THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SOCIAL CONSERVATISM AND PREFERENCE FOR SHARIAH-COMPLIANT HOTELS

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Abstract - The number of tourists who seeks for Shariah-compliant hotel is increasing rapidly over these few current years. In order to effectively tap into this emerging lucrative market, hoteliers need to fully understand what are the determinant factors in the decision-making process. This present article intends to shed some lights on the empirical relationships between the aspect of social conservatism and the preference for shariah-compliant hotels in the context of Malaysia. This study involving 450 respondents found that both, core attributes as well as the peripheral attributes of shariah-compliant hotels are positively related to social conservatism.

Keywords - Hotel Marketing, Shariah-Compliant Hotels, Social Conservatism

I. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a multiracial country which comprised of 29,179,952 million populations as of July 2012. Islam, being the most widely professed religion in Malaysia with proportion of 61.3 per cent and other religions embraced were Buddhism with 19.8 percent, Christianity with 9.2 percent and Hinduism 6.3 percent (Census, 2010). In recent years, we realized that there is a growing interest and demands in a new tourism concept such as 'Islamic tourism' or 'Halal hospitality' which has been recognized by many particularly in Middle East countries.

It is noted that since the case of 11 September 2000, the number of tourist from Middle East to western countries has drastically dropped, whereby the demands shift towards other Muslim country such as Malaysia which then make it becoming increasingly popular destination for Muslim tourists (Henderson, 2003). According to News Straits Times & The Star (2013), a study by Singapore-based Muslim travel consultancy; Crescentrating has rated Malaysia as the world's top Muslim-friendly holiday destination and listed Egypt, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Singapore as runners-up. Same finding were also suggested by DinarStandard; the leading survey institute for Muslim travel market. The ranking was based on how well they catered to the growing number of Muslim holidaymakers seeking Halal or Islam-compliant in context of foods and services. Few of the criteria that made them to choose Malaysia over the other countries includes the level of safety, the ease of access to halal food and prayer facilities and whether hotels catered to the needs of Muslim guests. On a scale of one to 10, in which 10 is the best score, Malaysia came out number one with a grade of 8.3 among 50 nations surveyed.Soon by the year of 2020, growth in travel by Muslims is expected to touch 4.8%, significantly higher than the global figure of only 3.8%. According to survey conducted by Reem El Shafaki; a senior associates of DinarStandard, Muslims will account for about 14 percent of all international trip. Asked what was most important for them at their holiday destination, 67% responded agreed that halal food and cooking were the most important, while 53% said the second most important factor was the overall price of the trip.

Chief executive of Messe Berlin; a leading German expert on international tourism described Malaysia as a fascinating tourism destination; built up with a modern infrastructure along with cultural diversity, good sports and medical facilities, besides being an important Asean member country. Given its growing interaction with the global industry and business, Malaysia can also be an interesting destination for the business traveler and could attract greater tourist arrivals in the future.

The number of tourists who seeks for Shariah-compliant hotel is increasing rapidly over these few current years. However, Malaysia is still behind in providing the suitable facilities to accommodate the needs. There are also very few research available that dedicated their study towards Shariah-compliant hotel; neither internationally nor nationally. However for some, the context of Shariah-compliant hotel might be still new, thus there is an urge to take this context into a big picture.

The general objective of this study is to examine the significant relationship between strictness attributes of Shariah-compliance hotel and social conservatism in Malaysian context. Recognizing the supremacy of tourism industry as a driver of economic activity whereby it could contribute towards the growth and development of country's economy, this study makes a significant contribution to the hotel industry in promoting Malaysia for Islamic tourism; taking advantages of its largely populated Muslim population by examined the core attributes and peripherals of Shariah-compliant hotel. This study examined the effects of social conservatism on Shariah-compliant hotel attributes.

The study is based on the Shariah-compliant hotel concept. The context of this study is to examine how much social conservatism affect the choice of

Malaysian consumers towards Shariah-compliant hotels and to find out their preference which involved a nation-wide sample of both Muslim and non-Muslim people. Research data collection was done through printed questionnaires which is created based on the proposed conceptual framework.

