

Reception of Sharia-Compliant Homestay Accommodations in Sabah: Insights and Implications

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Abstract

The growing prominence of Sharia-compliant tourism in Sabah, Malaysia, presents both opportunities and challenges for the hospitality industry. Understanding tourists' perceptions and preferences for such accommodations is crucial for providing meaningful and compliant experiences. However, limited research has explored this emerging market segment and its impact on the tourism industry. This study aims to investigate tourists' reception of Sharia-compliant homestay accommodations in Sabah. Specifically, it seeks to assess tourists' preferences and acceptance levels, and uncover potential implications for the tourism and hospitality sector. A quantitative research approach, utilizing a descriptive survey design, was employed. A sample of 260 participants, primarily domestic tourists, was selected through random sampling. Data was collected using structured questionnaires consisted of ten items measured on a 5-point Likert scale, covering various aspects of Sharia-compliant accommodations. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and the identification of trends and patterns. The study revealed a high level of acceptance and positive attitudes among tourists toward Sharia-compliant homestay accommodations in Sabah. Tourists prioritize such accommodations due to perceived benefits, safety, and comfort. They generally accept Islamic regulations and policies, provided they do not compromise privacy. However, willingness to pay extra for these services varied among respondents, highlighting the importance of competitive pricing strategies. While the study focused on domestic and

Muslim tourists, the findings offer valuable insights into the potential demand for Sharia-compliant homestays among a broader tourist population. The findings hold several implications for the tourism and hospitality sector in Sabah. They emphasize the importance of maintaining high service quality, including efficient management, cleanliness, halal dining, and prayer facilities, to attract and retain tourists. Additionally, the study suggests the need for diversified pricing strategies to cater to varying budget preferences within the market. This research serves as a foundation for further exploration of Sharia-compliant tourism and its potential contributions to Sabah's tourism industry, making it a valuable resource for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and researchers alike.

Keywords: Reception, Shariah-Compliant, Accommodation, Homestay, Sabah

Introduction

As Malaysia endeavours to establish itself as a prominent global centre for Halal products and services, a collaborative initiative involving Islamic nations, it seeks to encompass various aspects like Halal food, Halal manufacturing, Halal pharmaceuticals, Halal cosmetics, Halal packaging, Halal logistics products, and Halal services from across the globe.

In line with this strategic positioning, the Global Muslim Travel Index (2022) forecasts a return to pre-pandemic 2019 levels of 160 million Muslim traveller arrivals by 2024. This prediction comes on the heels of a significant decline to less than 50 million in 2020 and a further 50% reduction in 2021, underscoring the resilience of the global Muslim travel market. Valued at approximately \$190 billion, this industry holds immense potential. Notably, this index is jointly produced by Mastercard and CrescentRating, a distinguished Singapore-based consultancy specializing in Muslim travel. Although international travel has resumed, the recovery remains fragile and vulnerable to disruptions, such as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, rising fuel prices, and the potential emergence of health threats like monkeypox or new COVID-19 variants. Consequently, the report projects that the pre-pandemic estimate of 230 million arrivals by 2026 will likely not be achieved until 2028, with tourist expenditures estimated at \$225 billion.

The report also identifies emerging trends within the market. Approximately 70% of the estimated two billion Muslims worldwide are under the age of 40, with Generation Z and millennials comprising half of the Muslim population. Notably, women travellers constitute a rapidly growing segment of the market, accounting for approximately 45% of global Muslim arrivals.

Sabah, one of the states in Malaysia is rich in cultural diversity and breath-taking natural beauty, is increasingly becoming a focal point for tourists from around the world. Sabah is also richly blessed with fun adventure, beautiful beaches, and fantastic cuisines for the adventurous taste buds. As the popularity of this destination continues to grow, traditional accommodations like Sharia-compliant homestays are garnering more attention.

The statistics in Figure 1 show a decrease in tourist arrivals to Sabah in 2022. However, Sabah Tourism (2023) reported that from January to July 2023, there has been a significant resurgence in international tourist arrivals by 683.2% (345,436 individuals) and domestic tourists by 8.4% (853,100 individuals). This brings the total number of tourist arrivals from January to July 2023 to 1,198,536 individuals, representing an increase of 69.1%.

