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TITLE:

Core characteristics of Muslim-friendly accommodation service quality in Norway: international visitor's opinions

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** In the worldwide context, Muslim-friendly accommodation services have suddenly increased competition. This study aims to research the core characteristics of Muslim-friendly accommodation service quality present and what shapes their level of quality service for the international visitor's opinions visiting Norway.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The study utilizes a mixed-method analysis approach to study 500 reviews using Leximancer software. At the same time, data was gathered from tripadvisor.com using a web data scraper apify.com, an online-based tool.

**Findings:** Qualitative analysis has presented seven different themes, namely accommodation, room, food, staff, location, cleanliness, and facilities. Furthermore, this study contributes to understanding what conceptualized attributes of a Muslim-friendly accommodation are in Norway and whether the perceived service quality in a Muslim-friendly accommodation for international visitors by utilizing themes linked to customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

**Originality/Value:** The study provides an overview of valuable insights regarding the context of Muslim-friendly accommodations in Norway from the perspectives of the international visitors based on user-generated content and identifies dominant themes linked to various values for ratings.

**Keywords:** Muslim-friendly accommodations, Online, Content Analysis, satisfaction, Leximancer

**Foreword**

I want to acknowledge and express my heartfelt thanks to those who gave me the guidelines and possibility to complete this thesis report, especially the University of Stavanger.

I offer my special gratitude and a word of appreciation to my Professor of MHR 201 Advanced methods in business research and analytics & Advisor, Mr. Huseyin Arasli, whose contribution in stimulating suggestions, encouragement, guidelines, and support helped me to coordinate my thesis study, especially in writing this project.

**List of Abbreviations**

COVID -19	Coronavirus disease
EDP	Expectancy Disconfirmation Paradigm
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
UGC	User Generated Content
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

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### **Introduction**

The hospitality industry is vast and contributes significantly to the global gross domestic product (Stafford, 2020). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) presented that travel and tourism as a significant contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the GDP increased by US\$1 trillion (+21.7 percent). Due to increasing mobility constraints, the Travel & Tourism sector contributed 10.3 percent to global GDP in 2019. This contribution dropped to 5.3 percent in 2020 and then increased to 6.1 percent in 2021. (WTTC, 2020)

As per Azimabadi (1994), in the most basic definitions, halal is that which is permitted, and haram is that which is prohibited by Allah (as cited in Fischer, 2008). Halal tourism refers to tourism products that provide hospitality services in accordance with Islamic beliefs and practices (Pacific, 2013).

Before the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID -19) outbreak and the pandemic phase, halal tourism was considered a newer form of tourism and expected to boom soon. Between 2015 and 2060, the Muslim population is predicted to rise at a rate more than twice as fast as the global population (Lipka & Hackett, 2017). Muslim-majority countries such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia have higher GDP per capita than several developed countries, including Japan (Tanada, 2017). Although halal tourism is still a relatively new idea in both tourism theory and practice, it attracts many visitors from all over the world (SESRIC, 2018). The rise of the Muslim population has attracted international corporate players, notably those in the tourism industry. The global Muslim tourism sector is worth \$126.1 billion in outbound expenditure. According to DinarStandard (2018), marketing research and advising business based in New York. In 2011, this amounted to around 12.3% of worldwide tourism spending. Muslim tourist spending is expected to reach \$192 billion by 2020, accounting for 13.4 percent of global tourism expenditures (Rashid et al., 2020).

There was not much or sufficient research or study on halal tourism, and the Norwegian hotel industry in particular, is very virgin when it comes to such literature. Although, Halal tourism is forecasted to do well in the years ahead. However, there is no paper available in the context of Norway which defines what Muslim-friendly accommodations are shaped of, whether their service quality is considered satisfactory or dissatisfactory by the international visitors, and whether they are capitalizing on it and further developing the Muslim-friendly accommodations as the world is seeing great potential in the Muslim-friendly tourism sector and facilities revolving around Muslim friendliness. To fill this gap and contribute to the relevant literature, which is very sparse regarding this kind of tourism development in the Nordic countries. The purpose of this study is to investigate the main characteristics of Muslim-friendly accommodations in Norway and what influences their degree of quality service for international visitors visiting Norway.

