

Career in hotel industry: Dilemma and Challenges for Muslims Graduates

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ABSTRACT

The hotel industry has becoming one of the fast growing industries in Malaysia and the world. Around the globe, people from all walks of life and religious background enter this industry hoping to gain a promising career. Many Islamic or Muslim majority countries such as Malaysia, Maldives, The UAE, Turkey and so forth encourage the development of hotel industry in order to support tourism or tourism related activities. The hotel industry on the other hand is looking at ways to obtain a good source of workforce to sustain the increasingly challenging business environment. One of the ways is to recruit fresh graduates who have completed their internship/industrial placement program. They can be considered as trained or semi trained workforce since they are formally trained at relevant hotel/hospitality institutions thus having knowledge and skills required by the industry. Through the industrial placements program, students are exposed to the 'real life' experience of working in the industry. Therefore the program benefits in terms of preparing them for their future career. The hotel industry meanwhile would enjoy the advantage of having a pool of trained professionals to choose from.

Nevertheless there seems to be some problems with this type of labour supply. A study on industrial placement program of graduates of a higher learning institution in Malaysia suggests that many graduates did not enter hotel job market due to certain negative experiences or had negative perceptions about this industry after undergone their industrial placements. Some may simply feel that it was hard to work in the industry, while others feel that the industry may not be suitable to them due to religious reasons. Thus, this paper discusses a number of issues related to challenges and dilemma faced by Muslim trainees which seem to impede them from joining the industry's future workforce. Issues related to *aurat*, praying times, alcohol and halal foods and drinks are deemed as significant in influencing their perception of joining the industry in the future.

Information for this study was gathered from a number of internship trainees from a public university through series of interviews by phone, visits to the training sites as well as from trainees' reports. Ultimately, a list of problems and limitations that trainees faced during the training were compiled. In addition, their perception of the industry and their intention to enter the job market within this industry were also solicited.

This paper concludes that although the industrial placement program provides hands on experience for the students, it is crucial that the issues faced by the Muslim trainees are addressed. By doing so, they could be persuaded to stay in the hotel industry; thus increasing the number of Muslim workforce and at the same time the industry would not lose a significant number of potential Muslim managers.

Kerjaya Dalam Industri Perhotelan: Dilema dan Cabaran Graduan Muslim

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ABSTRAK

Industri perhotelan telah menjadi salah satu industri yang berkembang pesat di Malaysia dan seluruh dunia. Di serata dunia, masyarakat dari pelbagai latarbelakang hidup dan agama menyertai industri ini dengan harapan ianya dapat dijadikan kerjaya yang baik. Banyak negara-negara Islam atau negara majoritinya penduduk beragama Islam seperti Malaysia, UAE dan Turki menggalakkan industri perhotelan untuk menyokong aktiviti pelancongan. Bagi industri perhotelan pula, ia perlu mencari cara untuk mendapatkan sumber tenaga kerja yang sesuai supaya dapat terus bersaing di dalam iklim perniagaan yang semakin mencabar. Salah satu cara ialah dengan mendapatkan tenaga kerja dari kalangan graduan yang baru menamatkan latihan industri. Mereka dianggap sebagai tenaga mahir atau separuh mahir kerana telah mendapat latihan di institusi perhotelan/hospitaliti dan dengan itu memiliki pengetahuan dan kemahiran yang diperlukan oleh industri. Program latihan industri mendedahkan pelajar ini dengan pengalaman sebenar bekerja. Jadi program sebegini dapat menyediakan mereka kearah kerjaya akan datang. Industri perhotelan pula mempunyai kelebihan untuk memilih pekerja dari kalangan profesional terlatih ini.

