

# ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARD SHARIA-COMPLIANT HOTELS

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**Abstract:** *The background to this research is that every tourist who visits certainly needs accommodation to rest. However, sharia hotels are not yet the main choice for Muslim tourists when traveling. Apart from that, sharia hotels also face tough competition from conventional hotels. The aim of the research is to analyze the factors that influence consumer preferences for sharia hotels. The method in this research uses field research using descriptive qualitative methods, using observation, interview, and documentation techniques. The research results show that sharia hotels are a temporary housing option for Indonesian and foreign Muslim communities. The existence of sharia hotels in Indonesia is expected to take a share of the tourism market from the Middle East. Sharia hotels have several hotel facility services such as prayer directions, providing only halal food and drinks, hotel prayer rooms, Al-Qur'an, and complete prayer equipment in each hotel room. When accepting visitors, sharia hotels have written SOPs (Product Operation Standards), so that accepting visitors of the opposite sex must have family status or a husband-and-wife relationship.*

**Keywords:** *Consumers, Sharia Hotels.*

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## Background

The cultural diversity and natural beauty of the Indonesian archipelago have made Indonesia one of the most popular tourist destinations worldwide. The number of international tourists visiting Indonesia reached 9,435,411 in 2014. This influx of tourists contributed to a cumulative Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 9.83% in the hotel sector in 2012. Given the volume of international tourists and the percentage growth rate of GDP in the hotel sector, this represents a significant opportunity for expanding the hotel population in Indonesia (BPS, 2015). The increase in international tourist arrivals from 2010 to 2014 has positively impacted the occupancy rate of star-rated hotels, which stood at 52.56% in 2014. The rise in domestic tourism also generated foreign exchange revenue amounting to 213.94 trillion rupiah in 2014 (BPS, 2015). The Indonesian tourism sector is currently being promoted to achieve a target of 265 million domestic tourists (Wisnus) by 2017. By the end of the year, the Ministry of Tourism (Kemenpar) had monitored domestic tourist movements to make adjustments and prepare for the 2018 tourism development roadmap. Cumulative data from January to October 2017 indicated that the number of Wisnus had reached 252,569,465, surpassing the target of 221.5 million Wisnus by 14% (Kemenpar, 2017). Factors influencing Muslim tourists are closely related to religious observance and have a moderate effect on tourist satisfaction (Albughuli, 2011). Religious devotion among Muslims serves as a key moderating factor that influences Muslim tourist satisfaction (Ahmat et al., 2015). Several factors contribute to the growth of Sharia-compliant hotels, including:

- 1) Efforts by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries to develop the tourism industry among member states.
- 2) An increase in travel by Middle Eastern tourists, prompting many hotels to offer Islamic services to cater to their needs.
- 3) Stricter security measures and difficulties obtaining visas for Western destinations have led Middle Eastern tourists to shift towards Eastern destinations, boosting demand for Islamic services in the tourism industry.
- 4) The halal revolution has heightened awareness among Muslim travelers of their religious needs, thereby creating opportunities to cater to the unmet needs of Muslim tourists.
- 5) The growth of Islamic banking and finance has spurred investor interest in halal products and services.
- 6) The rapidly growing Muslim market, estimated to be worth USD \$500 billion annually, and the USD \$2.1 trillion halal market globally, have increased visibility and demand for Islamic tourism services (Sahida et al., 2011).

Every tourist requires accommodation during their visit, yet Sharia-compliant hotels have not become the primary choice for Muslim travelers. A preliminary online survey of 202 Muslim tourists revealed that only 12.4% selected Sharia-compliant hotels for their stay. Additionally, Sharia-compliant hotels face stiff competition from conventional hotels. According to BPS data from 2017, there were 2,387 conventional star-rated hotels with 233,077 rooms, in contrast to only 12 certified Sharia-compliant hotels in 2013. This number increased to 101 hotels by 2016. However, this number still falls short of the ideal requirement for the 2017 Sharia tourism market, which necessitated 372 Sharia-compliant hotels with a total of 8,880 rooms (Kemenpar, 2017). Given this data, the development of Sharia-compliant hotels requires intensive further development. Therefore, the problem outlined above serves as the motivation for this research, with the aim of contributing to the improvement of Sharia-compliant hotel development. The research will focus on analyzing the factors that influence consumer preferences towards Sharia-compliant hotels.

## Research methodology

This study seeks to analyse and describe the factors influencing consumer preferences towards Sharia-compliant hotels. The research utilizes a descriptive-analytical method. According to Haris (2023), descriptive analysis is an empirical examination that investigates a specific phenomenon within its real-life context. The research data is collected from both primary and secondary sources.

The approach used in this study is qualitative. As explained by Bogdan and Taylor (as cited in Arifudin, 2023), qualitative research is a research procedure that generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observable behaviors. Rahayu (2020) asserts that this approach involves transcribing data, coding field notes, and interpreting these data to draw conclusions.