The study attempts to provide an overview of insights regarding the context of Muslim-friendly accommodations in Norway from the perspectives of the international visitors who have traveled to and utilized these accommodations. Their review and experiences published on UGC will be utilized further to understand the conceptualized context of service quality. The objectives of the research can be understood with the help of the following points:

- To understand what the conceptualized characteristics of a Muslim-friendly accommodation are in Norway.
- To determine whether the perceived service quality in a Muslim-friendly accommodation for international visitors is satisfactory or dissatisfactory.

In summary, this study will contribute to the literature at least in 6 different ways. Firstly, it is the first study on Norway that addresses it as a Muslim-friendly sector. Secondly, it investigates the Muslim-friendly accommodations quality characteristics in Norway. Thirdly, it investigates the international visitor's opinions of the service quality of these Muslim-friendly



accommodations. Fourthly, it helps establish the major themes for core characteristics of the Muslim-friendly accommodations. Fifth, it investigates the inter-relationship among the concepts gathered from UGC on tripadvisor.com. Sixth, it provides suggestions for the managerial bodies of the Muslim-friendly accommodations in Norway.

In the following chapters, the literature review consists of an overview of relevant literature and the basics of theories. The methodology presents where the sample size was selected, how the data was collected, what basis of measures has been taken into consideration for the analysis and provides us with the statistical data. Results establish themes and their interrelationship and relevance with one another. Meanwhile, the discussion presents the reliability of the study, and its findings and conclusion provide theoretical and managerial implications and suggestions for future references.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Halal and Haram**

##### ***Halal***

As per Azam et al. (2019), Halal is which has come to be understood as Islamic and also, quality assurance, cleanliness, and animal welfare have all been supported by it at the same time. Furthermore, Halal products and services are more sustainable in nature.

Although Muslim consumers are the primary target, the concept of 'Halal' is not limited to them. The term halal is derived from an Arabic word that means "permissible" or "lawful" according to Islamic standards and guidelines. In addition, it is paired with the word 'Toyyiban,' which symbolizes 'good' for humanity. Overall, all halal components are more concerned with providing sound, high-quality services to all consumers. It is also popular among non-Muslim consumers due to the halal industry's values, including animal welfare, social responsibility, environmental friendliness, earth stewardship, economic and social justice, and ethical investments. (Pacific, 2013) Although initially the concept of halal tourism was targeted toward the Muslim religion travelers, but the values, practices, and principles of halal tourism like eco-friendliness, sustainability, and empowerment are regarded high and have been able to attract the non-Muslim community towards it. It is arguable, but halal deems everyone as equal and tries to empower good human beings and beliefs. It also seeks to contribute to the environment as it has given us its blessings and fruits. All these characteristics seem to create interest and engage people in it.

##### ***Haram***

Baalbaki (1993) explains that the word Haram is the opposite of Halal. It signifies taboo, inviolable, sacred, holy, ill-gotten, sin, wrongdoing, or offense. It is derived from the Arabic word

Harama which means to forbid, prohibit, interdict, proscribe, ban, outlaw, declare unlawful, taboo, or make illegal (as cited in Jallad, 2008)

### **Halal Tourism and Muslim-friendly accommodations**

Halal tourism has gained popularity in recent years due to the growing interest of the Muslim population in international tourist destinations and the association of their experiences with their appreciation of Allah's (God's) greatness and a diminished sense of self in the face of Allah's created natural beauty. Islamic laws restrict dietary requirements such as abstaining from alcoholic beverages, meat from deceased animals, and meat produced by suffocating animals, and rules governing male and female behavior based on their clothes and demeanor (Mohsin et al., 2016).

Pacific (2013) referred to halal tourism as tourism products that provide hospitality services in conformity with Islamic beliefs and practices. It offers halal cuisine, separate swimming pools, spas, and leisure activities for men and women, alcohol-free dining places, prayer rooms, and even women-only beach sections with Islamic swimming etiquette. Halal Tourism refers to the activities of any person (Muslim or non-Muslim) who follow Sharia law and consumes only halal products and services while traveling to and staying in places other than their usual place of residence or work for secular or religious purposes for no more than one year (Ahmed & Akbaba, 2020). On the ground level, tourism and tourist accommodations look upon the factors of halal, which makes providing high-quality services to all the guests, despite their social standings, an equality issue, while considering that the care of the environment is also crucial alongside the facilitation of tourism activities. This very nature is also appealing to non-Muslim visitors, and a gradual shift to halal tourism practices is also observed.