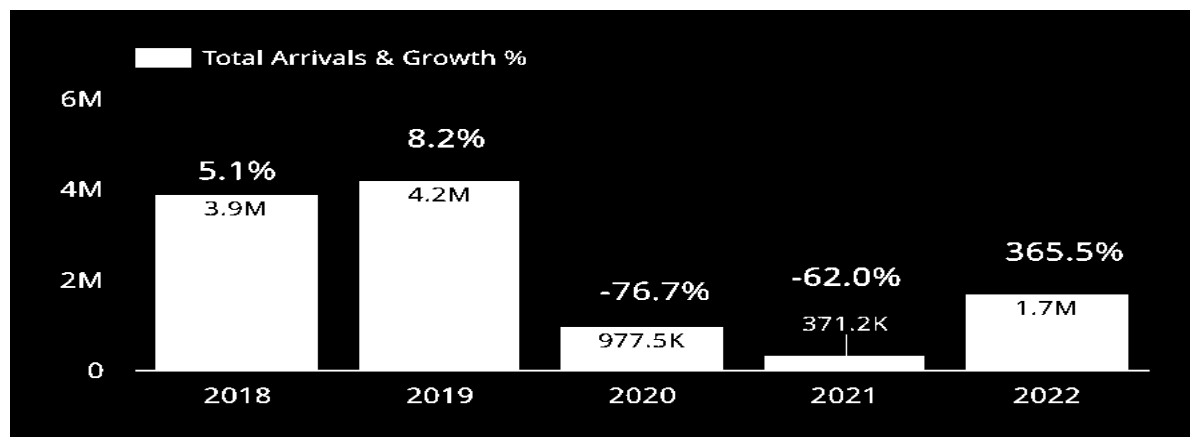


Figure 1: Total Arrivals and Growth of Tourists in Sabah for the year 2018 – 2022

Source: Sabah Tourism (2023)

After reopening its borders to international tourists on April 1, 2022, Malaysia has greeted 400,186 Muslim visitors. These travellers have made a noteworthy contribution of approximately 18%, equivalent to RM1.15 billion (over \$260 million), to the country's tourism revenue.

In order to accommodate Muslim tourists, destinations must ensure they meet specific criteria, including the provision of halal cuisine and the availability of facilities for prayers and other essential services. Hence, it is the aim of this paper to explore the reception of Shariah-compliant accommodations on the tourism industry in Sabah, with a specific focus on tourists' perceptions of homestay service quality and their role in the growing Muslim travel market.

Literature Review

Tourism serves as a vital cornerstone in bolstering a nation's economic revenue. Defined by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism encapsulates the activities of individuals who venture beyond their habitual surroundings for a duration of no more than one year, encompassing pursuits of leisure, business, and various other motivations (Zuliskandar, *et al.*, 2015). From the lens of Islamic thought, the notion of travel finds expression through diverse terminologies, including the traveller, the journey, pilgrimage, tourism (siyahah), umrah, and hajj. Tourism, as delineated, manifests as a multifaceted endeavour, intertwining facets of life and the economy. Its scope transcends mere leisure and recreation, encompassing realms such as business tourism, health tourism, sports tourism, cosmetic tourism, and more (Chris, *et al.*, 1993).

In the Malaysian context, the tourism sector has emerged as the second-largest contributor to the nation's income, a trend that has persisted since the 1990s. To ensure that Malaysia's tourism industry aligns harmoniously with the nation's overall development, the Department of Tourism was established in 1959 (Kamarudin & Ismail, 2012). The Minister of Tourism, Arts, and Culture in Malaysia, proudly announced that Malaysia clinched the top rank in four out of six sectors in the Global Islamic Economy Report (SGIE) 2020/21. Notably, Malaysia was bestowed the accolade of the premier destination for Muslim-friendly tourism (MFT) (Berita Harian, 2020). This success story extends to the Global Muslim Travel Index (2022), where Malaysia has consistently retained its position as the premier Muslim-friendly holiday destination for Muslim travellers since 2015. In light of these accomplishments, the Ministry

of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC) has set a target of 900,000 Muslim tourist arrivals in the country for the current year, following the reopening of national borders on April 1 (Utusan Malaysia, June 24, 2022).