Namun begitu, penawaran tenaga kerja sebegini dilihat ada masalah. Satu kajian berkaitan latihan industri di kalangan graduan sebuah institusi pengajian tinggi mendapati ramai di kalangan graduan ini tidak memasuki pasaran kerja industri ini disebabkan beberapa pengalaman negatif atau mempunyai persepsi negatif selepas menjalani latihan insustri. Sebilangan mereka menganggap kerjaya ini adalah sukar manakala ada yang menolak untuk kekal di dalam industri ini disebabkan masalah berkaitan agama. Jadi, kertaskerja ini membincangkan isu-isu berkaitan dengan cabalan dan dilema yang yang difikirkan boleh menghalang pelatih Muslim daripada menyertai tenaga kerja industri ini pada masa akan datang.

Maklumat untuk kajian ini dikumpul dari beberapa kumputan pelatih daripada pusat pengajian tinggi awam melalui temubual telefon, lawatan ke tempat latihan dan juga dari laporan pelatih. Akhirnya satu senarai masalah dan kekangan yang pelatih hadapi telah disusun. Sebagai maklumat tambahan, persepsi pelatih terhadap industri dan keinginan menyertai pasaran kerja dalam industri ini juga dikenal pasti.

Kertas ini menyimpulkan bahawa walaupun latihan industri memberi pengalaman langsung kepada pelajar, adalah amat penting supaya isu-isu yang dihadapi mereka diberi perhatian. Dengan berbuat demikian, mereka dapat digalakkan untuk melibatkan diri dalam industri perhotelan; meningkatkan penglibatan tenaga kerja Muslim dan pada masa yang sama industri ini pula dapat mengurangkan secara signifikan kehilangan bakal pengurus Muslim yang berpotensi.

CAREER IN HOTEL INDUSTRY: DILEMMA AND CHALLENGES FOR MUSLIM GRADUATES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Due to its multidisciplinary nature, tourism and hospitality attract various areas of research interest such as management, human behavior, finance, planning and development, marketing, training and education and many more. It is reported in the International Journal of Hospitality Management that the topics of research interest from 2000 to 2005 can be grouped into four categories namely lodging, food service, tourism and education (Rivera and Upchurch, 2008). Research related to lodging and food service is generally high (47% and 24% respectively) whereas research in the areas of hospitality education represents only 12% of the articles in the journal. Research related to tourism was low perhaps due to the scope of the journal which usually covers issues within the hospitality industry.

In Malaysia, official record regarding the pattern of tourism and hospitality research interests seems to be lacking. Nevertheless, based on a casual review on websites of a number of public and private higher learning institutions as well as various tourism and hospitality organisations and associations, there is a strong indication that the research interest pattern as discussed above exists. In this case, researchers in Malaysia generally look into issues within the planning, development, challenges and impact of tourism and hospitality industry to its various stakeholders. In terms of tourism and hospitality education, a handful of research were conducted and presented in some symposia. The Tourism Educators Association of Malaysia (TEAM) for example organized various symposia, conferences and forums related to tourism and hospitality education such as *Issues in Hospitality and Tourism Education and Training: Practitioners' Viewpoints* (June 2001), *Hospitality and Tourism in Asia : Charting Our Future Through Education and Research* (May 2005), *Tourism Education - Bridging the Gap between Tourism & Education* (January 2007), *Industry and Education Partnership: Suggestions for the Future* (March 2007), and *Graduate Research in Hospitality & Tourism* (November 2007).

It is also suggested that fundamental issues within tourism and hospitality education and training research are related to the contribution of such education to the industry (Hing, 1997; Xiao and Smith, 2006). One particular issue that received a number of attentions is internship programme which covers issues on the importance of internship programme and its impact on graduates and the industry. Internship program generally benefits students in terms of exposure to the 'real life' situation of the hotel industry. In this case, the training provides hands-on experience as well as giving sense of direction for their future career. Similarly, the hotel industry would benefit from this program since it could have a pool of trained professionals who are competent and ready for the industry.

