

# A conceptual model for Muslim-friendly hotel entrepreneurship\*

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords:

Muslim-friendly tourism,  
Muslim-friendly hotel,  
Entrepreneurship,  
Conceptual model.

Muslim-friendly tourism is one of the prominent topics in academic studies due to its potential returns and estimated market volume in recent years. Within this tourism type, customizing tourism products and services currently offered in the sector, rendering innovative tourism products and services needed by the customer segment, and profiting from the sale of these products and services are critical issues that need to be underlined. Although many studies have been carried out on Muslim-friendly hotels which are the essential dimensions of Muslim-friendly tourism, it is known that the studies investigating Muslim-friendly hotels in terms of entrepreneurship are limited in number, content, and scope. Therefore, it is aimed to carry out a conceptual analysis of Muslim-friendly hotel entrepreneurship and examine it under the main headings of the entrepreneurship field. Through the in-depth literature analysis, this study provided insights into the Muslim-friendly hotel entrepreneurship model. The Business Model Canvas, the success model, and the challenges of Muslim-friendly hotel entrepreneurship were produced. In addition to the importance of spiritual harmony between the entrepreneur and business concept, a supportive ecosystem was emphasized based on the designed conceptual model. The article was concluded with the implications for future research.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, specific market segments have been targeted in the tourism sector (El-Gohary, 2016, p. 125). Many definitions of Muslim-friendly tourism (MFT) have been proposed in academic literature. Among these definitions, one that provides a touch for entrepreneurs operating in Muslim and non-Muslim markets is as follows: it is a type of tourism that aims to present tourism products and activities following Islamic teachings, to increase the Muslim-friendly characteristics of the destination, and to meet the needs of Muslim visitors throughout their travel (Battour et al., 2022, p. 888). The need for Muslim-friendly products and services is gradually increasing, so a parallel increase in demand for MFT and Muslim-friendly hotels (MFHs) is being observed recently (COMCEC Coordination Office, 2016). However, despite this increase in demand, the extent to which MFT services are Muslim-friendly may vary depending on the service characteristics offered by hoteliers. This variety makes it necessary to understand the characteristics of entrepreneurs who decide on the quality of the services to be provided during the planning stage of the business and the nature of entrepreneurship. Since existing research on MFT entrepreneurship is considerably limited, a theoretical framework for MFT entrepreneurship

needs to be prepared (Battour et al., 2022). Clarifying the conceptual structure of Muslim-friendly hotel entrepreneurship (MFHE) can be illuminating for new business ventures and upcoming academic studies in the field. Additionally, conceptualizing the subject, determining its boundaries and content, and forming the general structure of the MFHE can be informative for decision makers. The conceptual presentation of MFHE can also allow naming problems in the field. In this regard, it is aimed to examine the subject of MFHE. Therefore, the main concepts of entrepreneurship and business activities were adopted. The answers to the following questions were investigated: "What are the features of a Business Model Canvas (BMC) for MFHE?", "What are the features of an MFHE model?" and "What are the unearthed challenges and suggestions in the relevant literature?".

It can be beneficial to analyze the characteristics of the process ranging from the entrepreneurial motivation to the operational activities of MFH to understand MFHE. Therefore, it is better to understand who a MFT entrepreneur is. According to the definition by Battour et al. (2022, p. 889), MFT entrepreneurs offer new value propositions, new products, and services for the travel needs of Muslim tourists in the tourism sector and benefit from the opportunities in the sector. As an element of MFT,

Theoretical Article

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MFH is a business model that enables Muslim guests to meet their special religious needs during their holidays and provides hotel services for non-Muslim guests who want to experience the Islamic atmosphere in hotel services (Suci et al., 2020, p. 5). Considering this business model, MFHE can be expressed as the application of the rules and values of Islamic religion to entrepreneurial processes and business functions (Salleh et al., 2019, pp. 8-10). By considering the study of Abdullah and Azam (2021, p. 1) on the concept of halalpreneurship and related business opportunities, the following definition can be considered: MFHE is a concept to distinguish entrepreneurial activities in the field of MFH management from traditional hotel management, integrating Islamic values into hotel entrepreneurship processes.

Based on these definitions, it can be stated that it would be helpful to analyze the process related to hotel entrepreneurship and business functions to determine the holistic characteristics of MFHE. To provide a conceptual synthesis, the distinguishing features of MFH were applied to related entrepreneurship concepts so that identifying the distinguishing features of Muslim-friendly entrepreneurship from other types of entrepreneurship can help create innovative and sustainable businesses (Hareebin, 2021). To ensure unity, the concept of MFT is used instead of expressions such as conservative tourism, hijab tourism, halal tourism, and Islamic tourism, etc. which are often used interchangeably in the literature and the sector due to the ongoing ambiguity concerning their definitional boundaries and common acceptance.

## 2. Muslim-friendly hotel concept as a business opportunity

In this regard, MFH is considered an example of customer-oriented marketing approach. Hotels are designed according to this market segment during the establishment phase or existing hotels are converted to this concept, targeting customers with religious sensitivities (Arpacı et al., 2015, p. 183).

MTHs can be used in different ways in the literature, such as halal hotels (Joeliaty et al., 2020), dry hotels (Ahmat et al., 2012a; Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009), Islamic hotels (Karia & Fauzi, 2020), and shariah compliant hotels (Yusof & Muhammad, 2013), focusing on services that can meet the needs of Muslim visitors (Battour et al., 2010). MFH is a type of MFT entrepreneurship with features that allow visitors to fulfill their religious responsibilities during the tourism experience (Battour, 2017). The three main issues that stand out in the study of entrepreneurship are innovation, the exploitation of opportunities, and business formation (Farmaki et al., 2020). According to Battour et al. (2022), MFT can be an innovative business opportunity for entrepreneurs. They stated that there are potential innovative opportunities in MFT for entrepreneurs in the following areas: digital platforms, alpha generation, cryptocurrency, sustainable products and services, Muslim women-friendly services, culinary tourism, 3D printing,

virtual reality, and augmented reality. Accordingly, the MFH concept can raise considerable new opportunities for hotel businesses (Razalli et al., 2012, p. 94), being perceived as a developing market by hoteliers (Buyruk & Aydemir, 2022).