**Service quality and halal tourism studies**

A study by Aji et al. (2020) investigated whether Muslim's attitudes and intentions to visit non-Islamic countries remain scarce when non-Islamic destinations adopt halal tourism in their study. This study aimed to see what factors influence Muslim's intentions to visit non-Islamic countries, considering their perceptions of halal risk and the Islamic value of non-Islamic country destinations. The findings show that Muslims' intentions to visit non-Islamic countries are influenced indirectly by attitudes rather than directly by perceived halal risks and Islamic values. The study's limitation was the disproportionate distribution of respondents regarding age, gender, occupation, and, most importantly, the country selection.

Abror et al. (2019) have investigated the connection between Halal tourism, religiosity, customer engagement, and visitor satisfaction. They discovered that halal tourism and customer engagement significantly impact visitor's satisfaction, and religion plays an essential moderating role in this relationship. Their research contributes to the tourism industry by providing necessary information about service quality and perceptions of Muslim-friendly accommodations, specifically halal tourism, religiosity, and customer satisfaction. However, the study had generalizability limitations because it was based on only one country, and future studies were advised to conduct a longitudinal study.

A recent study by Ratnasari et al. (2020) presented a study of Lombok Island to determine the intention of international and domestic visitors, in the face of international Halal tourism, to return to the destination after the earthquake where the island was promoted as an environmental destination. The study sought to determine whether customer satisfaction, in addition to the destination and brand of Lombok Island, directly influences behavior. However, the findings indicated that the environment of the destination brand experience is a significant predictor of visitor outcomes, specifically satisfaction and intent to recommend. They argue that satisfaction is

essential in the subsequent processing of improved visitor experience. The study's limitations included the inability to track all domestic visitors and the reliance on non-probability sampling and path analysis. As mentioned by (Crossman, 2019), Path analysis is helpful in theory because, unlike other techniques, it requires us to specify relationships between all independent variables. However, the obtained results might not be a transparent model depicting the interrelationships of the independent and dependent variables. Both direct and indirect may not be accurate because of the missing or assumed values.

### ***Expectancy Disconfirmation Paradigm***

The Expectancy Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) is a promising theoretical framework for evaluating theoretical framework for assessing customer satisfaction. In this theory, the customer has made a perceived value of expectation of the service performance they expect to receive after they have purchased a service that they will be measured against to evaluate their satisfaction. There are three possible outcomes of customer satisfaction which are: first, they receive higher performance where there is a positive disconfirmation between their expectancy and service performance, which leads to increased customer satisfaction; second, there is a match between what they had expected of the service performance, which also leads to the satisfaction of customers; and third, when the service performance is not good as per the customer expectation, then there is negative disconfirmation which means that there is no satisfaction or dissatisfied customers (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2008). The author plans to utilize the EDP theory to investigate the factors affecting customers as it is necessary to evaluate whether the perceived value of the service is exceeded, met, or underperformed. It helps determine the service quality of the overall Muslim-friendly accommodations in Norway. For the evaluation, a precise definition of expectation is necessary. In the case of a Muslim-friendly accommodation, people seem to expect that these accommodations have been equipped with the necessary infrastructure that the halal service

provides, and that the institution should focus on quality service while also being dependable to handle those services. Through interaction with customers and examination of whether they were highly satisfied, satisfied, or unsatisfied with the services, EDP allows the author of this study to analyze the perceived customer expectation of the services supplied by the Muslim-friendly accommodations representing halal tourism.

### ***Customer Satisfaction***

Customer satisfaction indicates how well the product use experience compares to the buyer's value expectations (Abd Razaka et al., 2020). Customer satisfaction research can help us understand how customers evaluate service quality and, as a result, improve service delivery and poor service performance (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Customers' satisfaction with the Muslim-friendly accommodations and the attributes that make them Muslim-friendly is determined by whether the accommodation has or offers halal infrastructure and technology such as an open prayer room, separate sauna, swimming pools for men and women, alcohol-free dining areas, and provides an equal level of service to all its guests is also observed or considered. Also, the Muslim-friendly accommodations offerings, such as quality service to all, should satisfy their expectations, impacting customer satisfaction. For a customer, the accommodation capacity to give service and quality of service that meets their expectations is critical, as it has an impact on customer satisfaction.