Despite being acknowledged by scholars and practitioners as beneficial, a number of past research also noted that students encounter various problems during internship which hinder them from joining the industry upon graduation (Basri Rashid, 2010). Many of these problems are associated with adjusting with working conditions, communication and remuneration. Nonetheless, research and discussions concerning dilemma and challenges faced by Muslim trainees during internship programme seems to receive very little attention. Thus, this paper discusses dilemma and challenges that Muslim graduates encounter during their hotel internship which seems to impede them from joining the workforce. Ultimately, the hotel industry may lose a significant number of potential managers. It is hoped that this paper would increase awareness about the need to address limitations face by Muslim graduates and encourage relevant organisations (hotels and higher learning institutions) to work together to resolve this issue.

2.0 HOSPITALITY PROGRAMME AND INTERNSHIP

There are numerous hospitality/hotel management programmes offered by various public and private higher learning institutions. In terms of hospitality curriculum, balancing theory and practical is a subject of continuous debate among academics and practitioners (Alexander, 2007). A vast majority of scholar agree that practical experience is an essential component in the hospitality undergraduate programme such as hotel management (Ford and LeBruto, 1995).

In the 1995 annual conference of Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education, it was emphasized that it is an advantageous for hospitality programmes to have practical training element and that students do not feel fully prepared or confident when provided with only theory based education (DiMicelli, 1998). Moreover, in the increasingly competitive work force market, a strong, hands-on approach which supports theoretical principles is a necessary component for success (DiMicelli, 1998). Thus, many hospitality and tourism higher learning institutions responded to the challenge by developing programmes that have a blend of theory and practical training in their curriculum (Isreali and Reichel, 1998). As such, a comprehensive hospitality undergraduate curriculum essentially has a blend of theoretical and practical components. The theoretical part is generally conducted internally in classes while the practical components involve the hands-on learning experience. The internship on the other hand allows students to practice the theory learned in the classroom as well as gaining other relevant skills and competencies that cannot be learnt without going outside the confines of traditional classroom setting.

In general, many hospitality undergraduate programmes practice two types of practical training modes; internal and external training (Maul and Krauss, 1996). In this case, the higher learning institutions split the training into two phases. The first phase requires the students to undergo the practical training conducted and evaluated by the internal instructors who often to be the lecturers. At this phase, the emphasize is on placing the foundation elements; i.e. the basic knowledge and skills (Chon and Sparrowe, 2000). Essential competencies and all the foundation elements are instilled and polished to ensure that they are competent to perform required tasks. After successfully passing this internal training phase, students will be sent into the second phase that is the external training.

The external training is often referred as internship, industrial attachment or industrial placement. Internship programme involves assigning the students at relevant hospitality or tourism organisations based on their academic programme. For instance, those who are pursuing hotel or hospitality management major would be attached with hotels or resorts. Students majoring travel or tourism management would normally be allocated at travel agencies and private or government establishments that have interest in tourism. Nonetheless, tourism students were also sent to hotels for their internship if requested.

The benefits of exposing students with “real life” experience either in the lab sessions or involvement in the industry have been pointed out in numerous studies. In supporting internship programme, Ford and LeBruto (1995) for example acknowledged that experience gathered from training would bridge the gap between theory and practice. Isreali and Reichel (1998) meanwhile suggest that practical training and internships would provide a set of directions and promoting positive outcomes to the students. It is hoped that they would pick up relevant knowledge and skills as preparation for their future career in the industry.

The internship programme also benefits hotel industry in terms of trained future workforce. As training and grooming potential employees who came straight from general education system may take a considerable amount of time, recruiting future managers from the pool of graduate trainees would be advantageous because they have acquired relevant theoretical knowledge as well as practical competencies during internship.

In terms of work force, a report by the Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2009) indicates that the hotel and restaurant sector is thriving. This sector employs 760,700 workers in 2007 and increased to 783, 600 in 2008. This also means that job opportunities are readily available for students in this field after graduation. This is portrayed in another report by the Ministry of Human Resource, Malaysia. The number of vacancies reported by the hotel and restaurant sector shows that there was a drastic need for workforce from 2004 to 2006. This number dropped in 2007 but the demand for work force increased again in 2008 and in 2009 (table 1). Looking at this trend it is reasonable to believe that there is a constant need for workforce in this industry.