These achievements underscore the profound significance of Islamic Shariah compliance in the context of tourism and hospitality, as illuminated by various scholarly reviews. A compelling study led by Ahmed et al (2021) amplifies the affirmative and substantial influence exerted by Islamic Shariah compliance on service quality and customer satisfaction. This underscores its pivotal role in crafting enriching and gratifying experiences for tourists particularly in the context of homestay.

Homestays are accommodations that follow the concept of a “home away from home,” where tourists can stay with a local family to experience life as a resident. In the context of Sabah, some homestays choose to adhere to Sharia principles. This means they offer accommodations that adhere to Islamic guidelines in the management of lodging and services provided. The option of Sharia-compliant homestays is becoming increasingly important for Muslim tourists seeking accommodations that align with their religious principles. This includes compliance with various aspects such as halal dining, prayer facilities, and Sharia-compliant social etiquette.

Notably, Shariah compliance transcends the boundaries of service quality, serving as a potent indicator in the construction of Islamic governance, a revelation unveiled by Junusi's research in 2012. This revelation suggests that Shariah compliance goes beyond the superficial; it permeates the broader realm of governance, contributing to a comprehensive and robust framework.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Akguc and Rahahleh in 2018 explores into the nexus between Shariah compliance and the augmentation of operational prowess. It is paramount to emphasize that this connection is most pronounced in the case of enterprises that steadfastly uphold their compliance status over an extended period. This discovery underscores the enduring benefits and favourable outcomes that accompany an unwavering commitment to Shariah compliance within the domain of tourism and hospitality.

In the context of Malaysia's thriving tourism sector and its pursuit of distinction as a Muslim-friendly destination, these insights underscore the pivotal role of Shariah compliance. Shariah compliance goes beyond ensuring superior service quality; it also extends its reach to the establishment of robust governance foundations and the attainment of enduring operational excellence. Therefore, understanding to what extent tourists perceive and respond to Shariah-compliant homestay accommodations, particularly in Sabah, becomes crucial. This paper delves into tourists' perceptions and responses, shedding light on the significance of Shariah compliance within the broader tourism landscape.

Methods

This study employs a quantitative research approach, specifically a descriptive survey, to investigate the perception and acceptance of tourists or guests towards Shariah-compliant homestay accommodations in Sabah. The survey method is utilized to assess the extent of

respondents' knowledge about Shariah-compliant accommodation services, particularly in the context of homestays.

The study involves a total of 260 participants, consisting of domestic tourists. The selection of participants is conducted through a simple random sampling technique. According to Kerlinger and Lee (2002), a minimum sample size of 30 individuals is considered acceptable for quantitative research, and the inclusion of 260 respondents in this study ensures an adequate representation of the target population.

Data Collection. The primary data collection instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items, each utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with various statements related to Shariah-compliant accommodation services, with response options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Data is collected through the distribution of survey questionnaires designed using Google Forms. The questionnaires are shared with respondents via the WhatsApp telecommunications platform, chosen as the preferred medium for data collection. This approach offers a convenient and efficient means of obtaining research data, eliminating the need for traditional fieldwork or manual questionnaire completion.

Questionnaire Development. The construction of the survey questionnaire and the question set is adapted and improved based on a prior study conducted by Mohammad Azizol and Mohamad Saifudin (2019) in their research titled 'An Inquiry into the Knowledge, Acceptance, and Constraints of Tourists Regarding Shariah-Compliant Hotel Services in Malaysia.' While this previous study focused on Shariah-compliant hotel services, our research extends its scope to the context of homestay accommodations in Sabah.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study, beginning with an analysis of participants' demographic profiles. Subsequently, it delves into an exploration of the level of acceptance of Shariah-compliant homestays services in Sabah, as revealed through the survey data.