### ***Customer Experience***

Packer and Ballantyne (2016) provided internal responses, which may be thoughts, feelings elicited by physical and social stimuli in environments, events, and activities, filtered through guest aspects like prior interactions, objectives, preconceptions, and motivating factors, ultimately leading to guest inferences, narration, and adaptations, and subsequently to grabbing impressions that last with them like memories, stories. Studying the international visitors based on their

previous experiences will allow us to understand the core attributes of Muslim-friendly accommodation and its service quality. Pine et al. (1999) have defined the experience economy as the next stage of economic development following agrarian, industrial, and service economies. The final business product is the experiences resulting from memorable events for customers.

As for shaping a customer experience with the attributes of a Muslim-friendly accommodation, they must be able to stand as a dependable service provider for both the hotel and its staff, as that accommodation has gained the trust of all their guest for the services they offer. The staff should empathize with all living beings as these factors shape the accommodation into a truly Muslim-friendly accommodation.

#### **User-Generated Content's function in Service Quality Studies**

Krumm et al. (2008) describe user-generated content as coming from ordinary people who voluntarily contribute data, information, or media that is then made available to others practically or entertainingly, usually on the Internet- for example, restaurant ratings, wikis, and videos. Such content has increased rapidly in recent years, providing readily available information cheaper cost-wise as users commonly contribute to it for no charge.

As observed in the study of Zhao et al. (2015), various consumer-generated content for reviews of widely available services and products through online platforms has been able to shape and benefit the accommodation providing organizations for the visitors. It can be seen that TripAdvisor has achieved notable success in a relatively short period, attracting millions of global visitors daily, and many hotels strive for the top spot in TripAdvisor's popularity index, which instantly indicates a hotel's level of quality (Duan et al., 2013).

## **Methodology**

### **Sample**

The sample size of this study is obtained from the international visitors who have visited Norway after December 2019 till April 2022, have utilized the accommodations facilities at the various accommodations, and have provided their UGC reviews on the concerned accommodations page on the online platform of Tripadvisor.com.

### **Data Collection**

The widely used web data scraping online-based tool apify.com has been used to obtain good data collection after a detailed listing of proper criteria for the required data in this study, which is discussed in the measurements.

Glez-Peña et al. (2014) have defined web data scraping as the process of extracting and combining contents of interest from the web systematically using a software agent. The software agent, also known as a web robot, simulates the browsing interaction between web servers and humans in a traditional web traversal process. The robot visits as many websites as necessary, parses their contents to search and collect data of interest and then structures those contents as needed. Bonifacio et al. (2015) discuss how these tools will allow the researchers and students to explore and efficiently collect data on the desired trends without wasting much time while providing access to comprehensive information, structure, and lay out practical concepts with the help of these web scraping tools.

Apify (2022) mentions that the tool is made to help people with simple facilitation and retrieval of information from the web, where various important information is available in a human-readable format. A systematic tool for shortlisting and accessing the obtained data is created with their assistance.



**Measurements**

As per (Arasli et al., 2021), the features picked are immediately noticeable to travelers, regardless of whether they are considering them. For example, a "non-Muslim visitor" will notice an alcohol prohibition in a hotel; a prayer direction signal may not be placed in the room. So, for this study keeping it under consideration, Muslim-friendly accommodations should have some of the most common attributes accepted by the mass to provide an experience of a Muslim-friendly accommodation. The values should reflect and give the guests that the accommodations could be considered Muslim-friendly. Some of the primary measures that have been standardized by CrescentRating (2021) for any accommodation to be regarded as a Muslim-friendly accommodation is listed in Table 1.