II. RESEARCH ISSUES

The significant size of Muslim consumer and the growing demand by the Muslim travelers around the world make the concept of Islamic hotel to be welcomed. With the world's Muslim population todays is at around 1.8 billion and rising, this figure alone can make few in the business to turn their back on such huge demographic. Since more than 50 percent of Muslims worldwide are under the age of 25 years old and together account for more than 10 percent of the world's population, the prospects for future look remarkably bright. Perhaps the single most important factor that lies behind the powerful growth of Shariah-compliant hotel is due to the fact that Muslims represent about a quarter of the world's population. According to Shelina Janmohamed; a senior strategist with Ogilvy Noor, part of Ogilvy & Mather, an international advertising agency, it is believed that the new generation of Muslim consumers – those she called "the futurists", are more confident about their preferences and ready to express this confidence. Moreover, today's consumers are keener about the value that a brand embodies, particularly in compliance towards Shariah principles. To some extent, the acceptance of Shariah-compliant hotels among Muslim consumers itself are yet to be discovered. The big question is how does we measure consumer's acceptance towards strictness of Shariah-compliant hotel's attributes? What factors affect Malaysian consumer's preferences in choosing a Shariah-compliant hotel?
Social conservatism; is one of the factors that might affecting the preferences of Malaysian consumers towards Shariah-compliant hotels. Based on Ray and Wilson's conceptual idea on social conservatism, we aim to understand how conservative are Malaysian at the present time on social issues? We also aim to determine is it any difference between Muslim and non-Muslim people in their degree of conservatism and acceptance towards the strictness attributes of Shariah-compliant hotels.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Shariah-compliant Hotel

Shariah literally means a road to a source of water or a straight path to be followed. Technically, Shariah term was defined by al-Qurtubi as the canon of Islamic law; all the different commandments of Allah to mankind (Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an, 16:10). Thus, the term Shariah-compliant can be broadly defined as an activity that is in line with Islamic law. Shariah-compliant hotels refer to hotel that run and operated on Islamic principles, which means they are alcohol-free, serve halal food, and provide a percentage of their profit to charity. The Shariah-compliant hotels, much like Islamic finance, touches on the 'Islamicity' of the offering (Siddiqui 2011).

According to Rosenberg (2009), in order for a hotel to be fully Shariah-compliant, it is extremely important that most of the facilities such as floors, spa, gym, guest room and function room be separated for males and females. This is significantly important things to note at the development stage when designing floor plans of the hotel. Beds and toilets also should note be placed in the direction of Mecca. In terms of food and beverages, neither pork nor alcohol should be served in the hotel. The served food products have to be halal; that is, slaughtered in the name of Allah. The hotel development and operations should be financed through Islamic financial funding in order to fully respect the principle of Shariah concept.

However, we must not be confused between 'dry' hotels with those that are fully Shariah-compliant. It is shown from the investigation that the overuse of the term has created such confusion among them. Many brands described as Shariah-compliant upon launching of their properties have altered their claims and now consider themselves to be purely alcohol-free or 'dry' hotels.

We could see that there is a growing trend of Shariah-compliant products. First, there was Sharia-compliant banking. Now, apparently the demand for Shariah-compliant hotels is the next big thing. According to an article in Emirates Business 24/7, there is an increase demand for fully Shariah-compliant hotels from Muslim business travellers, in line with their growing purchasing power. A Shariah-compliant hotel is more than just not serving beverages and non-halal food, though these are two important aspects of being Shariah-compliant. If the hotel has to be Shariah-compliant, then the concept should be implemented right through. As far as the formation Shariah-compliant hotels are concerned, it can be defined as a hotel that provides services in accordance to the Shariah principles whereby it is not only limited to serve halal food and drink, it is more than that. This is to ensure the entire operation throughout the hotel would also operate in accordance with the Shariah principles (Samori & Abd. Rahman 2013).

According to Mohd Fadil and Mohd Zulkifli (2013), shariah-compliant hotels must follow the overall Islamic values which begins from the sources of capital to their daily operation. The Shariah-compliant hotels are guided by the Islamic law, the

precepts by which are founded upon the Quran, the Sunnah and Fiqh. In their study, they focused on investigating the major attributes of Shariah-compliant hotels based on available literature and secondary data.

The concept of Shariah-compliant hotels also was a center of interest for Okasha Qutaiba. In his research paper titled "Shariah Compliance Hotel: A Framework for Destination Selection Applied on Kuwait and UK", he described Shariah-compliance as the classic revival of a few hundred year old tradition of living the Islamic way. In other words, the implied concept of Shariah-compliant in hotel industry should refer to delivery of services that was in line with Islamic way. The main objective in his research is to test whether the developed framework specifically designed for Sharia Compliance Hotels (SCH) will provide adequate results for selecting a Sharia Compliance Hotels destination within a specific country. It is proved that from the study, the awareness level of SCH is weak among travellers; also there was no international standard that constitutes a SCH. In addition they also have demonstrated that there is an increasing demand for SCH within non- Muslim countries that travelers favor whether they were Muslims or non-Muslims.

