).

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying key themes emerging from interview transcripts and related documents. Initial codes were grouped according to Shariah-compliant hotel elements such as halal food compliance, gender segregation, prayer facilities, and Islamic values training for staff. To enhance the reliability and consistency of the findings, data triangulation was also conducted by comparing information from documents, interviews, and existing literature (Patton, 2015). The results of this analysis were then used to outline the critical elements that should be present in a Shariah-compliant hotel from an Islamic perspective in the Malaysian context.

1.3 Literature Review

The development of the Islamic tourism industry has led to the emergence of specialized sub-sectors such as Shariah-compliant hotels, which are gaining increasing attention among researchers and hotel operators. The concept of Shariah-compliant hotels was introduced in response to the growing demand from Muslim travelers seeking accommodation services aligned with religious requirements (Razalli et al., 2013). This includes the

provision of halal food, gender-segregated facilities, and prohibition of non-compliant activities such as the sale of alcohol and excessive entertainment (Samori et al., 2016).

According to Henderson (2010), the concept of Islamic hospitality is not only physical but also spiritual and moral. Truly Shariah-compliant hotels must provide an environment that preserves Islamic values, including appropriate social interactions between staff and guests, and adequate prayer facilities. Previous studies have shown that Muslim guests are more inclined to choose hotels that facilitate acts of worship, such as the provision of Qiblah direction, prayer mats, suraus (prayer rooms), and Islamic reading materials (Rasit, 2016; Battour et al., 2014).

However, studies by Marzuki et al. (2021) and Mohd Fadil (2011) found that the implementation of Shariah-compliant hotels in Malaysia remains incomplete and inconsistent. Key challenges include the lack of an official, standardized guideline that can serve as a common reference for all industry players, high implementation costs, and a shortage of personnel trained in Islamic management principles. Additionally, hotel operators often struggle to obtain formal certification, leading many to adopt the “Islamic-friendly” label without meeting the full criteria for Shariah compliance.

Moreover, several researchers have highlighted the need to strengthen the implementation framework based on Maqasid al-Shariah (higher objectives of Islamic law). The three main dimensions—daruriyyat (essentials), hajiyyat (needs), and tahsiniyyat (enhancements)—can serve as a guide in developing hotel services and management elements. For instance, basic necessities such as halal food and prayer facilities fall under daruriyyat, while elements such as a harmonious atmosphere and Islamic architectural design fall under tahsiniyyat (Md Salleh et al., 2020).

Previous work by Razalli et al. (2013) proposed the development of a comprehensive model for Shariah-compliant hotel implementation, covering not only physical elements but also governance, compliance with Islamic financial systems, and training for employees in understanding Islamic values. Nonetheless, there remains a lack of empirical research that systematically integrates the perspectives of both users and experts to identify the critical elements that should be implemented in Shariah-compliant hotels in Malaysia.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill the existing gap by examining in greater detail the essential elements of Shariah-compliant hotels through document analysis and case studies in Malaysia. This approach not only reinforces the theoretical foundation of Islamic hospitality but also has the potential to serve as a reference for authorities, policymakers, and hotel operators in enhancing the implementation of Shariah-compliant hospitality in a more systematic and holistic manner.

1.4 Important Elements in Shariah-Compliant Hotels

Shariah-compliant hotels function not only as accommodation spaces but also as environments that reflect harmony with Islamic principles. One of the most fundamental elements is the provision of halal food and beverages, which is a basic requirement in fulfilling the needs of Muslim guests. Every food item must be certified halal by an authorized body such as JAKIM, and the kitchen and utensils must be separated from items deemed unlawful or impure (Samori et al., 2016). This not only enhances consumer confidence but also contributes to the hotel’s brand integrity.