Title	Description	Measure
Muslim Rating	Crescent rating criteria have been utilized to consider that the accommodations are Muslim-friendly.	The measure obtained and utilized from the Crescent rating website is listed under:
Muslim Indicator	Indicators used in this study are based on the physical presence of the services offered by the accommodation (halal meals offered at the accommodation that can be directly observed.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rooms for prayers</li> <li>• Halal food</li> <li>• Halal accommodation</li> <li>• Mosque nearby</li> <li>• Alcohol-free</li> <li>• Water-friendly bathroom</li> <li>• No clubs</li> <li>• No casino</li> <li>• No adult television channels</li> </ul>
		<b>Source: CrescentRating (2021)</b>

Table 1 Measurements in this study

### **Data Analysis**

In this research, “content analysis” is utilized to analyze the perspectives of international visitors about the Muslim-friendly accommodations in Norway.

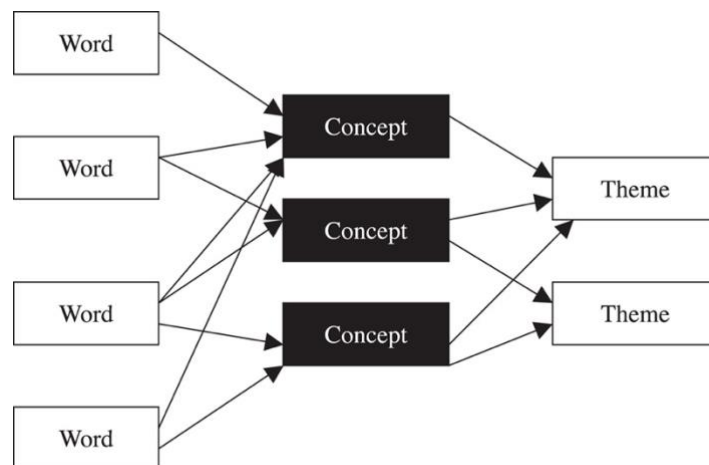
Content analysis studies "by hand" are time-consuming, and dependability is an important topic. Our goal was to use Leximancer, a software tool specialized for analyzing natural-language text data, to undertake a content analysis that traces the history of Social Marketing Quarterly (SMQ) articles (Biroscak et al., 2017). In this study, Leximancer software is used to analyze the data collected from “Tripadvisor.com” and further break it down into manageable categories. Leximancer is a text analytics tool that can be used to analyze the content of collections of textual documents and to display the extracted information visually (Leximancer, 2022). Leximancer is used to evaluate the relationships of dominant themes by analyzing the patterns and establishing a network of clusters based on their reoccurrences. The Leximancer software determines the value of the themes and the concepts and is interconnected based on their importance. (Arasli, Furunes, et al., 2020). Smith and Humphreys (2006) discuss that the Leximancer system uses the reoccurring words for the informational purposes of natural language and then utilizes them and processes them into two different stages based on the Bayesian Theory and Machine Learning principles, which in turn creates a system where concepts and themes are obtained unsupervised and are clustered together into a network.

Dambo (2021) explains that concepts emerge based on their frequency of occurrence, while the most prominent concept emerges as the theme of a cluster. Angus et al. (2021) discusses how the concept list generated by the software is based on the text we input. It tackles the issue of dependability and validity (as cited in Arasli et al., 2021). The essential concepts that reoccur frequently become themes that are categorized according to the rainbow colors. The most

important ones are assigned the colors orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, and the others are in descending order (Arasli, Furunes, et al., 2020).

As elaborated by Lemon and Hayes (2020), Leximancer software is designed and programmed to understand the importance and establish a relationship between the themes in a concept map. Leximancer (2022) explains that concept definitions are used to determine the frequency of co-occurrence between ideas and identify the overall presence of a concept in the text. The concept map is generated using this co-occurrence measure.

Several steps were analyzed to create the concept map. First, the excel file containing data collected from Tripadvisor.com was uploaded into the system. Second, the concept seeds were derived in step two, reflecting the beginning of the concept definition. Thirdly, in this step, some words combine to form keywords that distinguish one concept from another. The following step is "thesaurus derivation," which is specific to each seed. (Ozturen et al., 2021; as cited in Arasli et al., 2021). The Leximancer software allows the user to establish and evaluate the relationships of the various findings from the data entered and divide them into words, concepts, and themes, which are then utilized by it to form a concept map containing the necessary helpful information for the users. The software processes text documents into words, concepts, and themes, as demonstrated in Figure 1 (Manual, 2008).