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Vacancies	1,331	11,928	41,641	35,953	55,369	73,448

Table 1: Hotel and restaurant vacancies 2004 -2009 (Source: Ministry of Human Resource)

Despite these job opportunities, a study conducted on a group of Muslim tourism and hospitality graduates suggests that many of them may not want to enter hotel job market due to certain negative experience or negative perceptions about this industry after having undergone the internship programme. Other than comments about the demanding working conditions, many graduates feel that the industry may not be suitable to them due to various religious reasons.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Data for this study was gathered from a number of sources namely the trainees' internship reports, employers reports and interviews. In this case, the students from the Bachelor of Hospitality Management (BHM) and Bachelor of Tourism Management (BTM) programme at Universiti Utara Malaysia who undergone internship at various hotels in Malaysia were taken as sample of study. These programs require students to undergo for a 16-week and 24-week internship programme respectively after completing their final semester. Although students are allowed to identify their preferred organization for internship, they are advised to choose the establishment based on their programme of specialization; hotel management or travel/tourism. An internship moderator is in charge for each program to advise them in terms of recommended establishment as well as on the right procedures and policies.

Upon the completion of the internship, students are required to submit a written report. This report describes their training schedule, duties and responsibilities well as new experience they have gained during the training. They are also required to spell out the benefits, problems and limitations they faced during the training. In addition, the employers are also requested to submit an assessment report regarding the student's (trainee) progress and performance.

In order to gather relevant information, reports from the last two batches of students who underwent the internship exercise were studied. In this instance, 20 students were interviewed either by phone or through visits to their places of training in addition to a series of review on 20 internship reports.

For the purpose of this study, written (from the report) and verbal comments from Muslims trainees were reviewed. This process leads to the construction of a list of benefits and problems faced by the trainees during their training.

This list was then short-listed revealing a number of limitations encountered by these Muslim trainees during their internship which can be interpreted as challenges and dilemma. Finally, their perception of the training and their intention to pursue a career in the hotel industry in terms of their willingness to enter the job market in this industry were also solicited.

4.0 THE RESULT

Although internship is regarded as beneficial to graduates, problems and limitations associated with such programme should not be overlooked. These problems and limitations undermine the potential learning benefits that may hinder the desired training outcome. In this study, a number of limitations have been identified which can be regarded as the contributing factor in repelling young Muslim graduate from embarking their career in the hotel industry. Factors mainly associated with religious needs or rights of trainees (workers) are seen as a strong indication why these graduate are reluctant to join the industry in the future.

4.1 Uniforms

In general, the trainees were aware that hotels provide standard uniform for their staff. Nevertheless, certain types of uniform worn in certain departments caught their attention. They relate this matter to decency. According to them some of the uniforms are a bit 'revealing' or tight and uncomfortable. It was reported for example "the food and beverage hostess uniform expose a number of body parts". Another trainee commented; "At one particular outlet in Food and Beverage department, I had to wear uniform that conforms to my body contour, and I felt uneasy wearing it". In another instance, few female trainees complained that although they were allowed to wear headscarf, the uniform has long skirt with a slit up to the thigh. They asserted; "there is no point wearing the headscarf if the uniform had a long cut up to the thigh, which would expose our legs when walking; it is a mockery". The use of such uniforms in terms of safety and exploitation is also being questioned by some female trainees. This is revealed by comments such as: "We wonder why such uniforms are worn, we feel vulnerable while wearing

the uniforms. The uniforms were designed to get attention; we felt exploited”. Eventually, the rationale of uniforms was criticized; “a staff uniform should look great and make the staff feel good about it but at the same time it should also allow the staff to work comfortably while wearing it”. Hence the benefit of wearing such uniform in terms of work performance or efficiency is questionable.

4.2 Prayer Breaks

Taking the prayer breaks sometimes could be an issue. Generally, trainees on morning shift could go for the *Zohor* prayer after the busy lunch time particularly if they were working in the restaurant or kitchen. A trainee commented; “I normally go for my prayer after the busy period which is after lunch time”. However it is important that they inform their superior and their working partner that they are going for the break. This is to avoid any speculation about them missing from work; as a trainee said; “we need to inform our supervisor and coworker because we do not want them to think we are trying to escape from work”.