The second element is gender segregation, particularly in facilities such as swimming pools, gyms, spas, and prayer areas. This separation provides comfort for Muslim guests to utilize the hotel facilities without fear of violating Islamic boundaries. Hotels such as De Palma Ampang and Raia Hotel have implemented this policy as part of the value-added services of Shariah-compliant hospitality (Razalli et al., 2013). In addition, the availability of prayer facilities is a fundamental requirement. Comfortable suraus, Qibla direction indicators in rooms, prayer mats, and copies of the Qur’an are essential for Muslim guests. A study by Rasit (2016) found that Muslim tourists prioritize such spiritual amenities when choosing accommodation, and their absence may negatively affect guest satisfaction.

The prohibition of non-Shariah-compliant activities is another important component. This includes banning the sale and consumption of alcohol, gambling, and any form of entertainment that contradicts Islamic values. Shariah-compliant hotels also enforce modest dress codes and ensure that television channels are free from immoral content (Marzuki et al., 2021). These measures demonstrate the hotel’s commitment to Islamic values and help build customer trust.

Moreover, the dress code and conduct of hotel staff must reflect Islamic ethics. Female employees are encouraged to dress modestly, and communication between genders should be conducted respectfully and professionally. The integration of Islamic values in human resource management forms part of the effort to strengthen an Islamic work culture in the hospitality sector (Henderson, 2010; Md Hamzaimi et al., 2015). Shariah-compliant financial management also plays a vital role. This includes adhering to fair and non-oppressive employment contracts, ensuring transactions are free from riba (usury), gharar (uncertainty), and other prohibited elements, and collaborating with Islamic financial institutions for asset and liability management. According to Mohd Fadil (2011), applying Shariah principles in financial management improves transparency and fairness in business operations.

Interior design and décor must also conform to Islamic values. Shariah-compliant hotels often feature Islamic architectural elements such as calligraphy, separate family and guest areas, and the use of calming, modest colors. Entertainment such as television and background music must be curated to maintain an Islamic atmosphere (Samori et al., 2016). These features enhance the experience of both Muslim and non-Muslim guests who appreciate a tranquil and ethical environment.

Finally, certification and monitoring by authoritative bodies such as JAKIM are crucial to ensure transparency and uniform standards in implementing Shariah-compliant hotel practices. Without official certification, hotels may struggle to convince guests of their level of compliance. Therefore, collaboration between government agencies, Islamic NGOs, and hotel operators is essential in establishing a sustainable Islamic hospitality ecosystem in Malaysia (Marzuki et al., 2021).

1.5 Challenges in Implementing Shariah-Compliant Hotels in Malaysia

Although the concept of Shariah-compliant hotels is gaining increasing attention in Malaysia, its implementation still faces various challenges that hinder comprehensive and systematic development. One of the main issues is the absence of standardized and comprehensive guidelines that can be universally adopted by all hotel operators. Although JAKIM has issued a guideline for Shariah-compliant hotel certification, its application remains voluntary and is not legally enforced, resulting in varied levels of implementation across the industry (JAKIM, 2015; Marzuki et al., 2021).

In addition, there is a lack of understanding and training among hotel operators and staff regarding Shariah principles. Many hotel managers do not have an Islamic education background; thus, they require specific guidance and training to understand the concept of Maqasid Shariah and its application in daily hotel operations (Razalli et al., 2013). The lack of professional training programs in Islamic hospitality has also contributed to inconsistent implementation across the sector.

Cost and implementation burdens are another limiting factor, especially for budget and smaller hotels. Gender-segregated facilities, prayer spaces, and physical design adjustments require additional expenditure that not all hotel owners can afford. For some, the investment does not provide immediate returns, leading them to adopt the “Muslim-friendly” label without full compliance with Shariah principles (Samori et al., 2016; Battour et al., 2014).

Another challenge is the lack of promotion and awareness among travelers, especially local tourists. Many consumers do not fully understand the differences between conventional hotels, Muslim-friendly hotels, and fully Shariah-compliant hotels. This confusion contributes to limited demand, which in turn reduces the commercial incentive for hoteliers to invest in full Shariah compliance (Henderson, 2010).