Source: Adapted from Leximancer (2008, p. 6)

Figure 1 Leximancer processing pattern

### **Data collection and sample**

The study's data collection was obtained from a famous online travel platform called Tripadvisor.com. In the context of Muslim-friendly accommodations in Norway, the measures for standardization were obtained from CrescentRating (2021) and are based on the essential criteria for selecting the accommodations. In this study, for data collection from Norway on Muslim-friendly accommodation, Norway is divided into five primary regions: east, west, central, north, and south. The sample in this study includes ten hotels from each of these zones. Ten reviews were given from each of these hotels, along with ten amenities offered, resulting in a total of 50 hotels with 500 reviews. The reviews obtained are only from the ones made in English.

Tripadvisor (2022) is the world's largest travel guidance platform, assisting hundreds of millions of travelers each month with planning, booking, and activities at various destinations. The platform is user-based, with users posting over 1 billion reviews and opinions about 8 million businesses. It is available in 43 markets and 22 languages to help with travel planning.

Xie et al. (2015) explains that TripAdvisor users can write reviews and assign ratings ranging from 1 ("terrible") to 5 ("excellent") based on a variety of criteria such as overall satisfaction, quality of sleep, location, rooms, service, price-quality ratio, and cleanliness. The effect of online consumer review factors on TripAdvisor (i.e., quality, quantity, consistency, and recency) on offline hotel occupancy (as cited in Molinillo et al., 2016, p. 17). TripAdvisor only utilizes the review of the guests that have at least utilized the hotel for a night. The data gathered for the study were transferred into Excel, where the reviews included vital information like the rating on a scale of 1 to 5, their reviews, and data, as shown in Table 2. A total of 500 UGC were collected for the study.

According to the data obtained from TripAdvisor, 319 reviews were written by male (63.8%), and 181 were written by female (36.2%). Of the total reviews, 317 (63.8%) were written using a desktop device, while 183 (36.6%) were written using a mobile device. Regarding the geographical location or country, the most visitors came from the United Kingdom with 65 (13%), and Germany with 64 (12.8%). The fewest visitors came from Cairo, China, Lithuania, Hungary, Belarus, and five other countries, with one (0.2 %) visitor. It is noticeable that the ratings given for the accommodations in Norway are 165 (33%) for 5 and 45 (9%) for 1 in Table 2.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Reviews No.</b>	<b>Relevance</b>
Published On	Desktop	317	63.4%
	Mobile	183	36.6%
Gender	Male	319	63.8%
	Female	181	36.2%
Review Rating	5	165	33%
	4	145	29%
	3	75	15%
	2	70	14%
	1	45	9%
Country	United Kingdom	65	13%
	Germany	64	12.8%
	Italy	50	10%
	France	44	8.8%
	America	39	7.8%
	Spain	26	5.2%
	Poland	23	4.6%
	Denmark	16	3.2%
	Belgium	12	2.4%
	Canada	17	3.4%
	Romania	11	2.2%
	Switzerland	12	2.4%
	Australia	12	2.4%
	Netherlands	10	2%
	Austria	8	1.6%
	Sweden	12	2.4%
	Thailand	7	1.4%
	Singapore	2	0.4%
	Colombia	4	0.8%
	Greece	7	1.4%
Finland	9	1.8%	
India	5	1%	
Brazil	5	1%	

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Ireland	2	0.4%
Armenia	4	0.8%
Indonesia	3	0.6%
Iceland	3	0.6%
Lithuania	1	0.2%
Portugal	3	0.6%
Latvia	2	0.4%
Czech Republic	4	0.8%
Slovenia	2	0.4%
Philippines	2	0.4%
Egypt	1	0.2%
China	1	0.2%
New Zealand	1	0.2%
Hawaii	1	0.2%
French Guiana	1	0.2%
Liechtenstein	1	0.2%
Hungary	1	0.2%
Belarus	1	0.2%
Isle of Man	1	0.2%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	0.2%
South Africa	1	0.2%
Costa Rica	1	0.2%
Santo Stefano D'aveto	1	0.2%
Bulgaria	1	0.2%

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Table 2 Descriptive statistics for reviewers (number= 500)

**Result**

The study's content analysis provided us with the result as a concept map, highlighting the most important themes and concepts based on a international visitor's perspective about the Muslim-friendly accommodation service. The semantic approach classified the highlighted themes of importance into six distinct themes, ranging from a low 24% to 100%, with accommodation having the highest relevance with 100% and facilities having the lowest relevance with 20%, as shown in Table 3.