From the study conducted by Soltanian et al. (2016, p. 173), it can be understood that the motivation to be a halal entrepreneur is affected by halal entrepreneurship, intrinsic motivation, opportunity seeking, perceived attractiveness, peer influence, perceived feasibility, and government support. MFT entrepreneurs seek profitability by considering current and potential market trends and customer demand in the MFT market (Battour et al., 2022). Religion, individual values, and religiosity play important roles in entrepreneurial behavior (Gursoy et al., 2017). According to Farmaki et al. (2020), religion can positively or negatively affect tourism entrepreneurship. While it may present new market opportunities, other markets may not be accessible because of religious differences. Specifically, while financial constraints can be a hindrance, social connections can provide advantages (Farmaki et al., 2020). In another study (Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç et al., 2021), it was concluded that MFH entrepreneurs may act for spiritual and commercial purposes; therefore, compliance with the philosophy of the concept in operational activities may vary according to the hoteliers' religious sensitivity. In the mentioned study, hoteliers emphasized that their lifestyles are influential in investing/working in MFHs. Moreover, it can be stated that profitability expectation, recognizing the need for MFHs, and other similar investments carried out are the other factors in consideration (Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç et al., 2021). Accordingly, in the study conducted by Nor et al. (2017), it was understood that women who are MFH entrepreneurs in Malaysia have strong Islamic and cultural values and try to offer food and beverage services following a halal understanding. In another study (Rozita Tahir et al., 2016), it was determined that more than 80% of small and medium entrepreneurs operating in Muslim-friendly businesses in Malaysia have the personality traits that Muslim-friendly entrepreneurship constitutes.

## 3. Methodology

The aim of this study was to develop a framework that represents MFHE. Studies are conducted to create conceptual frameworks for the structure of Muslim-friendly activities in different branches of tourism. For example, Jamaluddin et al. (2018) prepared a conceptual framework for Muslim-Friendly Spa. Mohtar et al. (2022) conducted a study that includes Muslim-friendly beauty and wellness framework.

This study aims to examine MFHE considering the available information in the related literature, to define the BMC, to determine the factors that lead to success in MFHE, and identify the challenges encountered. Articles, papers, books, and industry reports were analyzed using keywords, such as MFH and hotel entrepreneurship. The obtained data were synthesized using the main headings.

The research findings were structurally presented and explained in the BMC and MFHE success models. Developed by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010), BMC is one of the frequently used tools in business model development (Carter & Carter, 2020). In this visual structure, a related model is created by examining the data under the headings of value propositions, key activities, customer segments, customer relations, key resources, channels, key partners, cost structure, and revenue streams. BMC is regarded as a useful tool for developing concepts and is used to design tourism businesses (Strulak-Wójcikiewicz et al., 2020).

## **4. Results**

### *A Business Model Canvas and entrepreneurship model for Muslim-Friendly Hotels*

Business model research has attracted academic interest in recent years (Joyce & Paquin, 2016). This study analyses the BMC to identify and classify the characteristics of the MFHE. The research was conducted in the nine sub-dimensions of the BMC to investigate the components of the MFHE. The related subheadings considered were value propositions, key activities, customer segments, customer relations, key resources, channels, key partners, cost structure, and revenue streams.

#### *Value Propositions*

A MFH has the potential to attract guests seeking an authentic and spiritual experience, as it offers its customers a different value than standard hotels (Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009, p. 4). Emphasizing that religious values are perceived as well as consumption during Muslim-friendly holidays, Rodrigo and Turnbull (2019) revealed themes according to basic consumption values in their study. Accordingly, the relevant consumption values and key themes were as follows: functional value (quality service, scenery, and sites), emotional value (happiness/excitement, stepping out of routines, relaxation), social value (friendliness of locals, social acceptance, being respected), epistemic value (new experiences and novelty), conditional value (safety and security, proximity to home country), physical Islamic values (halal food, no alcohol, compliance with religion, access to a mosque, prayer location, qibla direction), non-physical Islamic values (gender-based separate facilities), facilities for personal hygiene, not being exposed to inconvenient practices, halal entertainment).

MFHs offer unique value to their guests (Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009, p. 1). For example, the rooms are designed to meet the needs of families. Appropriate types of music, conferences, and religious talks are arranged. In addition, same-sex personnel are employed in the men's and women's pools (Doğan, 2011, p. 479). Yet, the top priority service to be provided at MFHs is the availability of halal food options (COMCEC Coordination Office,