Another issue related to prayer is getting permission for Friday prayer especially in organizations where there are many male Muslim trainees. The problem is apparent if they work on the morning shift (7.00am – 3.00pm). Asking for permission to attend the Friday prayer sessions may be seen as trying to escape from work and may be taken as lack of consideration for others. In addition the Friday prayer time coincide with lunch hours thus taking a break during that time is normally not permitted especially for those working in food and beverage service areas. A trainee said; “most supervisor do not allowed us to take a break during that time as we were very busy”. Another trainee commented; “we were normally busy during that time especially in the restaurant, some staff felt that we were trying to avoid the rush hour by taking a break at that time”. Nonetheless the trainees may request to work on different shift (such as afternoon shift – 3.00pm to 11.00pm) so that they may attend Friday prayer. In this instance, a trainee said; we were allowed to ask for different work shift and most of the time the supervisor didn't mind”.

4.3 Headscarf

There seems to be an injunction for female trainees, to wear headscarf particularly in an established 4 to 5 star rated hotels. Majority of these trainees complained that they were not allowed to wear headscarf especially if they were to work at the front line. There were even cases whereby female trainees were asked on the first day upon report duty if they could remove the headscarf during working hours. A female trainee said: “the staff asked if I could remove my tudung while working in the hotel”. Although some hotels allow their Muslim trainees (even their own workers) to wear headscarf on duty, it is done with a condition. Wearing headscarf is only allowed in departments where guest contact is minimum such as the kitchen, housekeeping and administration office. In this instance the trainees were informed that the hotel only allowed those who wear headscarf to work at the back of the house. Hence, trainees who decline to take off their headscarf were only assigned to the ‘back of the house’ departments. A trainee commented “I was informed that the tudung (head scarf) can only be worn by those working in the back of the house”. Some trainees hesitantly obeyed and said; “we felt bad but since we need to work at the front line, we had to take off the *tudung*; it’s their policy”. On a sad note, a number of female trainees mentioned that they had to forfeit the tudung since they wanted to learn working at the front line. They commented; “we wanted to learn so we had to take off our *tudung* while working especially at the front office and food and beverage outlets”.

4.4 Serving alcoholic beverages

In many occasions Muslim trainees raised up the issue on serving alcoholic beverages. In general it was observed that the non-Muslim coworkers view serving alcohol as part of the job of a food and beverage server. Many of them believe that it is alright to serve alcohol as long as they do not consume it. This thought is raised by a trainee when he said; “my non- Muslim colleagues seem hard to accept that we can’t serve alcohol. They think it was alright (to serve the drink) as long as we did not drink”.

In line with this issue, refusing to serve alcoholic beverages are seen as refusing to serve customers. Muslim trainees need to explain that they should not involve in any stage of selling alcohol – from production to serving. A trainee commented; “I had to explain to my coworker

that as Muslim I should not play a part in providing alcoholic beverages”. However many seems to be in dilemma when customers ordered alcoholic beverages. Trainees said they tried to avoid being in this position but they had to serve the drink if customers order directly from them. At this point they thoughts they had to do it. They had to ‘close an eye’ and half-heartedly serve the drink. A statement such as; “I would not suggest alcoholic beverages to customers, but if I had the order I could not avoid but to serve them” indicated that they forced themselves to serve such beverages.

A situation which is considered worst is when trainees were assigned to work at the bar. Refusing to work in this area seems to be taken as refusing direction from the superior and being selective. Again they had to explain that if working indirectly with alcohol is not permitted, working directly at the bar dispensing alcoholic beverages is a more serious matter. In this case, a trainee reported; “my supervisor seemed unhappy when I said I prefer not to work in the bar due to my faith. He thought I was refusing an opportunity to learn”. Nonetheless, many tried to avoid conflict by negotiating to reduce the length of training in this area. “I had to solicit my supervisor, asking him to put me in other areas to avoid being seen as negative minded but the reality is I was trying to minimize the training duration at the bar”. Overall, working at the bar area and serving alcohol put the trainees in dilemma.