This research employs qualitative methods with a field research approach. According to Kartika (2020), this approach is aligned with the primary objective of the study, which is to describe and analyse the factors influencing consumer preferences towards Sharia-compliant hotels. This method will allow for a thorough explanation of the research problem (Kartika, 2023).

The selection of appropriate data collection techniques is crucial for ensuring the scientific validity of a study. The data collection methods used in this research include observation, interviews, and documentation. These techniques are viewed as tools for performing technical work carefully and systematically to achieve the research goals. Although the study itself is a scientific endeavours, it is conducted to gather data realistically and systematically to uncover the truth. Research methodology is a means to find solutions to research problems. In this case, the researcher gathers information on the factors influencing consumer preferences towards Sharia-compliant hotels from books, articles, journals, theses, e-books, and other relevant sources (Rusmana, 2020).

Because this study requires library materials for data sources, it utilizes a literature review. Researchers need books, scholarly articles, and other related literature, both in print and online, to explore the topic and issues at hand (Arifudin, 2020). Seeking information from data sources involves the use of various data collection techniques. Amir Hamzah (as cited in Kartika, 2021) argues that data gathering is an effort to collect information related to the research topic. The researcher uses a library research method to gather data. Specifically, the researcher starts with library materials to collect information from books, dictionaries, journals, encyclopaedias, papers, periodicals, and other sources that provide insights related to the analysis of factors influencing consumer preferences towards Sharia-compliant hotels.

Further, Amir Hamzah (as cited in Kartika, 2022) states that data collection involves efforts to gather facts related to the topic being researched. These details can be found in scholarly literature, research studies, dissertations, theses, and other written sources. According to Arifudin (2021), data collection can be carried out under various conditions, using different sources, and employing diverse techniques.

Observation is a key part of the research process, involving direct investigation of the phenomena being studied (Nasem, 2018). This method enables the researcher to directly observe and experience the environment and conditions of the study subjects (Arifudin, 2019). In this research, the observations focus on the analysis of factors influencing consumer preferences towards Sharia-compliant hotels.

The interview technique used in this study is structured interviews, where the questions are pre-determined according to the information needs necessary to uncover empirical data (Juhadi, 2020).

Documentation is another data collection method that involves examining written documents or records. Documentation, derived from the word "document," refers to written materials. In implementing this method, the researcher investigates written materials such as books, magazines, meeting minutes, and diaries. According to Moleong (as cited in Ulfah, 2021), the documentation method is a way of gathering information by examining archives and documents. The documentation strategy is also a technique used to collect data from research subjects. This method is employed to gather data about the institutional context of the research object, namely the analysis of factors influencing consumer preferences towards Sharia-compliant hotels.

According to Muhadjir (as cited in Tanjung, 2020), data analysis involves organizing, searching, and systematically arranging the findings from observations and interviews, allowing the researcher to focus on the research topic. The data is then processed and presented to others, edited, classified, and displayed in a meaningful way.

### **Result And Discussion**

Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, with approximately 209 million Muslims, is seen as having tourism facilities and infrastructure that are quite friendly to Muslim tourists (Kemenparekraf, 2013). According to BPS (2013), in 2010, out of the 7 million foreign tourists visiting Indonesia, 1.2 million (about 18%) were Muslim tourists, presenting significant potential for the development of Sharia-compliant tourism. The growing tourism activity is linked to the command of Allah SWT in the Quran, Surat Al-Ankabut verse 20: "Say, 'Travel through the land and observe how He began creation; then Allah will bring about the final creation.' Indeed, Allah is competent over all things" (29:20).

Sharia-compliant hotels have become a preferred temporary accommodation option for Muslims, both in Indonesia and internationally. The existence of Sharia hotels in Indonesia is expected to capture the tourism market from the Middle East. The spending from the tourism sector in the UAE, which reaches US\$1,700 per person, can drive the growth of Sharia-compliant hotels in Indonesia. These hotels offer various services and facilities, such as prayer direction signs, serving only halal food and beverages, prayer rooms, the Quran, and complete prayer equipment in each hotel room. In terms of guest acceptance, Sharia hotels have written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), ensuring that male and female guests must be either family members or spouses. Female staff are required to wear hijabs, and men must dress modestly. The application of Sharia principles in hotels represents a new innovation in the hotel industry, opening up a more competitive market share.

A Sharia-compliant hotel is defined as a hotel that provides accommodation, food and beverage services, and other services to the public, operated commercially, and complies with the requirements set by the government, the industry, and Sharia law (Hotel, 2015). According to Sabri (cited in Fasa, 2020), Sharia guidelines for hospitality operations include prohibitions against things that violate Sharia law, endanger others, involve deception, or are dubious in nature.