The lack of specific government incentives and support also poses a significant barrier to the growth of Shariah-compliant hotels. Fiscal incentives, training grants, or recognition through Islamic tourism awards are still rarely extended to hotels genuinely committed to Shariah compliance. Without strategic support, it becomes difficult for this sector to grow competitively in the mainstream market (Mohd Fadi, 2011).

Additionally, implementation gaps between different states affect the development of this sector. Some states are more proactive in driving the Shariah-compliant hotel industry through collaboration with the State Islamic Religious Council and Islamic tourism agencies, while others lack any formal support mechanisms. This results in uneven development of Shariah-compliant hotels across regions in Malaysia (Marzuki et al., 2021).

Finally, there is a proliferation of confusing labels such as “halal hotel,” “Islamic-friendly hotel,” or “Muslim welcome,” which causes uncertainty among customers. These labels are often not backed by any formal audit or certification process, thus reducing Muslim consumers' trust in the authenticity of Shariah practices implemented by the hotel (Samori et al., 2016).

Therefore, to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of Shariah-compliant hotels in Malaysia, a coordinated effort among government bodies, certification agencies, training institutions, and industry players must be strengthened. A holistic approach encompassing policy, capacity-building, incentives, and consumer awareness is essential to overcoming these existing challenges and expanding the industry sustainably.

1.6 Positive Impacts and Future Potential of Shariah-Compliant Hotels in Malaysia

The implementation of Shariah-compliant hotels in Malaysia has brought numerous positive impacts, not only for Muslim consumers but also for the tourism sector and the hospitality industry as a whole. One of the primary benefits is the increased confidence among Muslim customers towards accommodations that are safe, clean, and aligned with their religious values. Facilities such as halal-certified food, prayer spaces, and alcohol-free environments provide spiritual comfort, thereby enhancing overall customer satisfaction (Battour et al., 2014; Rasit, 2016).

From an economic perspective, Shariah-compliant hotels can generate additional income through the niche market of Islamic tourism, which is rapidly growing globally. According to CrescentRating (2023),

Malaysia ranks among the top destinations in the global Muslim travel index. By offering genuinely Shariah-compliant accommodations, the country has the potential to attract more tourists from West Asia, South Asia, and North Africa—regions where Shariah adherence is valued in all aspects of life.

Additionally, the Shariah-compliant hotel model helps to strengthen Malaysia's image as a global hub for Islamic tourism. This initiative aligns with the Islamic Tourism Strategy and the nation's vision to lead the ethical and values-based tourism sector (ITC, 2021). With the active roles of agencies such as the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) and JAKIM, Shariah-compliant hotels can be integrated into a broader national halal tourism strategy that is competitive and inclusive.

Shariah-compliant hotels also serve as a subtle form of da'wah, particularly for non-Muslim tourists. Experiencing a peaceful, clean, and ethical Islamic environment may offer a positive impression of Islamic values. According to Henderson (2010), Islamic hospitality conveys more than service—it embodies values such as etiquette (adab), justice, and compassion, which can gently influence the perceptions of non-Muslim guests.

Looking to the future, there is significant potential to enhance Shariah-compliant hotels through innovation such as digital halal certification, Muslim-friendly mobile apps, dynamic Shariah-compliance scoring systems, and the integration of smart technologies to enrich user experience. Furthermore, the development of specialized training modules in Islamic hospitality management could reinforce professionalism among hotel operators and staff (Samori et al., 2016).

At the policy level, government support through tax incentives, training grants, and promotional campaigns for Shariah-compliant tourism should be strengthened to encourage more hotels to join the ecosystem. Collaboration between government agencies, universities, and the private sector is also critical in building a sustainable development model based on the values of Maqasid Shariah (Md Salleh et al., 2020).

In conclusion, Shariah-compliant hotels not only promise economic returns, but also offer a platform for building an Islamic work culture, effective da'wah, and the dissemination of Islamic values within the service industry. Its future potential is bright, provided that current challenges are addressed strategically and inclusively with the involvement of all key stakeholders.