Table 1 illustrates the participants' demographic profile. It provides valuable insights into the composition of the sample population. The participants comprised 92 males (35.4%) and 168 females (64.6%). This distribution suggests a relatively balanced representation of both genders in the study, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of tourist perceptions. In terms of ethnicity, the majority of respondents identified as Sabah Bumiputera (61.5%), followed by Malays (23.1%), and others (15.4%). This distribution reflects the diverse ethnic makeup of Sabah, highlighting its cultural richness. The study also largely involved participants of the Islamic faith, with 230 respondents (88.5%). A smaller proportion identified as Christian (11.5%). This distribution aligns with the dominant religious demographics in Malaysia, particularly in Sabah. Meanwhile, the age distribution reveals that a significant portion of participants falls within the 20-30 years (50.0%), followed by those aged 31-40 years (34.6%), and 41 years and above (15.4%). This distribution underscores the representation of both younger and middle-aged individuals in the sample. As for the occupation, participants' occupations were varied, with the largest group being students (40.8%), followed by those in the private sector (31.5%), government sector (16.2%), unemployed individuals (7.7%), and self-employed individuals (3.8%). This diverse occupational background contributes to a well-

rounded perspective on tourist perceptions. As for the education Level, respondents exhibited diverse educational backgrounds, with 38.5% holding a university degree, 34.6% having a diploma, and 26.9% having completed secondary school. This distribution indicates a mix of educational qualifications within the sample, allowing for comprehensive insights.

In summary, the demographic analysis portrays a diverse and representative sample, encompassing various gender, ethnic, religious, age, occupational, and educational backgrounds. This diversity enhances the robustness and applicability of the study's findings to a broader tourist population visiting Shariah-compliant homestays in Sabah.

Table 1
Participants' Demographic Profile

Attribute	No. of Participants	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	92	35.4 %
Female	168	64.6 %
Ethnic		
Sabah Bumiputera*	160	61.5 %
Malay	60	23.1 %
Others	40	15.4 %
Religion		
Islam	230	88.5 %
Christian	30	11.5 %
Age		
20 - 30 years	130	50.0 %
31 - 40 years	90	34.6 %
41 years old and above	40	15.4 %
Occupation		
Students	106	40.8 %
Private sector	82	31.5 %
Government sector	42	16.2 %
Unemployed	20	7.7 %
Self-employed	10	3.8 %
Education Level		
University degree (Bachelor's degree, Master & PhD)	100	38.5 %
Diploma	90	34.6 %
Secondary School	70	26.9 %

*Sabah son of the soils consisting diverse and multi-ethnicities such as Bajau Samah, Bajau Ubian, Kadazan, Dusun, Kagayan, Bisaya, Bajau Laut and Iranun

Table 2 shows the level of acceptance of shariah-compliant homestay services in Sabah. The provided data represents responses to a survey aimed at understanding tourists' perceptions and acceptance of Shariah-compliant homestay services in Sabah. The findings reveal several key insights into how tourists view these homestays and their related preferences.

Table 2

Level of Acceptance of Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation Services in Sabah

Item	1	2	3	4	5	Mean score	Standard deviation
Prioritizing staying in Shariah-compliant homestays	-	-	50 (19.2%)	100 (38.5%)	110 (42.3%)	4.23 (High)	.75120
Believing in the benefits of Shariah-compliant homestays	-	-	40 (15.4%)	90 (34.6%)	130 (50.0%)	4.34 (High)	.73218
Having no issue if the majority of staff in Shariah-compliant homestays are Muslims	-	-	20 (7.7%)	100 (38.5%)	140 (53.8%)	4.46 (High)	.63555
Believing that staying in Shariah-compliant homestays is safe and comfortable	-	-	30 (11.5%)	90 (34.6%)	140 (53.8%)	4.42 (High)	.69042
Having no issue with Islamic regulations in Shariah-compliant homestays as long as they do not compromise privacy	-	-	20 (7.7%)	70 (26.9%)	170 (65.4%)	4.57 (High)	.63203
Having no issue with policies in Shariah-compliant homestays that prohibit riba (usury)	-	10 (3.8%)	20 (7.7%)	80 (30.8%)	150 (57.7%)	4.42 (High)	.79443
Having no issue with reducing inappropriate entertainment in Shariah-compliant homestays	-	-	30 (11.5%)	80 (30.8%)	150 (57.7%)	4.46 (High)	.69364
Willing to pay extra for Shariah-	10 (3.8%)	10 (3.8%)	80 (30.8%)	60 (23.1%)	100 (38.5%)	3.88 (High)	1.08791