2018, p. 126-127). Therefore, all food and beverages served in the hotel restaurant must be halal (Zulkifli et al., 2011, p. 299-300). Halal food is food that does not contain ingredients that are prohibited for Muslims to consume (Riaz & Chaudry, 2004) which is one of the top priorities of Muslim tourists (Battour & Ismail, 2016, p. 153). The development of Muslims' awareness of their responsibilities to consume halal food has led to an increase in the demand for halal food. Accordingly, awareness of food safety associated with halal food has reached a global dimension. With the developing technology, the content of foods can be recognized quickly and accurately. In this context, halal certification guarantees the quality and health benefits of these products. Furthermore, halal certification leads to increases demand for certified products (Dali et al., 2009, p. 41). As stated by GIMDES (2019), music should not be broadcast in the dining areas of MFHs. Waste must be controlled, and precautions should be taken in this regard. Arrangements should be made for waste food by raising awareness among customers. Meals should be served for iftar and sahur during Ramadan. Those who cannot fast also should be considered. In addition, alcoholic beverages, or acidic beverages such as cola should not be kept in the mini fridges in the rooms. Cosmetic products and cleaning products used in bathrooms must be certified (GIMDES, 2019). To ensure these standards, especially the employees of the kitchen and purchasing departments should be more conscious about halal. For this reason, some hotels inform and train their kitchen staff on this issue. In addition, purchasing department employees are expected to be capable of evaluating the products to be purchased following the standards and seek certificates from the suppliers (Temizkan et al., 2017, p. 857). In addition to the above-mentioned features, another issue to consider regarding food presentation in MFHs is seafood. Some seafood varies according to denomination. It is thought that this situation may complicate the delivery of services provided in MFHs (Razak et al., 2020, p. 22). Pamukçu and Arpacı (2016) examined the features offered by MFHs by analyzing hotel websites. It has been determined that the information provided about the halal understanding features are as follows: The concept of the hotel, halal hotel certificate, halal food-beverage, no alcohol, no gambling, masjid, separate facilities for genders, religious activities, religious activities for children, and faith destinations close to the hotel. According to the research conducted by Gündüz and Topaloğlu (2021), MFHs offer value to customers based on different competitive strategies. These are the effort to create a positive reputation in the industry (differentiation strategy), the effort to provide service above expectations (cost-oriented strategy), the reduction of distribution costs (cost leadership strategy), and the focus on the high-price market (focus differentiation strategy).

### Key Activities

Although there are no clear principles for MFH management (Razalli, 2020, p. 97), these types of hotels have different aspects from traditional hotel management and these differences should be reflected and applied in strategic planning (Seçilmiş et al., 2017, p. 767-768). For instance, the most authorized manager in the business should be aware of the hotel concept and create the business organization accordingly (GIMDES, 2019) with proper and regular planning, monitoring, and control of business operations. Therefore, several requirements should be fulfilled in the management of the MFHs such as an advisory committee that gathers to evaluate and monitor the compliance of hotel activities with the rules of the Islamic religion, adoption of Islamic quality principles as the basic policy of the hotel and improvement programs prepared in line with the evaluations of the internal audit (Razalli, 2020, p. 99). It is influential to have advisors who monitor the hotel's compliance with religious rules (Ahmat et al., 2012b, p. 124). It is usually the management's responsibility to establish a committee of Muslim employees responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the internal halal control system (Karia & Fauzi, 2020, p. 88). In a nutshell, a Muslim "internal halal coordinator", who is fully authorized by the business and an expert in this field should be employed as well as the establishment of a "halal assurance system" (GIMDES, 2019). In Türkiye, Halal Accreditation Agency (HAA) accredits halal tourism certificate providers and provides Halal Tourism Standard Training by HAA Academy (HAA, 2023). There are also legal regulations to prevent non-accredited organizations from introducing themselves as MFH (Palabıyık, 2023).

### Customer Segments

As a result of combining conservative Islamic lifestyle elements with the modern tourism industry, new tourism types or new tourism destinations are emerging (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004, p. 180). While some major destinations may attract Muslim tourists, other destinations have not adequately understood the needs of such tourists (Bahardeen, 2016). The lifestyle of individuals is one of the common reasons for choosing MFHs (Pamukcu & Sariisik, 2021). The guest profile of MFHs includes Muslim guests, non-Muslim guests who want to experience a Muslim-friendly holiday, families, businesspeople who want to stay in Muslim-friendly city hotels on business trips, and individuals who prefer to stay in family-friendly hotels (especially women traveling alone). Hotel selection is mostly made by women, and the wishes and needs of women and children are taken into consideration in designing the services offered (Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç et al., 2021). Also being preferred by non-Muslim guests (Razalli et al., 2013, p. 316), MFHs can appeal to guests who may not specifically seek a Muslim-friendly vacation but are instead vacationing with their families or seeking a

culturally immersive holiday experience (Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009, p. 5).

According to the research carried out by the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) by collecting data from participants from different countries to understand the travel needs of Muslims, it has been seen that the main travel purposes of Muslim visitors are vacation, friend-family visit, and religious travels, respectively. Participants often travel with family members, participating in sightseeing and shopping activities in destinations. Plenty of participants seek a compatible destination with their religious needs before traveling, obtaining information from travel websites, family, friends, and social media. Cost, Muslim-friendly services, and the friendliness of the locals are the most important criteria for destination selection while halal food, bidet/bidet faucet in the toilets, no alcohol in rooms, and sahur/iftar service during Ramadan are significant for hotel selection. Accommodation reservations are usually made from travel websites. 39% of the participants state that the religious needs of Muslims are neglected by tourism professionals. Muslim visitors spend an average of 15 days on their travels. They are often willing to pay extra for products and services tailored to their religious need (COMCEC Coordination Office, 2018, p. 2-31). In the study of Yılmaz and Bağcı (2023), the halal tourism tendency of generation groups was investigated. As a result of the study, the generation group with the highest halal tourism tendency was "Baby Boomers" followed by the traditionalists, the X generation, the Y generation, and lastly, the Z generation.

Guests arriving at MFHs are expected to be Muslims or respectful of the practices of the Islamic faith, generally composed of domestic tourists. In addition, foreign Muslim tourists come from other countries with Muslim populations (Doğan, 2011, p. 479). As per the study of Yusof and Muhammad (2013, p. 1144), these hotels can also be a choice for guests who adopt a healthy lifestyle since MFHs do not allow alcoholic beverages and smoking.

### Customer Relations

Guest relations are quite crucial for MFHs, as it is for many other service providers. MFHs offer facilities such as catering and accommodation and ensure that guests are comfortable about obeying their religious sensitivities during holidays (Omar et al., 2013, p. 6). The insufficient implementation of Islamic rules in MFHs is an important reason for customer complaints (Boğan & Arıca, 2019, p. 266). Therefore, hoteliers of MFHs need a deep understanding of religion to improve guest relations (Hall et al., 2020, p. 3). In addition, hoteliers should understand Muslim customers' needs correctly to ensure their satisfaction (Zafir, 2015). Therefore, meeting the religious needs of the guests is significant to increase guest

satisfaction (Weidenfeld, 2005, p. 143). When the needs are not realized enough, it can negatively affect the hotel's performance. These effects cause a decrease in revenue, profitability, guest satisfaction, and guest loyalty and lead to less competitive power, advantage, and a negative perception of the destination (El-Gohary, 2016, p. 130).