4.5 Halal Issue

It is a concern among Muslim trainees if they have to serve non-halal food. Their concern is valid especially the food outlets they are working in do not get halal certification from relevant authority. A trainee mentioned that she work cautiously as she was unsure about the halal status of the food since the names of the food may denote non-halal item. Additionally, some hotel have non-halal food outlet but these areas generally not in the list of training areas for Muslim trainees. Nevertheless a number of outlets serve a mixture of halal and non-halal item or the preparation of the food is questionable such as using non-halal ingredients in the food during preparation. Comments such as; “I was aware some of the doubtful ingredients used in the food but can’t do nothing as I was told that was part of the standard recipe”. Looking at this issue, it is reasonable to understandable why trainees are expressing their uncertainty on their career in this industry.

5.0 PERCEPTION OF FUTURE CAREER

In general, Muslim workers in the hotel industry are aware of the above challenges and limitations. Many of them hesitantly accept these shortcomings as the policy set by the management. In the case of internship trainees, they would normally make a choice; either to ask for placement transfer or try to accept the policy. They are usually advised to check with the establishment regarding their religious rights. It is reasonable to note that denying these rights could influence the trainees' decision to join the industry hence limiting the supply of trained workforce in the future.

The need to address these religious related issues is legitimate due to the fact that Malaysia receives a significant number of tourists from Islamic countries. Data published by Tourism Malaysia shows that the number of tourist arrival from 2003 to 2008 recorded a positive growth trend (figure 3). It is logical to believe that Muslim travelers would mentally at ease knowing they are among people with similar belief. Hence having more Muslim workers who understand Muslim customers would be very beneficial to the industry.

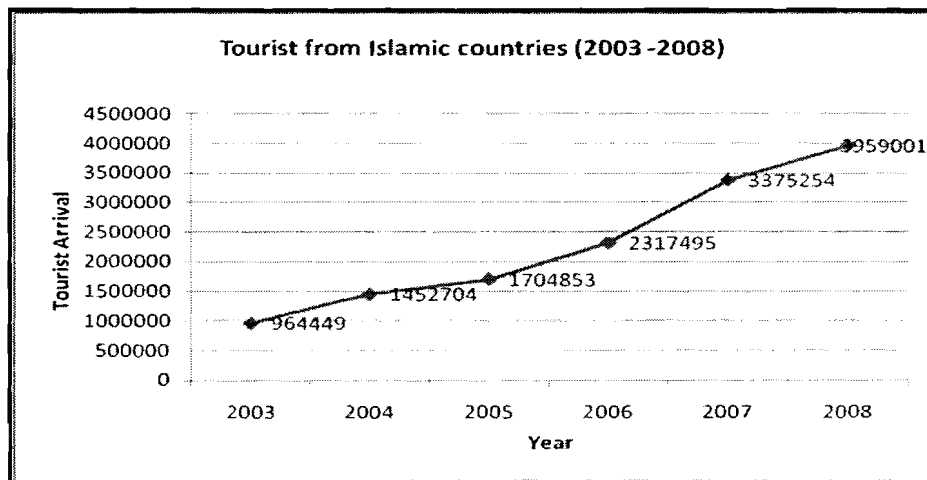


Figure 3: Trend of tourist arrival from selected Islamic countries

Looking positively at the headscarf scenario for instance, having more female staff wearing headscarf working at the frontline may portray the multi-ethnicity of Malaysia and provide additional comforting element to these tourist during their stay at the hotel.

In terms of perception of the industry and their future career planning, trainees expressed their concern about the possible clash between religious right and the norm practiced by the hotel industry. Other than expressing their concern with their readiness to join the industry in terms of skills and language competency, issues concerning staff uniforms, prayer break, headscarf, serving of alcohol and halal certification seem to influence their perception of the industry.