compliant homestays services							
Adhering to etiquette and modest dress when staying in Shariah-compliant homestays	-	-	40 (15.4%)	90 (34.6%)	130 (50.0%)	4.34 (High)	.73218
Having no issue with separating recreational facilities between men and women, including swimming pools, gyms, spas, and others.	-	-	30 (11.5%)	70 (26.9%)	160 (61.5%)	4.50 (High)	.69471

N: 260 respondents

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

A significant majority of respondents appear to highly prioritize staying in Shariah-compliant homestays accommodations. This is evident from the fact that 42.3% of respondents gave the highest rating (5) to the statement indicating a preference for such accommodations, while an additional 38.5% rated it as 4. This strong preference suggests a substantial demand for Shariah-compliant lodging options among tourists visiting Sabah. This finding has significant implications for the hospitality industry in the region. It underscores the potential for growth and investment in Shariah-compliant homestays accommodations to meet the preferences of a discerning market segment.

Moreover, the survey results indicate a widespread belief in the benefits of staying in Shariah-compliant homestays accommodations. Approximately half of the respondents (50%) gave the highest rating (5) to this statement, while 34.6% rated it as 4. This reflects a positive perception among tourists regarding the advantages and merits associated with Shariah-compliant homestay options. Tourists' positive beliefs in these accommodations can influence their decision-making when choosing where to stay, further emphasizing the potential demand for such services.

In terms of staff composition, the survey reveals a high level of acceptance among respondents regarding the religious background of staff in Shariah-compliant accommodations. More than half of the respondents (53.8%) rated their acceptance as the highest (5), indicating that they have no issues if the majority of staff are Muslim. This reflects a welcoming and inclusive attitude towards accommodations that align with Islamic principles. It implies that tourists, regardless of their own faith, are open to experiencing the cultural and religious aspects of Shariah-compliant accommodations.

Furthermore, the data indicates that a significant proportion of respondents perceive staying in Shariah-compliant homestays accommodations as safe and comfortable. Over half of the

respondents (53.8%) gave the highest rating (5) to this statement, while 34.6% rated it as 4. This positive perception is essential for attracting and retaining tourists seeking a secure and enjoyable experience during their stay. It suggests that Shariah-compliant accommodations in Sabah are successfully conveying an image of comfort and safety to potential guests.

The survey also gauged acceptance levels for specific Islamic rules and policies within these accommodations. The results reveal a strong acceptance of various Islamic principles, such as prohibitions on *riba* (usury) and the reduction of inappropriate entertainment. This high level of acceptance aligns with the Shariah compliance standards upheld by these accommodations and indicates that tourists are amenable to these rules.

However, there is some variation in the willingness of tourists to pay more for Shariah-compliant accommodation services. While a notable proportion (38.5%) expressed a willingness to pay a premium, the majority (61.5%) did not indicate such willingness. This suggests that while there is demand for Shariah-compliant accommodations, pricing strategies should be carefully considered to accommodate various budget preferences.

Referring to the data findings regarding the level of acceptance among tourists or guests towards Shariah-compliant accommodation services in Sabah, it is evident that all the presented variables have reached a 'high' level on the scale. The highest recorded response was for the item 'Having no issue with Islamic regulations in Shariah-compliant accommodations as long as they do not compromise privacy,' with a minimum score of 4.57. This indicates that 20 individuals (7.7%) provided a moderate response, 70 individuals (26.9%) agreed, and 170 individuals (65.4%) strongly agreed with this statement.