1.7 Findings Analysis

By An analysis of official guideline documents, expert interviews, and case studies of hotels identified as Shariah-compliant in Malaysia has revealed six main themes that reflect critical elements in the implementation of Shariah-compliant hotels. These themes were derived using a thematic analysis approach grounded in the framework of Maqasid Shariah and the contemporary needs of Muslim travelers.

The first theme is compliance with halal food and beverage standards. All Shariah-compliant hotels studied demonstrated strong commitment to obtaining halal certification from JAKIM or other recognized authorities. Kitchens, raw material suppliers, and food preparation procedures are regulated in accordance with halal standards. This element is seen as the core component of Shariah implementation in hotels, aligned with the *daruriyyat* (essentials) category (Rasit, 2016; Samori et al., 2016).

The second theme involves the provision of prayer facilities. Almost all participating hotels provide surau (prayer rooms), prayer mats, Qibla direction indicators, and copies of the Qur'an in each guest room. Some hotels also announce prayer times and offer small spaces for religious classes. These provisions highlight the importance of fulfilling the spiritual needs of Muslim guests, distinguishing Shariah-compliant hotels from conventional ones (Md Hamzaimi et al., 2015).

The third theme is gender segregation in facilities. Although not all hotels are able to implement full separation due to existing building design constraints, several have adopted scheduled time slots for men and women to use facilities such as swimming pools and gyms. This reflects a gradual and practical effort toward fulfilling Shariah requirements (Razalli et al., 2013).

The fourth theme is the prohibition of non-Shariah-compliant activities. All studied hotels implement a strict ban on the sale of alcohol, gambling, and entertainment deemed excessive or inappropriate. Television content is also filtered to avoid explicit or violent material. These steps demonstrate a commitment to maintaining a morally safe environment in line with the Islamic principle of *al-amr bil ma'ruf wa nahy 'anil munkar* (promoting good and forbidding evil) (Henderson, 2010).

The fifth theme concerns Islamic staff training and work culture. Findings show that hotel management pays attention to modest staff attire, courteous communication, and engagement in spiritual practices such as daily prayers and *du'a* (supplications). However, formal Shariah-based training remains limited and requires stronger institutional support from Islamic training bodies (Samori et al., 2016).

The sixth theme relates to consumer awareness and certification. Many guests perceive the "Shariah-compliant" label as meaningless without official certification. Thus, hotels endorsed by JAKIM or ITC are more trusted by Muslim consumers than those merely advertising themselves as "Islamic-friendly" without adhering to a standardized framework. This highlights the need for a robust certification and regular audit system (Marzuki et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the findings show that core elements such as halal food, prayer facilities, the prohibition of immoral activities, and Islamic work ethics are key components in the implementation of Shariah-compliant hotels. However, there remains a pressing need for improvements in monitoring, continuous training, and more comprehensive policy support to ensure consistency and effectiveness in implementation.

An analysis of official documents, expert interviews, and case studies of hotels identified as Shariah-compliant in Malaysia revealed six key themes that represent critical elements in the implementation of Shariah-compliant hotels. These themes were derived using thematic analysis based on the framework of Maqasid Shariah and the practical needs of contemporary Muslim travelers.

1. Compliance with Halal Food and Beverage Standards

All hotels examined displayed a strong commitment to sourcing halal-certified food and beverages, with kitchens and raw material suppliers adhering to JAKIM-approved standards. This element is considered foundational to Shariah-compliant operations, classified under *daruriyyat* (essentials).

"All raw materials must have halal certification, and we have a dedicated kitchen to avoid cross-contamination." (Hotel Manager A)

2. Provision of Worship Facilities

Almost all hotels provided *surau* (prayer rooms), Qibla direction indicators, prayer mats, and copies of the Qur'an in each guest room. Some even broadcast prayer times and offer short religious sessions, indicating a strong commitment to fulfilling spiritual needs.

"We ensure the Qibla direction is clear, and each room is equipped with prayer mats and a Qur'an for the guests." (Operations Manager, Hotel B)

3. Gender Segregation in Facilities

Although complete gender separation is not always feasible due to physical infrastructure, several hotels implement time-slot usage for swimming pools or gyms to ensure privacy and comfort, aligning with the category of *hajiyyat* (complementary needs).