In Malaysia, the opportunity of hotels to provide some facilities and activities that were in line with the Islamic values has come into existence. For example, today we could see some hotels promoting halal food, organizing Bazaar Ramadan, Ramadan buffet and prayer room to perform tarawikh prayer. It is pertinent to note that Muslim tourists are increasingly sensitive and demanding for access in obtaining hotels that suit their lifestyles.

Social Conservatism

Ray (1974) defines conservatism as a cynical or hardened view of humanity. The definition that stands out most in the Oxford Dictionary is referring to preference or rejection of innovation and new things. Commonly, the liberal prefers the new, meanwhile a conservative prefer the old. John Stuart Mill once quoted as saying, "A liberal is he who look forward for his principles of government; the Tory look backward". This explains why the radicalism of today becomes the conservative of tomorrow; in which their belief has become accepted and ceased to be an innovation that will be no longer debated and will eventually defended by conservatives. Thus, we can conclude that social conservatism refers to the rejection of new innovation and preservation on what is seen as traditional values.

When we heard about the word ‘conservatism’, there would be few negative thoughts that will caught into our attention. Generally this is what happened throughout the world, whereby we often made own assumptions about things that we aren’t so sure about. Same things did happen to the term ‘conservatism’. Over the years, the term conservatism has gained multiple connotations throughout modern society, which most of the time leading to misunderstanding of the term. Conservatism is an elusive ideology. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, conservatism refers to disposition in politics to preserve what is established, in which the conservatism and conservatives themselves prefer not to change what is established by nature.

The word conservative is first known to be used in 1832, thanks to Edmund Burke, the founder of conservatism. The term is originated from political thoughts which start few decades earlier. Even Abraham Lincoln took a shot at defining by saying, "What is conservatism? Is it not the adherence to the old and tried, against the new and untried?”. Ronald Reagan also quoted saying, "I believe the very heart and soul of conservatism is libertarianism, where the basis of their desire is less government interference or less centralized authority or more individual freedom". The conservative is someone who seeks to conserve. In order to determine whether he is right or wrong, it should be enough to consider what it is he/she wishes to conserve. In social form, it refers to conformity of man's highest goal and corresponds to man's deepest needs (Burckhardt n.d.). Conservatives challenge the idea that society planned in a rational way without regards to tradition and historical experience. The idea of conservation or preservation suggests that conservatives stand opposed to progress.What about conservatism is social context? Social conservatism can be defined broadly as any socio-cultural value system that encourages strict adherence to social norms and emphasizes social exclusivity. Individuals who adopt such value systems are devoted to social conventions and traditions, which function as a means of promoting group cohesion (Altemeyer 1988). Adherence to social norms helps to ensure that group members do not behave in ways that are contrary to the group's best interest and helps to distinguish group members from others (Triandis 1994). Social conservatives have little tolerance for who individuals who deviate from social convention. Thus, they are more discriminating in terms of who they consider a group member and non-group member, resulting in a narrower group and a more diverse non-group (Gudykunst, Gao, Schmidt, Nishida, et al. 1992).

Cultural value systems can also promote social conservatism in a way. Collectivism focused on the interdependence of every human in a collective group whereby they emphasizes strict adherence to social norms, or social conservatism, whereas individualism in the other hand promotes autonomy and independence (Triandis 1994). More recently, collectivism has been divided into two subtypes;

horizontal and vertical. In cultures that exhibit horizontal collectivism, group members are seen as equals, whereas vertical collectivism is more socially conservative due it the fact that they emphasizes social hierarchies, which suggests some individuals are better than others (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand 1995). Collectivism, like other forms of social conservatism, promotes an increased bias within ingroup and greater discrimination between ingroup and outgroup members (Gudykunst et al. 1992).

Social conservatism can also be described as a strict adherence to specific value systems; such as religious conservatism, ethnocentrism and political conservatism. For example, religious conservatism is a dogmatic allegiance to a specific religious worldwide including adherence to religious texts, doctrines and rituals. It is characterized by intolerance for alternative views and is known to correlate with prejudice towards outgroup members (Altemeyer & Hunsberger 2004). It is also suggested that socially conservative nature of religious conservatism promotes prejudice (Laythe, Finkel, & Kirkpatrick 2001).

Similarly, social conservatism may be apparent in terms of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is a value system in which individuals believe that their ethnic group is inherently superior compared to other groups. For example, American ethnocentrism is associated with negative attitudes toward foreign others (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997; Navarrete & Fessler 2006).