Reza (2011) concluded that, based on the above values, operational standards or criteria for Sharia hotels are as follows:

1. **Facilities that benefit guests:** Facilities that cause harm, immorality, division, stir up passions, exploit women, or similar acts are prohibited. The use of facilities must align with their intended purpose to prevent misuse.
2. **Guest check-in procedures:** Special care is taken when guests of opposite genders check in, especially to determine if they are spouses or family members. This is done through observation of behavior (e.g., signs of closeness or affection, using terms of endearment, maintaining physical distance at the front desk) and appearance (e.g., revealing attire, young women in school uniforms, absence of luggage, and significant age differences).
3. **Open marketing:** Marketing is available to everyone, regardless of individual, group, formal or informal status, ethnicity, religion, race, or social class, as long as the activities of guests are not prohibited by the state and do not promote corruption, immorality, or hostility.
4. **Halal food and beverages:** All food and drink provided must be guaranteed to be halal in both ingredients and preparation methods, and healthy for consumption.
5. **Islamic decor and ornaments:** Decorations must reflect Islamic aesthetics and should not contradict Sharia law. For instance, statues are avoided, and depictions of living creatures are minimized. Decorations do not have to be in the form of calligraphy.
6. **Operations:**
  - **Policy:** Management policies, rules, and collaborations with external parties, as well as investment and business development, should comply with Islamic principles.
  - **Human resource management:** Recruitment and employment should not discriminate based on ethnicity, religion, race, or social class, provided the qualifications meet the required standards. The company must be honest with employees and provide necessary training.
  - **Human resource management focuses on quality improvement,** including ethics, knowledge, and skills.
  - **Financial management:** Financial management should follow Sharia accounting, using Sharia-compliant banks and insurance. If the company's profits reach the required level, it is obligated to pay zakat.
7. **Sharia Supervisory Board (DSN):** A body tasked with overseeing hotel operations in accordance with Sharia principles. It provides guidance and answers operational questions. Members are selected and approved by the National Sharia Council (DSN).

Services provided should adhere to Islamic values, focusing on hospitality, friendliness, honesty, trustworthiness, helpfulness, and politeness. Services must be delivered within the bounds allowed by Sharia, avoiding practices such as *khalwat* (being alone with someone of the opposite sex in a secluded place). Karim (cited in Labetubun, 2021) notes that in Islamic economics, the concept of *maslahat* (social welfare or utility for the common good) is a key objective, whether in economic or other matters. Issues are classified into *masalih* (benefits) and *mafasid* (harms), all aimed at improving social welfare. Islam views human desires for wealth as never fully satiable. It acknowledges the desire to accumulate wealth but warns against greed and the pursuit of personal desires. Sharia-compliant hotels embody this perspective by focusing not only on profit but also on increasing *maslahah* for society. One core concept in modern marketing is the development of a marketing mix. According to



Sunyoto (cited in Shavab, 2021), there are seven elements in the marketing mix that guide a company's marketing strategy:

1. **Product:** The combination of goods and services offered to the target market, providing value to the customer.
2. **Price:** The amount of money customers must pay to obtain the product, representing the value exchanged for the product's benefits.
3. **Place:** Activities that make the product available to the target customers.
4. **Promotion:** Activities that communicate the product's benefits and persuade customers to purchase it.
5. **People:** Human resources are critical in both production and service delivery, playing a key role in differentiating the company and gaining a competitive advantage.
6. **Process:** The procedures, mechanisms, and routines involved in creating and delivering a service, including customer involvement and employee flexibility.
7. **Customer Service:** As customers demand higher levels of service, customer service becomes a competitive tool for differentiation and establishing long-term relationships.

**Consumer preferences** refer to the likes or preferences that consumers have among different product or service options (Philip, 2005). Preference theory can be used to analyze consumer satisfaction, where limited resources force a consumer to choose alternatives, optimizing the utility derived from the product or service. Consumer preferences can be measured by evaluating the usefulness and relative importance of the attributes of a product or service. The attributes of a product or service often create initial appeal, which can influence consumer behavior and decision-making. Evaluations of products and services reflect consumers' attitudes, which, in turn, reveal behavior patterns related to their usage or consumption.

### Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the research findings and discussions presented, it can be concluded that Sharia-compliant hotels have become a temporary accommodation choice for both domestic and international Muslim communities. The presence of Sharia-compliant hotels in Indonesia is expected to capture a share of the tourism market from the Middle East. These hotels offer various facilities and services in accordance with Sharia principles, such as prayer direction indicators, halal food and beverages, prayer rooms, Qur'ans, and complete prayer sets in each hotel room. In terms of guest reception, Sharia-compliant hotels have written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which require that guests of the opposite gender must be either family members or married. Female staff are required to wear the hijab, and male staff are expected to dress modestly. The implementation of Sharia principles in hotel management represents an innovative development in the hotel industry, enabling the capture of a new and more competitive market segment.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that Sharia-compliant hotels enhance the dissemination of information regarding their facilities, services, and consumer knowledge to facilitate decision-making for potential guests. Additionally, these hotels should consider pricing strategies that align with the offered facilities and services in order to compete with conventional hotels. Sharia-compliant hotels must continue to improve their facilities and services in accordance with Islamic principles, as well as strengthen their legal standing, such as obtaining official certifications, to increase consumer knowledge and trust, particularly among Muslim clientele.

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