"We have specific hours when women can use the gym and pool separately so that guests feel secure and respected." (Facility Supervisor, Hotel C)

4. Prohibition of Non-Shariah-Compliant Activities

All hotels studied have implemented a clear ban on alcohol, gambling, and inappropriate entertainment. Television content is filtered to avoid immoral content, reflecting the principle of *al-amr bil ma'ruf wa nahy 'anil munkar* (promoting good and forbidding evil).

"We've filtered all TV channels in rooms, and alcohol is strictly prohibited in all hotel areas." (Shariah Compliance Officer, Hotel D)

5. Islamic Training and Work Culture

Hotels placed emphasis on Islamic ethics in staff attire, communication, and spiritual practices such as reciting daily prayers. However, most hotels still lack formal training modules specifically focused on Islamic hospitality.

"We teach staff to greet guests with salams and begin the day with du'a, but we still lack a formal Shariah training module." (Human Resource Manager, Hotel E)

6. Customer Awareness and Certification

Many hotel guests still question the authenticity of Shariah-compliance labels. Hotels with official certification from JAKIM or ITC are perceived as more credible than those using the "Islamic-friendly" label without verification.

"Many guests ask, 'Does this hotel have official Shariah certification?' They want something genuine, not just a label." (Marketing Executive, Hotel F).

Overall, the findings show that critical elements such as halal food, prayer facilities, gender considerations, prohibition of haram activities, Islamic staff culture, and trusted certification are central to the implementation of Shariah-compliant hotels. Nonetheless, ongoing improvements in monitoring, structured training, and policy support are necessary to ensure consistency, credibility, and sustainability across the

industry. Here is Table 1.1: Key Themes in Shariah-Compliant Hotel, complete with main themes, brief descriptions, Maqasid Shariah categories, and sample interview quotes.

Table 1. 1: Key Themes in Shariah-Compliant Hotel

MAIN THEME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAQASID SHARIAH CATEGORY	INTERVIEW QUOTE
Halal Compliance	Provision of halal-certified food and beverages; kitchens and suppliers approved by JAKIM.	Daruriyyat	"All raw materials must have halal certification, and we have a dedicated kitchen to avoid cross-contamination." (Hotel Manager A)
Prayer Facilities	Comfortable prayer room, Qibla direction, prayer mat & Qur'an in every room.	Daruriyyat	"We ensure the Qibla direction is clear, and each room is equipped with prayer mats and a Qur'an for the guests." (Operations Manager, Hotel B)
Gender Segregation	Separate use times or gender-based space division for swimming pools & gyms.	Hajiyyat	"We have specific hours when women can use the gym and pool separately so that guests feel secure and respected." (Facility Supervisor, Hotel C)
Prohibition of Non-Shariah Activities	Ban on alcohol, gambling, immoral entertainment; filtered TV channels.	Daruriyyat	"We've filtered all TV channels in rooms, and alcohol is strictly prohibited in all hotel areas." (Shariah Compliance Officer, Hotel D)
Islamic Training & Work Culture	Modest dress code, respectful communication, spiritual practices; Shariah training still limited.	Tahsiniyyat	"We teach staff to greet guests with salams and begin the day with du'a, but we still lack a formal Shariah training module." (HR Manager, Hotel E)
Customer Awareness & Certification	Shariah-compliant label trusted more with official certification like JAKIM/ITC.	Hajiyyat	"Many guests ask, 'Does this hotel have official Shariah certification?' They want something genuine, not just a label." (Marketing Executive, Hotel F)

Table 1.1 outlines six core themes identified from the analysis of expert interviews and official documents related to Shariah-compliant hotel operations in Malaysia. Each theme represents a critical element in the implementation of the Shariah-compliant hotel model, aligned with the principles of Maqasid Shariah. The first theme, Halal Compliance, emphasizes the importance of serving halal-certified food and beverages, including strict monitoring of suppliers and kitchen processes. The second theme, Prayer Facilities, covers the provision of accessible prayer rooms, qibla direction indicators, prayer mats, and copies of the Qur'an—essentials for Muslim guests.