Another form of social conservatism is in political conservatism. There are two types of political conservatism; social/cultural conservatism and economic conservatism. Social/cultural conservatism is associated with dogmatism and adherence to tradition (Johnson & Tamney 2001). Social/cultural conservatism is more pertinent to social injustices (ie; prejudice), whereas economic conservatism is concerned with distribution of wealth (Jost, Federico, & Napier 2009).

IV. RESEARCH METHODS

This research study is carried out in the form of explanatory research, whereby as the phenomena of Shariah-compliant hotels are existed, we try to go beyond just than merely describing the characteristics, in order to analyse and understand the phenomena by discovering and measuring causal relationship among Shariah-compliant hotels and related variables such as social conservatism.

The research will involve very structured data collection techniques. The collection of primary data was done using survey in the form of questionnaire, which is distributed to the respondents. In ensuring a high response rate, accountability and credibility to the research, the respondent should consist of various nationalities, income and gender. It also ensures an unbiased selection for the sample.

Due to limited time given for the research study and subjected to the financial constrain, hence the researcher has adopted the non-probability or non-random sampling process and the data collection process are performed via convenience sampling method. There is no specific sample frame in the research study. The main population for this study involves Malaysian which comprises of different races (Malay, Chinese, Indian and others), genders, age groups, income groups and education levels. Most of our gathered respondents are in a range of 40 years old and above. This is because most of our mentioned age group have a stable jobs which means higher purchasing power, able to make own decision and are experienced individual. Thus, they belong to the major category of potential customer in hotel industry.

Researcher has first undergone the pilot test with few random people before the final research questionnaire survey form been finalised and distributed out for data collection purposes. A number of 450 questionnaires have been distributed out and all are successfully collected. This to ensure higher reliability, validity and precise research results which able to be generalise to represent a population. Sampling unit is individual who are interested in participating in the survey; whether male or female with balance income group. In terms of sample size, a number of 450 respondents have participated in this study. Most of our respondent is in a range of 40 years old and above. This is because most of our mentioned age group have a stable jobs which means higher purchasing power, able to make own decision and are experienced individual. Thus, they belong to the major category of potential customer in hotel industry. The prepared research questionnaire survey form was structured and self-administered. It is referred to the relevant past questionnaire survey which were constructed based on Ray & Wilson's Social Conservatism Inventory, which consisted of 15 items. The research instrument that was used is based on a set of structured questions and closed-category questions because it is simpler and quicker for respondents to answer.

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Reliability Test

All three variables that were tested for its reliability and it were found to reached a good range of alpha coefficient. The alpha coefficient for core attributes is .926 and peripheral attributes is .866. For social conservatism, the alpha coefficient is .809. Generally,

an alpha coefficient of .30 or higher is considered acceptable.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The first table would be the Table 1: Model Summary; which provides the R and R^2 value. The R value is .469, which represent the simple correlation. It indicates a moderate degree of correlation. The R^2 value in the other hand, indicates how much of the dependent variable; social conservatism, can be explained by the independent variable; core attributes and peripheral attributes of Shariah-compliant hotels. In this case, the coefficient of multiple determinations is .220; therefore 22% of the variation in the social conservatism can be explained by two predictors; which are the core attributes (Part A) and peripheral attributes (Part B). The value appears to be low since the value of R^2 is just about quarter from 1.

Model	R	R Square	Adj R Square	SE
Social Conservatism	0.469	0.220	0.217	0.542

Table 1 : Model summary for social conservatism

The next table is the ANOVA table. This table indicates that the regression model predicts the outcome variable significantly well. Here, $p<0.0005$, which is less than 0.05, and indicates that the model applied can statistically significant predict the outcome variable.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social n Conserv.	Regression	37.096	2	18.548	63.079	.000[a]
	Residual	131.439	447	.294		
	Total	168.536	449			

Table 2. Anova

Last but not least, the coefficient table. This table provides the information on each predictor variable. It gives us the information that we need to predict. Based on Table 4.13, it is found that both constant, core attributes (Part A) and peripheral attributes (Part B) contribute significantly to the model ($p<0.05$). By looking at the B column under the Unstandardized Coefficients column, we can present the regression equation as:-

Social conservatism = 2.733 + .265 (Part A) + .168 (Part B)

The core attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel (Part A, b=.265) is significant (p=0.000), the coefficient is positive which would indicate that the higher one's preference toward core attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel is related to higher social conservatism; which is what we would expect. The peripheral attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel (Part B, b=168) is significant (p=0.000), the coefficient is also positive which would indicate that the higher one's preference towards peripheral attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel is related to higher social conservatism; which also what we would expect. The core attributes of Shariah-compliant hotels (Part A, b=.265) is significant (p=0.000), the coefficient is positive which would indicate that the higher one's preference toward core attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel is related to higher social conservatism; which is what we would expect.