On the other hand, the item stating that customers or guests are 'willing to pay extra for Shariah-compliant homestays accommodation services' recorded the lowest minimum score among all the items, at 3.88. This means that 10 individuals (3.8%) strongly disagreed and disagreed, 80 individuals (30.8%) were neutral, 60 individuals (23.1%) agreed, and 100 individuals (38.5%) strongly agreed with this statement.

Discussion

The data insights highlight several important aspects of the acceptance of Shariah-compliant accommodation services in Sabah. Firstly, high acceptance overall whereby the data shows that in general, tourists or guests have a high level of acceptance and positive attitudes towards Shariah-compliant homestays accommodation services. This is reflected in the majority of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements related to Shariah compliance.

Secondly, privacy concerns whereby the item related to Islamic regulations not compromising privacy received the highest level of agreement. This suggests that tourists or guests are generally accepting of Islamic rules and practices within the accommodations as long as their privacy is not infringed upon. This is a crucial consideration for Shariah-compliant accommodations in ensuring guest comfort and satisfaction.

Thirdly, cost considerations. On the other hand, the item regarding willingness to pay extra for Shariah-compliant services received mixed responses. While a significant portion of

respondents agreed or strongly agreed, there were also a notable number who were neutral or disagreed. This indicates that cost may be a factor influencing the decision to choose Shariah-compliant accommodations. Further analysis could explore the reasons behind these varying responses, such as the perceived value of the additional services provided.

Fourthly, opportunities for improvement whereby the data provides valuable insights for Shariah-compliant accommodations in Sabah to understand the preferences and concerns of their guests. It suggests that accommodations should prioritize privacy and consider offering competitive pricing strategies to attract a broader range of customers.

It can be concluded that the survey findings suggest that tourists in Sabah have a generally positive reception and acceptance of Shariah-compliant accommodation services. These accommodations are seen as desirable and safe, and tourists are generally accepting of Islamic rules and practices associated with them. Nevertheless, pricing strategies should be tailored to cater to a diverse range of budget preferences within this segment. Overall, the data provides valuable insights for the hospitality industry in Sabah to meet the evolving needs and preferences of tourists, particularly those seeking Shariah-compliant homestays options.

Ensuring a high standard of service quality is paramount when it comes to attracting tourists and providing them with a fulfilling experience. Specifically, for Sharia-compliant homestays in Sabah, the focus on service quality takes on significant importance to guarantee that tourists enjoy a meaningful stay. Several key aspects of service quality warrant attention.

Firstly, it is essential to emphasize the need for professional management in Sharia-compliant homestays, where efficient and courteous handling of homestays matters is crucial. This entails offering friendly and helpful guest reception services. Additionally, the quality of facilities and cleanliness plays a pivotal role. Comfortable and impeccably clean homestay facilities, encompassing cosy bedrooms, spotless bathrooms, and well-stocked essential amenities, are imperative to ensure that tourists experience a high level of comfort. Furthermore, adhering to Sharia principles necessitates the provision of halal dining options. This involves ensuring that all food served (if provided) is prepared in an environment completely free from non-compliant ingredients, thus upholding the dietary requirements of Muslim guests.

Equally important is the provision of dedicated prayer spaces, recognizing the significance of these facilities to Muslim tourists. Sharia-compliant homestays must offer suitable and hygienic areas for prayer to cater to the religious needs of their guests. Lastly, enhancing tourists' experiences by offering cultural and religious activities can be a valuable addition. This may encompass opportunities for guests to immerse themselves in local culture, witness captivating art performances, and engage in enlightening religious lectures, all of which contribute to a richer and more meaningful stay. By giving diligent attention to these aspects of service quality, Sharia-compliant homestays can ensure that tourists have not only a comfortable stay but also a deeply enriching and memorable experience that aligns with their cultural and religious preferences.