The rules adopted as per the hotel concept are valid for the guests as well as the hotel business, so guests are expected to abide by ethical rules (Stephenson, 2014, p. 157). MFHs should consider the followings when serving guests (Razalli, 2020, p. 102): Muslim-friendly welcoming, warnings about no alcohol, information about Muslim-friendly restaurants, mosques, and markets in the surrounding area, call for morning prayer, prayer rugs, prayer times, providing Muslim-friendly products/services such as honeymoon packages, tours, seminars and conferences, no gambling-related products and services, Muslim-friendly shopping mall, Muslim-friendly detergent for laundry, ethical and fair pricing, providing price information for rooms, meals, and other products, non-discrimination on price, ethical behavior, convenient location, no unnecessary delays in services, ethical promotional activities, no sexually explicit elements, no fraudulent, and the application of Islamic financial transactions. Some of the requirements stated by GIMDES (2019) for guest relations are as follows: The clothing of the guests and staff should be appropriate to the concept. Guests who do not dress appropriately should be warned or not accepted. Events such as weddings or conferences held at the hotel must be compliant with religious requirements. Male and female guests staying in the same room must be married or first-degree relatives.

### **Key Resources**

MFHs have certain specific characteristics in terms of human resources. Some features that should be implemented in these hotels are as follows: providing gender-based facilities and services leads to more hired personnel than in traditional hotels, increasing the labor cost in MFHs (Razak et al., 2020, p. 45). In non-Muslim countries, particular attention should be paid to the fact that at least 30% of the employees in MFHs operating are Muslim (Razalli, 2020, p. 101). Personnel who can maintain a Muslim-friendly approach should be employed (GIMDES, 2019). Therefore, MFHs should clearly state the job description and expectations in their job postings. The behavioral characteristics of the hotel staff should match the hotel concept as possible to avoid any hostile behavior (such as alcohol or gambling) which should be considered during the selection of employees (Boğan et al., 2020, p. 9).

The alignment of employees with business objectives is influential in the success of business activities (Dinçer & Fidan, 1997, p. 96). The managers of MFHs may encounter resistance to the MFH concept in terms of personnel, especially during the concept transformation process.

Therefore, the specific concept should be interiorized by senior management and other staff (Seçilmiş et al., 2017, p. 767-768). Halal training should be provided to all employees of MFHs (GIMDES, 2019) to provide comprehensive knowledge about how halal the result of their work activities (Karia & Fauzi, 2020, p. 88). In this vein, standards and accreditations need to be developed in cooperation with the Vocational Qualifications Authority. Moreover, practices in other countries should be explored analyzed. The guides, cooks, service personnel, and managers specialized in MFT should receive training. Training and certificate programs should be provided. MFT courses should be given at tourism education institutions and training modules should be developed. Joint graduate programs should be prepared in the fields of theology and tourism. Local authorities and stakeholders such as NGOs should gain awareness of this issue (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2017, p. 15-17). For example, several courses and training on MFT education are offered and organized at the universities by various NGOs and HAA in Türkiye. According to Razalli (2020, p. 101), staff should be trained in helpfulness and friendship. In the MFHs, staff clothing should conform to the concept. The staff must behave by moral norms. The staff should be allowed to pray by providing enough time and space. Dressing rooms should be separate for male and female employees. The safety and security of personnel must be ensured (Razalli, 2020, p. 100-101; Stephenson, 2014, p. 157).

MFHs must comply with Islamic values at every step, from capital to operation (Yusof & Muhammad, 2013, p. 1144). Besides zakat, other activities such as salary payments, savings, and investment should also be practiced according to Islam. However, finance is not sufficient in most MFHs (Razalli, 2020, p. 99). To ensure that hotel management and religion are compatible, the resources used in hotel management should be based on Islamic finance principles. Therefore, transactions and investments should be made by the principles and practices of Islamic banking, accounting, and finance (Stephenson, 2014, p. 157). Islamic finance requires that the profit or loss of the organization must be shared among all parties. Riba ("excess" or "unjustified increase") is prohibited in Islamic finance. Riba al-nasiah, one of the principles of Riba, is defined as "an excess of the original amount charged for delay in repayment". Briefly, interest-based profit is restricted in Islam (Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009, p. 3; Zulkifli et al., 2011, p. 300). Transactions made must not include interest (Razalli, 2020, p. 99) since interest is expressly prohibited in the Qur'an (Baqara: 275).

### **Channels**

Determined by COMCEC, MFT marketing's priorities were examined in three dimensions: promotion, distribution, and pricing. Some of the services are digital promotion, advice of reference groups, promotional trips, integrated campaigns, cross-promotion with other sectors

that are compatible with the halal lifestyle, visitor guides, campaigns, virtual reality, and cluster marketing (COMCEC Coordination Office, 2018, p. 6-134). Recently, online sales opportunities are frequently preferred by MFHs such as online travel agencies and online tour operators (Resort Magazine, 2015, p. 35). Many websites offer information that can make the holiday fun and Muslim-friendly. Along with smartphone applications (Battour, 2017, p. 28), tools such as radio, television, and print media are also used (Kılıç et al., 2021; Özbay, 2020).