The peripheral attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel (Part B, b=168) is significant (p=0.000), the coefficient is also positive which would indicate that the higher one's preference towards peripheral attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel is related to higher social conservatism; which also what we would expect. From this result, we could conclude that higher favourability towards core and peripheral attributes of Shariah-compliant hotels are related to higher level of social conservatism of that individual.

Model		Unstd Coef		Std Coef	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Er	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.733	.188		14.534	.000
	PartA	.265	.040	.304	6.545	.000
	PartB	.168	.031	.249	5.375	.000

Table 3. Beta coefficients

VI. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Relationship between Core Attributes of Shariah-Compliant Hotel and Social Conservatism

In this research study, the first proposed hypothesis suggested that core attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel is significantly related to the social conservatism. From the previous chapter, researcher have established a statistical analyses over all collected sample data, the Pearson correlation had evidenced that significant relationship existed between core attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel and social conservatism. Core attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel is significantly related to social conservatism, in which the analysis delivered a positive correlation ($r=.412$, $n=450$, $p<0.01$). Besides, the value of correlation coefficient 0.688 which found to be fell in the range from +0.41 to +0.70, the relationship strength between these two variables is moderate. The significant value shown is 0.00, which is obviously lesser than the significant values of 0.01 and 0.05, hence core attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel can be ascertained to have significant relationship with social conservatism at 95% and 99% confidence levels. Hypothesis 1 is supported.

As this research study is the first attempt to relate attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel with factors that might influenced such concept, thus there is no evidence from past research study that researcher could relate with. The Relationship between Peripheral Attributes of Shariah-Compliant Hotel and Social Conservatism

The second hypothesis was proposed as peripheral attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel is significantly

related to social conservatism. Pearson correlation analysis has validated that there is significant relationship existed between peripheral attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel and social conservatism. The analysis had delivered a positive correlation ($r = .381$, $n=450$, $p<0.01$). The value of correlation coefficient is 0.381 which found to fell in the range of lesser than +0.41 to +0.70, which means the relationship strength between these two variables is low. Because of the significant value shown is also 0.000 which obviously lesser than the significant values of 0.01 and 0.05, hence peripheral attributes of Shariah-compliant hotel can be confirmed to have significant relationship with social conservatism at 95% and 99% confidence levels. Hypothesis 2 is supported.

VII. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The concept of Shariah-compliant hotels would be a growing trend throughout the world. Yet, the concept is still left unclear and lead to few misconceptions. Previous studies have came into an agreement where a set of criteria that compliance to Shariah-compliant hotels was formed. However, it was noted that no research have yet to discover the variables that might influence consumer's preference towards Shariah-compliant hotels. In this study, the researcher attempt to make the discovery and determine the variables that might have a direct relationship with the attributes of Shariah-compliant hotels.

Since the list of criteria and characteristic of Shariah-compliant hotels are still not exhausted, by exploring the possible variables that may influence consumer's preference towards Shariah-compliant hotels and knowing what determines their decision, hotelier might have a clue on how to capture these demand and prospect. As noted by Suhaiza Zailani (2011), the concept of halal hotel that serve halal food and convenience accommodation has give an added advantage in order to attract more local and as well as foreign tourist.

CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that tourism industry has the potential to boost country's economy. The remarkable growth of Shariah-compliant hotel has come into the centre of attention. The concept itself is very unique and it have the potential to be expand throughout Malaysia as we have everything that it takes to be the Shariah-compliant hotel. The concept needs to be promoted not only towards Muslim market but also to non-Muslim market. It will not only benefit Muslim per se but also give advantages to non-Muslim and gives space for another niche sector.Nevertheless, the focused is needed in terms of the standardization of its concept and attributes on what constitute a Shariah-compliant hotel. In an effort to expand the idea, it is good to know what elements that may affect in consumer's purchasing behaviour. The elements might be one from these three variables; religious orientation, social conservatism or spiritual well-being; or it might be all. With well acceptance towards Islamic product such as Islamic banking and investment among both Muslim and non-Muslim market, it is hoped that the concept of Shariah-compliant hotels will also favour both markets. Along with the Malaysia's acknowledgment and recognition as a progressive Islamic country, this would be an added advantage of us in pioneering the delivery of Shariah-compliant hotel.

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