Overall, tourists' reception to Sharia-compliant homestays in Sabah is positive. This is because tourists, especially those who practice Islam, feel comfortable and confident that they can

have an accommodation that adheres to their religious principles. Furthermore, the high-quality experiences provided by Sharia-compliant homestays have a positive impact on their stays. Tourists also appreciate the cultural aspects offered by Sharia-compliant homestays. This provides them with an opportunity to better understand the local culture and the religious values practiced by Sabah's communities.

Significant of Study

The motivation behind this study is to explore the implementation of Shariah-compliant homestays in Malaysia and its potential to enhance the attractiveness of the Islamic tourism industry. The study aims to provide significant insights into the need for the implementation of Shariah-compliant homestays in the country's tourism industry, which has been rapidly growing in recent years. The Islamic tourism industry is a significant contributor to Malaysia's economy, and the country is known for its rich Islamic culture and heritage. However, there is still a lack of Shariah-compliant accommodations that cater to the needs of Muslim travelers.

This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the implementation of Shariah-compliant homestays and their potential to attract more Muslim tourists to Malaysia. The study also aims to highlight the potential benefits of Shariah-compliant homestays, such as promoting a positive image of Islam, providing halal-friendly facilities, and creating a welcoming environment for Muslim travelers. By doing so, the study hopes to contribute to the development of the Islamic tourism industry in Malaysia and enhance the country's competitiveness in the global tourism market. Overall, this study is significant as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of Shariah-compliant homestays in Malaysia and their potential to attract Muslim tourists. The findings of this study can inform policymakers, industry players, and stakeholders in their efforts to promote the Islamic tourism industry in Malaysia and beyond.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the reception of Sharia-compliant homestay accommodations in Sabah within the broader context of the tourism industry. The findings suggest that these accommodations have garnered a positive reception among tourists. High levels of acceptance and preferences for Sharia-compliant homestay options are indicative of a growing demand for accommodations that align with religious principles. However, several factors need to be considered when interpreting the results.

The positive reception is evident in the strong preference expressed by a substantial majority of respondents for staying in Sharia-compliant homestays. This preference underscores the importance of these accommodations in meeting the needs and preferences of Muslim tourists and highlights their potential for growth and investment. Tourists' willingness to embrace Islamic rules and practices within these accommodations, provided they do not infringe upon privacy, further demonstrates the inclusivity and acceptance that tourists hold. It reflects a welcoming attitude towards experiencing cultural and religious aspects during their stay, regardless of their own faith. Nevertheless, the study also reveals that pricing strategies should be carefully considered. While a notable portion of respondents expressed a willingness to pay extra for Sharia-compliant services, a majority did not indicate such willingness. This suggests that pricing strategies should be flexible to accommodate a diverse range of budget preferences within this segment.

In conclusion, Sharia-compliant homestay accommodations in Sabah, Malaysia particularly hold promise in catering to a discerning market segment seeking meaningful and culturally rich homestay experiences. By maintaining high service quality, emphasizing privacy, and considering pricing strategies, these accommodations can continue to thrive and contribute to Sabah's reputation as a welcoming and inclusive tourist destination. Although this study offers valuable insights into the reception of Sharia-compliant homestay accommodations in Sabah, but several limitations should be noted. Firstly, the study's geographic focus on Sabah may limit the direct applicability of findings to other regions with different dynamics. Secondly, the sample primarily consisted of domestic and Muslim tourists, potentially restricting broader generalization. The use of structured questionnaires on WhatsApp could introduce selection bias, and reliance on self-reported data may involve social desirability bias.

Additionally, the absence of a comparative analysis with non-Sharia-compliant alternatives and limited incorporation of direct guest feedback may offer room for further exploration. Lastly, a more in-depth examination of pricing strategies and cost structures within the industry could provide a deeper market understanding. Future research endeavours could address these limitations by expanding the scope, diversifying the sample, and incorporating more qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding. Additionally, further research and industry collaboration can facilitate the ongoing development of Sharia-compliant accommodations, ensuring they meet the evolving needs and preferences of tourists worldwide.

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