The third theme focuses on Gender Segregation, particularly in facilities such as swimming pools and gyms, often achieved through designated usage times for males and females. The fourth theme, Prohibition of Non-Shariah-Compliant Activities, highlights the hotels' commitment to banning alcohol, gambling, and immoral entertainment content, thus ensuring a morally safe environment. The fifth theme emphasizes Islamic Staff Training and Work Culture, where staff ethics, modest dress, respectful gender interaction, and involvement in spiritual activities are promoted. Lastly, Customer Awareness and Certification addresses the need for formal recognition by authorities such as JAKIM and ITC to enhance consumer trust in the authenticity of Shariah compliance.

Table 1. 2: Thematic Analysis of Shariah-Compliant Hotel Implementation

THEME	SIGNIFICANCE	IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGE
Halal Compliance	Core religious requirement; reflects integrity and trust in hotel services.	Maintaining supply chain integrity; costs of certification.
Prayer Facilities	Supports guests' spiritual well-being and differentiates from conventional hotels.	Space limitations; inconsistent standard across hotels.
Gender Segregation	Promotes modesty and comfort, especially for female guests.	Physical infrastructure constraints in older buildings.
Prohibition of Non-Shariah Activities	Preserves Islamic moral environment and enhances customer confidence.	Balancing guest expectations with strict compliance.
Islamic Training & Work Culture	Shapes ethical behavior; fosters Islamic identity in service culture.	Lack of structured training modules; staffing gaps.
Customer Awareness & Certification	Builds consumer trust and ensures transparency in Shariah compliance.	Low public awareness; voluntary nature of certification.

Table 1.2 provides a thematic analysis for each key theme identified in Table 1.1 by focusing on its significance and associated implementation challenges. For example, halal compliance is not only a religious obligation but also a symbol of trust and credibility in hotel branding. However, challenges include the financial burden of certification and ensuring a halal supply chain. Prayer facilities are vital for meeting guests' spiritual needs, yet many hotels face space limitations, especially in urban areas.

Gender segregation supports customer comfort and Islamic modesty, but its full implementation may be constrained by existing architectural layouts. Prohibiting non-Shariah-compliant activities strengthens the hotel's Islamic image, though it may conflict with mainstream commercial expectations. Meanwhile, fostering an Islamic work culture instills ethical service values but is hindered by the lack of formal training modules. Lastly, customer awareness and proper certification play a key role in building confidence, yet misleading labels without official audits contribute to public confusion.

1.8 Conclusion

Overall, this study emphasizes that the implementation of Shariah-compliant hotels in Malaysia represents a crucial initiative in developing a sustainable and globally competitive Islamic hospitality industry. Key elements such as the provision of halal food, prayer facilities, gender-segregated amenities, prohibition of non-Shariah-compliant activities, value-based Islamic staff training, and official certification serve as foundational pillars in shaping hotel services that are aligned with Islamic legal principles. The execution of these elements not only fulfills the needs of Muslim travelers but also reflects Malaysia's broader efforts to position itself as a global hub for Islamic tourism.

However, several challenges continue to hinder widespread implementation, including the absence of uniform standards, low consumer awareness, financial constraints, and limited governmental incentives. Therefore, a coordinated effort is required among policymakers, certification bodies, Islamic tourism agencies, and hotel operators to design a holistic development model for Shariah-compliant hotels grounded in the principles of Maqasid Shariah.

Looking ahead, the potential for Shariah-compliant hotels in Malaysia is significant, especially if key aspects such as certification, technological innovation, professional training, and strategic promotion are strengthened. This study makes an important contribution by clarifying the critical elements that can serve as a reference for industry practitioners, policymakers, and researchers in building an Islamic hospitality system that not only functions commercially but also contributes to the spiritual and social well-being of the Muslim community as a whole.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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