In the MFT market, promotional activities are quite substantial both on a country and business basis. Proper promotions that target audiences will increase tourism potential, by gaining customers' awareness about MFT (Zengin et al., 2017a, p. 606). However, obscene images should not be included in posters, advertisements, and billboards prepared for promotion (GIMDES, 2019). Direct sales, travel agencies, tour operators, service providers' websites, and online tools serving B2B (business-to-business) and B2C (business-to-consumer) can be preferred as distribution channels in MFT. Generally, a competitive pricing strategy is applied. In addition, prices are increased depending on demand during periods of high demand. Businesses are advised to make competitive pricing and create value, as the cost is the most important factor in destination selection for traveling Muslims. As an exception, high-income Muslims can agree to pay more for quality products and services. A second exception is observed when demand exceeds supply in beach hotels during peak season (COMCEC Coordination Office, 2018, p. 6-134).

cafes, travel agencies, and tour operators, research and education institutions (Zarkasyi et al., 2022), and Muslim-friendly financial institutions (Nisha & Iqbal, 2017).

Considering the characteristics of MFHs, it can be stated that key partners are halal-certified product/service suppliers, certification bodies and travel agencies, and tour operators cooperating with MFHs. Halal certificates can be used as a tool in marketing products and services (Rajagopal et al., 2011, p. 138). Halal certification can ensure that the food consumed is halal for Muslims, strengthening MFHs' F&B services. Additionally, a certification must be obtained for the F&B products and services in the rooms (Razalli, 2020, p. 102), issued by authorities or government agencies to guarantee traveling Muslims' religious conformity to the product or service (Mohsin et al., 2016, p. 139). Although there is halal writing in Arabic in many of them, Halal certification has not been standardized worldwide yet. These halal logos of countries are different (HAA, 2018, p. 8), leading to a serious problem faced by companies working in this field while obtaining certification. Since MFHs do not have a general and inclusive standard around the world, their services may vary (COMCEC Coordination Office, 2018, p. 4-7). Furthermore, hotels that seek to obtain halal certification may encounter various difficulties due to the requirements and detailed controls during the certification process. For example, the necessity of all materials used in the hotel's kitchen to be halal-certified or choosing halal-certified suppliers with other details may cause difficulty or hinder obtaining a certificate (Karia & Fauzi, 2020, p. 88).

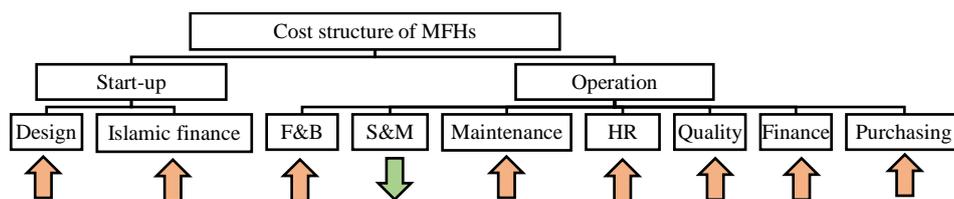
**Key Partners**

Various stakeholders that constitute or affect the supply chain of MFHs were investigated in different studies. These stakeholders can be listed as MFT marketers, media or press (Ainin et al., 2020; Zarkasyi et al., 2022), Islamic scholars (Ithnan et al., 2022), hotel operators (Ithnan et al., 2022; Zarkasyi et al., 2022), the hotel's guests (Ithnan et al., 2022; Samsi et al., 2011; Zarkasyi et al., 2022), employees and human resource management (Ab Talib et al., 2015; Samsi et al., 2011), the central and local government supports (Ab Talib et al., 2015; Huda et al., 2022; Samsi et al., 2011; Zarkasyi et al., 2022), food and other product suppliers, NGOs (Samsi et al., 2011), halal certification and accreditation agencies (Ab Talib et al., 2015), management of tourist attractions, restaurants and

**Cost Structure**

Although the operation and establishment of MFHs are essentially no different from standard hotels, there are a few differences to consider at the planning stage (Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009). Hoteliers especially highlight high start-up and operating costs in MFHs (Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç et al., 2021). In Figure 1, MFH departments that differ from standard hotel departments in terms of cost in start-up and operation processes are presented.

During the stage of hotel development, design, and finance cost becomes prominent. Hoteliers of MFHs emphasize that the investment cost is high since the separate areas for men and women should be constructed (Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç et al., 2021). Gender-based function rooms, wellness facilities, and separate floors are needed at MFHs (for



**Figure 1. Department-based cost structure Muslim-friendly hotels**

Source: Prepared by the author by compiling the relevant literature

single males, single females, and families) (Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009). Building multiple activity fields is another factor that increases the total costs (Zengin et al., 2017b). In addition, any cost of halal finance in the hotel development process should be considered (Samori & Rahman, 2013).

In the food and beverage department, supplier costs of halal-certified food ingredients are highlighted by hoteliers (Baran et al., 2017). It is understood that there are two different views on alcoholic beverages in the relevant literature. Accordingly, not serving alcohol is sometimes seen as a significant cost advantage (Tekin, 2014), yet the absence of sales of alcoholic beverages decreases the profit in the food and beverage department (Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009). Determining the target audience is easy and MFHs can provide advantages in reducing sales-marketing costs and profitability (Karayılan et al., 2017, p. 1198-1200). MFHs provide unique value propositions and have high purchasing power in the potential market (Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009). Energy and maintenance expenses of separate facilities such as separate function rooms, wellness facilities, and separate floors exist. As the need for personnel in housekeeping and service departments will increase, there may be extra costs in terms of human resources (Resort Magazine, 2015, p. 36; Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009). The need for various MFH certifications can create extra costs for quality departments. The necessity for financial arrangements to comply with religious rules both at the establishment stage and during the operation process (Samori & Rahman, 2013) may cause additional costs. Finally, supplier costs due to certified products for cleaning and food production may result in an increase in costs.