Although in general wearing hotel uniforms are acceptable, many are unhappy with the uniforms designed for certain areas or departments. This concern is particularly apparent among female trainees. Many did not consider wearing such uniform as beneficial in terms of work performance or efficiency; hence they thought the hotel seems to exploit women. This is noted in comment such as; “I don’t think revealing uniforms would increase efficiency or have any other benefit but it could be interpreted as exploiting women workers. I don’t see myself wearing that uniform in the future”.

Friday prayer break was an issue among male trainees especially when they had to work on morning shift. They took this limitation with precaution because they were aware that certain department are busy during this time, thus missing a few Friday prayers would be inevitable. However many are optimist since they could negotiate with the supervisor to change their shift with non-Muslim or female colleagues. A trainee express this optimism; “I know it could be troublesome but I think some supervisors are aware of this and can accommodate our request to change shift especially our non-Muslim or female friends were willing to help”.

Muslim female trainees felt that there is a double standard or an unfair condition in the headscarf issue. They strongly believe that headscarf has nothing to do with their capability or efficiency. A number of female trainees stressed that “we are sure that our *tudung* would not in any way obstruct our work. In fact in areas such as the food production, the *tudung* would be beneficial as it is hygienic”. Some trainees sadly hinted that they were sidelined. Others consider working at the back of the house areas is their only choice as these areas allow them to wear headscarf. This is reflected in comments such as “if we work in hotel line, we would find hotels that allow us to wear *tudung*, or at least working in departments that permit us to do so; there are not many alternatives for us and this could hinder us from doing well in the industry”. Overall, the issue related to scarf seems to deny their right as well as preventing them to prove their capability at the front line areas.

As far as serving alcoholic beverages is concerned, all would prefer not to be involved with this duty. Hence their solution is not to work in outlets where alcohol is served. A trainee for instance stated that “I think working in hotel is alright but I prefer not work in the food and beverage since I might need to serve alcohol”. Alarmingly, a number of trainees stress that they may not want to work in the industry if they cannot find a free alcohol establishment. “I may not want to work in areas where alcohol is served; perhaps F&B is not the department to work in. I will try to work at alcohol free hotel, if not may be I will work in other industry”.

Overall, the negative perceptions about the hotel industry seem to be associated with the limitations that the trainees experienced during their internship. They found rather difficult to accept the norms of the industry which basically perceived as not in line with their religious belief. The limitations can reasonably be translated into dilemma if they want to join the hotel industry upon graduation. Nonetheless, to change the practices which for some regarded as the norms is a challenge to them and to the industry as a whole.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Generally, the limitations faced by the Muslim graduates in hospitality industry could be anticipated given the fact that majority of ideas, products, services, policy and procedures are adopted from international hotel industry practices originated from the western countries. These were brought to this country and gradually become norms or standard practices. Those who work in the industry or in this case had followed the internship program would agree that they faced these limitations at their workplace. Some of the limitations could be overcome through negotiations and others need better understanding of the workers religious needs and obligations and to accommodate them in the hotel's policy.

In order to encourage and increase the number of Muslim graduates (trainees) in the hospitality industry, the limitations associated with religious beliefs should be addressed. Failing to cope with these limitations could mean that their talent, skills and knowledge are wasted. This can be a threat to hospitality organisations since they may be lose potential managers. The same trainees will be coming back to the industry to work. However, they face a dilemma knowing that a number of religious related limitations await them. Hence, accommodating the religious needs and addressing the dilemma is desirable so that the image of the industry is upheld and that they would not shy away from the hotel job market.

It is timely that the industry players, higher learning institutions and relevant authorities meet to encourage better understanding and relationship. Meetings and discussions should be arranged in order to appreciate each other's contribution to the industry so that a win-win situation can be achieved. Ultimately, a good quality training programmes that consider the needs of the graduates would not only benefit the graduates, but would also greatly benefit the industry in terms of accessibility to trained workforce and at the same time save on training time and cost.

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