**Revenue Streams**

MFT is a market that can generate significant returns for investors and entrepreneurs (Pamukcu & Sariisik, 2021). In MFHs, the main income streams come from accommodation, catering, activities, and recreational facilities. Due to high demand and low supply, profitability is high in MFHs, making them a unique concept (Idris & Wahab, 2015, p. 204-205). Due to the supply-demand imbalance, the prices of MFHs are above the average price

of standard accommodation establishments (Tekin, 2014, p. 760). However, international companies operating in the hotel sector may be reluctant to manage MFH because they are concerned that not serving alcohol in hotels may adversely affect their revenues (Razalli et al., 2012, p. 93-94). In a study on MFHE (Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç et al., 2021), hoteliers state that the profitability of MFH as an investment depends on the proper business operation, effective marketing, and hotel's location (distance from the airport and the beach). Besides, profitability differs in hotels where the property is rented. The hoteliers stated positive opinions on profitability, declared that the hotel had a high occupancy rate, high demand, relatively further profit on the count of no-alcohol service, and provided spiritual benefit. However, in the research, negative opinions were emphasized more intensely in the profitability category. Some of the remarkable reasons stated on this issue are the short season, low occupancy rate, the negative effects of the changes in exchange rates, high costs (it was emphasized that the investment cost was high since gender-based separate facilities should be established), increase in costs (especially food expenses increased due to inflation, but hotel prices could not be raised at the same rate), less revenue compared to the investment cost, the target segment which is middle class, the decrease in the income level of the guests, and the high competition (Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç et al., 2021). Lastly, separate allocation of floors may cause a loss of income and a decrease in demand when adequate rooms do not exist (Rosenberg & Choufany, 2009).

BMC is presented in Table 1. Considering the synthesized academic knowledge through the study, MFHE-specific characteristics on value propositions, key activities, customer segments, customer relations, key resources and partners, channels, cost structure, and revenue streams are provided.

**4.1. Success in Muslim-Friendly Hotel Entrepreneurship**

The MFH concept brings meaningful opportunities to businesses (Razalli et al., 2012, p. 94). The most fundamental factors behind the rise of MFHs are the increases in Islamic financial resources and the raising number of Muslim travelers (Rosenberg & Choufany,

**Table 1. A proposed Business Model Canvas for Muslim-friendly hotel entrepreneurship**

<b>Key Partners</b> Halal-certified product/service suppliers, Certification bodies, Travel agencies and tour operators collaborating with MFHs.	<b>Key Activities</b> Muslim-friendly hospitality services (Performing hotel business activities by considering the Islamic religion).	<b>Value Propositions</b> Religious-sensitive holiday experience (Halal food, Muslim-friendly holiday environment, Separate entertainment facilities.)	<b>Customer Relations</b> Reliability (presentation of certificates), Providing an atmosphere that will not disturb hotel customers.	<b>Customer Segments</b> Muslim travellers, Non-Muslim travellers who desire to experience Muslim-friendly holidays, Families, Religious-sensitive business travellers staying in Muslim-friendly city hotels, Travelers who prefer to stay in family-friendly hotels due to security concerns.
	<b>Key Resources</b> Human resources capable of providing services under the concept, Muslim-friendly financial resources.		<b>Channels</b> Social media, Web, Travel agencies and tour operators, Radio, TV, Print Media	
<b>Cost Structure</b> Fixed Cost: Start-up costs (Additional cost for gender-based separate facilities) Variable Costs: Salaries, the cost of halal-certified products.			<b>Revenue Streams</b> Revenues from sales of Muslim-friendly accommodation, catering, activities, and recreational facilities	

Source: The table was obtained by compiling the relevant literature and re-adapting the BMC which is prepared by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010), and then is adopted by Abd Aziz and Ramli (2017) aiming to integrate the halal concept into the business model development process.

2009, p. 1). In 2022, 12% of all international arrivals (110 million visitors) were international Muslim visitors (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2023). The following questions should be considered for MFHs to be successful: “How will the hotel be positioned in the market?”, “Will existing brands be damaged?”, “Can non-Muslim guests be comfortable in this concept as in traditional hotels?”, “Would they like to stay in hotels with this concept?” and “Do existing hotels take the risk of converting to this concept?” (Razalli et al., 2012, p. 94). As reflected in the research by Kılıç (2020) and Kılıç et al. (2021) outstanding factors in the success of MFHE are the compatibility of the entrepreneur's lifestyle with the concept and the location of the hotel. In the mentioned study, factors that contribute to the success of MFHE were examined under three sections which are the entrepreneur's characteristics, the facilities' features, and business activities. Entrepreneur-related success factors are the entrepreneur's honesty, resolution, belief in her/his work, and endurance. Hotel recognition, peacefulness and family-friendliness of the environment, cleanliness, location, largeness of the premises (especially for gender-based facilities), pool and sea are facility-related success factors. The most emphasized success factors related to business activities are the staff, guest satisfaction, and service quality. Other factors can be listed as food and beverage, price-benefit balance, discipline, promoting honestly, and the development of hotel services in line with autocriticism or requests from guests (Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç et al., 2021). Nine basic themes on MFHs' service quality are revealed as hotel, personnel, food, rooms, location, pool, facilities, cleaning, and wi-fi (Arasli et al., 2023). In particular, the quality of halal products has

an enormous role in the loyalty of hotel guests (Jung et al., 2022). To be able to offer Muslim-friendly products and foods to customers, suppliers and certification bodies should be cost-effective and reliable. This ensures an initiative to be more successful (Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç et al., 2021). Salaheldeen et al. (2021) proposed the "Halal Entrepreneurship Success" scale that includes four dimensions which are "Islamic success", "economic success", "social success" and lastly, "environmental success". As can be understood from these revealed dimensions, businesses have responsibilities toward consumers, the physical environment, and society (Akat, 2009, p. 29). In this context, corporate social responsibility strategies (related to Islamic values) and charity donations are implemented in MFHs (Stephenson, 2014, p. 157).

The success model created for MFHE is presented in Figure 2. According to this model, entrepreneurship opportunities are perceived and evaluated in line with the stimulation provided by the MFHE ecosystem (Bruns et al., 2017). The elements stated in the ecosystem model proposed by Isenberg (2011) were implemented. According to the model, the entrepreneur, who is stimulated by the existence of the appropriate ecosystem, profitability, capital, and personality/value congruence realizes the investment after evaluation (Battour et al., 2022; Gursoy et al., 2017; Nor et al., 2017; Rozita Tahir et al., 2016; Soltanian et al., 2016). The MFHE ecosystem is an element that supports the business activities to be implemented in accordance with the concept. Similarly, harmony among the concept, its values, and the personality of the entrepreneur can contribute to the success of the

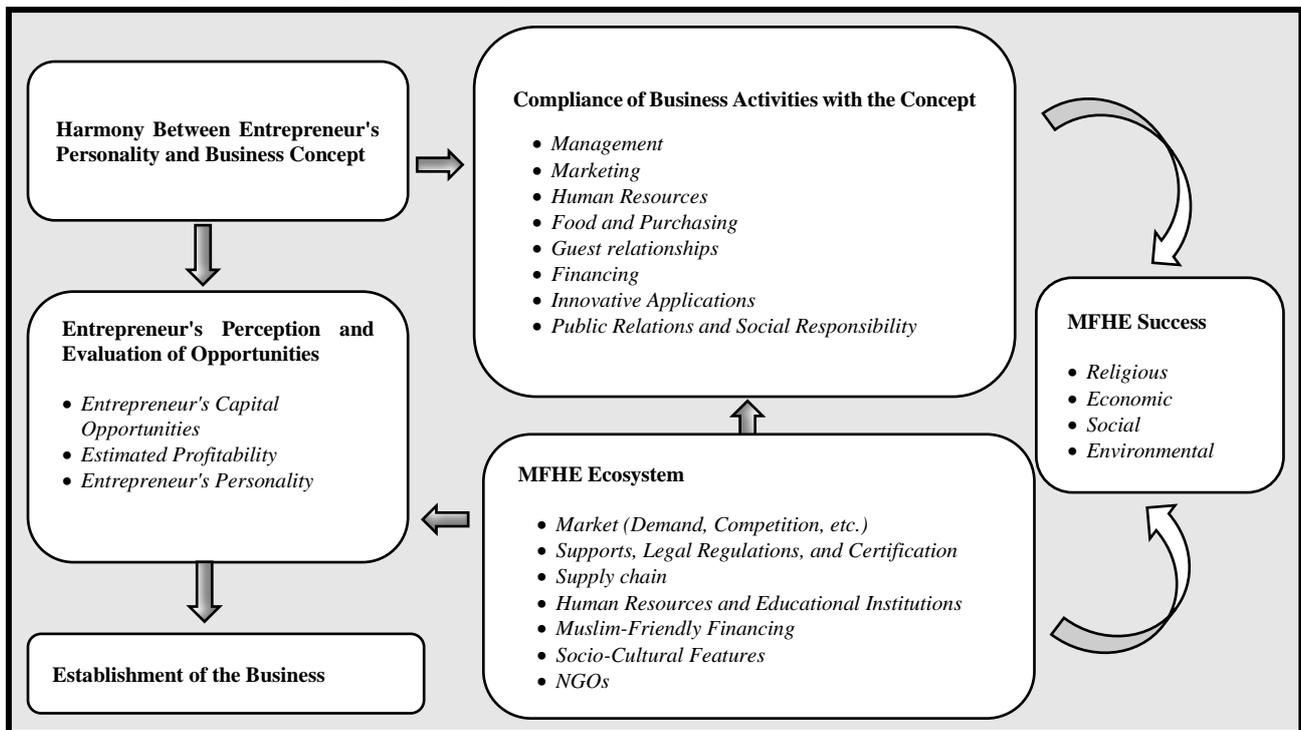


Figure 2. Success Model of Muslim-Friendly Hotel Entrepreneurship

Source: Prepared by the author by compiling the relevant literature

MFHE as it can help the correct execution of the business activities (Kılıç et al., 2019; Farmaki et al., 2020; Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç et al., 2021). Lastly, as revealed by Salaheldeen et al. (2021), ultimate success is evaluated under the dimensions of religious, economic, social, and environmental success.

#### **4.2. Challenges of Muslim-Friendly Hotel Entrepreneurship**

MFH is not a well-known concept by hoteliers (Razalli, 2020, p. 97). A lack of awareness of MFHs may lead to several problems in hotel management and the service delivery process (Hall et al., 2020, p. 8). Based on the literature, several drawbacks and problems can be stated.

Muslim-friendly enterprises can be initiated with religious concerns as well as commercial profits. However, profitability expectation is one of the reasons why a hotel business later changes its concept to a Muslim-friendly one (Doğan, 2011, p. 483). Due to the increase in the number of Muslim tourists traveling, hotel concepts can be changed to MFH. However, certification is quite seldom, possibly due to the lack of relevant authorities in this field (Boğan, 2020). MFHs usually do not have any certification for the kitchen. Instead, they pay attention to the supply of halal food (Yıldırım & Özbay, 2019, p. 341). Potential investors and entrepreneurs of MFT are hesitant to invest in this sector due to the lack of legislation and regulation (Tekin et al., 2019, p. 67-83).

The difficulties faced by MHT, such as xenophobia and anti-Islamism, are also prevalent in MFHE (Abbasian, 2021). The sale of alcohol, which is considered a considerable income item in many hotels, is not allowed in MFHs (Razalli, 2020, p. 103). Some businesses try to fill this gap by offering services such as banquets. However, this situation is not considered advantageous in terms of profit, especially for international chain hotels (COMCEC Coordination Office, 2018, p. 48). Some non-Muslims have a negative perception of Islamic countries. This negative perception is about extremism in punishment and violation of women's rights. Hence, it is considered challenging to expand into the wider market (Yusof & Muhammad, 2013, p. 1144). Considering other studies (Kılıç et al., 2019; Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç, 2021; Kılıç et al., 2021) prepared within this framework, it is thought that addressing some of the current foremost debates can provide elaborated apprehension on the subject: Discussion and criticism of the concept by individuals with different ideology are one of the paramount issues encountered by hoteliers. Such criticisms sometimes appeared in the press and resulted in a negative image. Furthermore, certain claims highlight the ethical debates related to the concept, creating a negative perception. For instance, the inability to offer products complied with halal standards sufficiently and the operation of the concept is often left to the conscience of the hoteliers. Therefore, it is understood that legal regulations are necessary so that the implementation of the concept is not left only to the

conscience of the hoteliers. However, the question of "Can a similar legal regulation be made for each hotel concept?" is one of the controversial topics. In terms of entrepreneurial motivation in MFHs, two main intentions that have emerged are profitability-focused and spirituality-focused. For example, transforming the concept according to the sector's demand (at one time targeting the European market, while at the other time serving tourists demanding Muslim-friendly services) may cause some lack in service areas such as inadequately suited indoor pools. In this sense, the concept is sometimes abused in the sector for the mere purpose of making a profit. Thus, this may leave other hoteliers in a detrimental situation in terms of the reliability and image of the concept. Considering the relevant literature, it can be argued that "MFH entrepreneurship" and "entrepreneurship in MFH" are two different concepts. It is understood that, in the previous, all entrepreneurial activities must comply with religious rules from the beginning (intention), while the latter possesses a "marketing purpose" (Kılıç et al., 2019; Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç, 2021; Kılıç et al., 2021). To provide a more detailed view, MFHE can be associated with concepts such as halalpreneurship or Islamic entrepreneurship. Considering this aspect, it can be considered as a concept that considers the entrepreneur's lifestyle, the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and Islamic values with greater emphasis (Abdullah & Azam, 2020). Entrepreneurship in MFHs, in contrast, predominantly implies an entrepreneurship-oriented approach. In other words, it can be described as an application of entrepreneurial technical knowledge within MFHs. For instance, the term "innovative marketing opportunity" can be exemplified (Battour et al., 2022).

#### **5. Conclusion and recommendations**

In the current study, MFHE was analyzed under a comprehensive and holistic framework based on the relevant literature. While there are many studies in areas such as MFT, Muslim entrepreneurship, Islamic entrepreneurship, and halal entrepreneurship in the related literature, the number of studies on the theoretical and practical analysis of MFHE is quite limited. Therefore, the current research can contribute and fill the gap in the literature. No matter how conceptually it is idealized and standardized, the application of the concept shows a heterogeneous structure according to the city, hotel type, and personality of the entrepreneur or manager. Hoteliers emphasize the influence of chain hotels in this concept for both branding and standardization (Kılıç, 2020; Kılıç et al., 2021).

The study's results have identified BMC and MFHE Success Model with an elaborative literature review. The examined models extend the current understanding of the MFHE. Based on the designed conceptual model, the importance of congruence and ecosystem concepts is revealed. With the models obtained, it can be stated that the difference between MFHE and entrepreneurship in MFHs stems from the difference between the spiritual and

operational dimensions of the business. To develop the concept, different types of capital and MFHE success can be examined comparatively by examining case studies in future studies. It is thought that the study can contribute to the relevant literature in terms of examining an understudied topic. Testing the conceptual model of MFHE with future empirical studies can provide validation. It is also thought that examining MFHE in cooperation with different disciplines or considering explanatory theories may provide more information on the subject.

Companies can be suggested to unite to create global brands in MFT. This is referred to as the transition to MTM 2.0 (Muslim Travel Market 2.0.) (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2019a, p. 15). In this case, it may be useful to perform cost-benefit analyzes related to the merger of competing firms. New startups focusing on the Muslim travel market need to grow significantly to compete and become global brands. For this reason, it is thought that companies may prefer merging or acquiring a place in the Muslim-friendly travel market (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2019b, p. 14). Potential entrepreneurs in non-Islamic destinations should consider tourists' religious needs which are halal food, water-friendly toilets, and prayer facilities (Jia & Chaozhi, 2020).

Further control of the operations in the industry, arranging training programs for MFHEs, and supporting potential investors may be beneficial. In the relevant training programs, it may be useful to determine the objectives and content according to the needs of the sector, give accreditation to the institutions that will provide training, and update the training contents in line with the opinions of the sector officials. Besides, for further thought, it may be beneficial to examine the subject in terms of the entrepreneur's personality and morality.

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## INFO PAGE

### A conceptual model for Muslim-friendly hotel entrepreneurship

#### Abstract

Muslim-friendly tourism is one of the prominent topics in academic studies due to its potential returns and estimated market volume in recent years. Within this tourism type, customizing tourism products and services currently offered in the sector, rendering innovative tourism products and services needed by the customer segment, and profiting from the sale of these products and services are critical issues that need to be underlined. Although many studies have been carried out on Muslim-friendly hotels which are the essential dimensions of Muslim-friendly tourism, it is known that the studies investigating Muslim-friendly hotels in terms of entrepreneurship are limited in number, content, and scope. Therefore, it is aimed to carry out a conceptual analysis of Muslim-friendly hotel entrepreneurship and examine it under the main headings of the entrepreneurship field. Through the in-depth literature analysis, this study provided insights into the Muslim-friendly hotel entrepreneurship model. The Business Model Canvas, the success model, and the challenges of Muslim-friendly hotel entrepreneurship were produced. In addition to the importance of spiritual harmony between the entrepreneur and business concept, a supportive ecosystem was emphasized based on the designed conceptual model. The article was concluded with the implications for future research.

**Keywords:** Muslim-friendly tourism, Muslim-friendly hotel, Entrepreneurship, Conceptual model

#### Authors

Full Name	Author contribution roles	Contribution rate
Sultan Nazmiye KILIÇ	Conceptualism, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing	100%

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