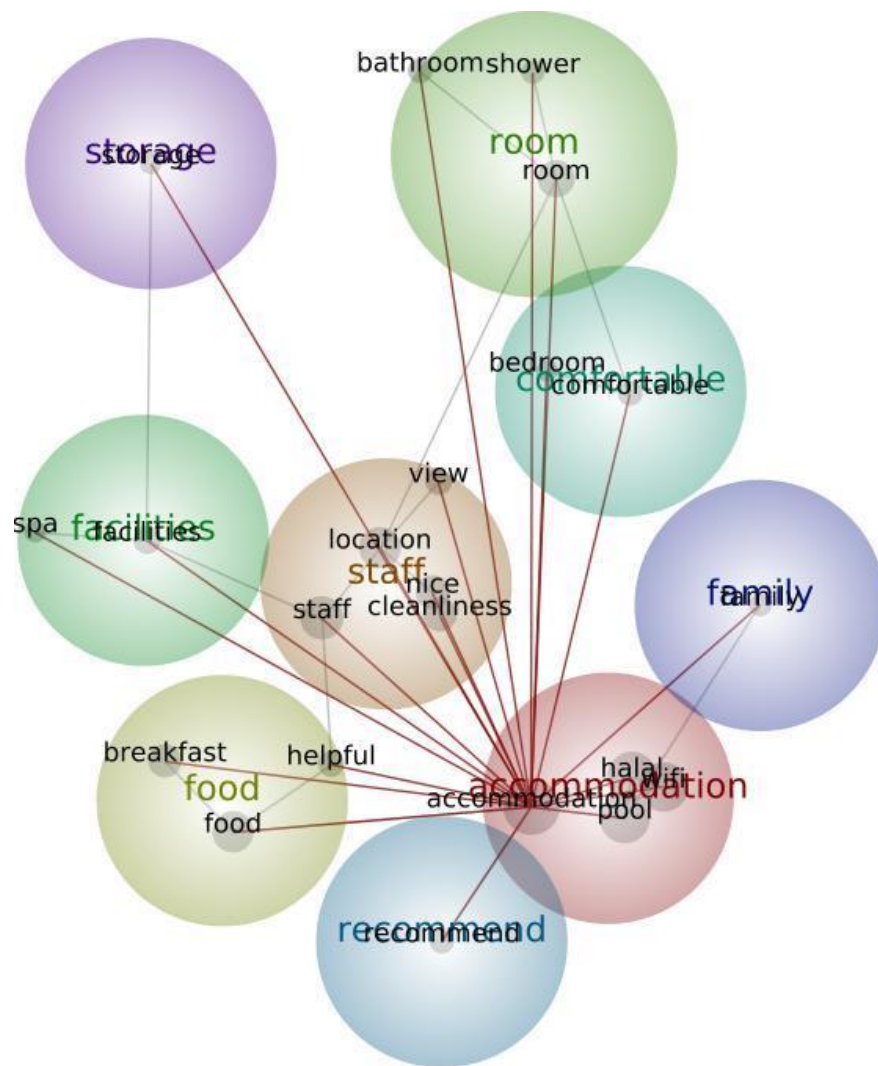


Figure 2 Conceptual map

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Relevance</b>
Accommodation	816	100%
Room	538	66%
Food	500	61%
Staff	467	57%
Location	393	48%
Cleanliness	193	24%
Facilities	167	20%

Table 3 Relevance of the themes

### **Accommodation**

The most significant theme in the study was "accommodation," as it is 100% relevant to all the other concepts and themes, as shown in Figure 3. The theme is composed of the concepts of accommodation (100%), pool (70%), and halal (67%).

A review posted by a international visitor:

Hello, the hotel was good, but the rooms had insects! The food was not pleasant for us. My booking was half board. They even did not respect our request for halal food, and when we asked the waiter for something to eat, he said (you can only eat salads!). Then the day after that, they cook the salad with chicken. I think it is a big and famous chain of hotels, so they have to respect even vegetarian guests! It is not logical for a four-night stay to only eat green salad!



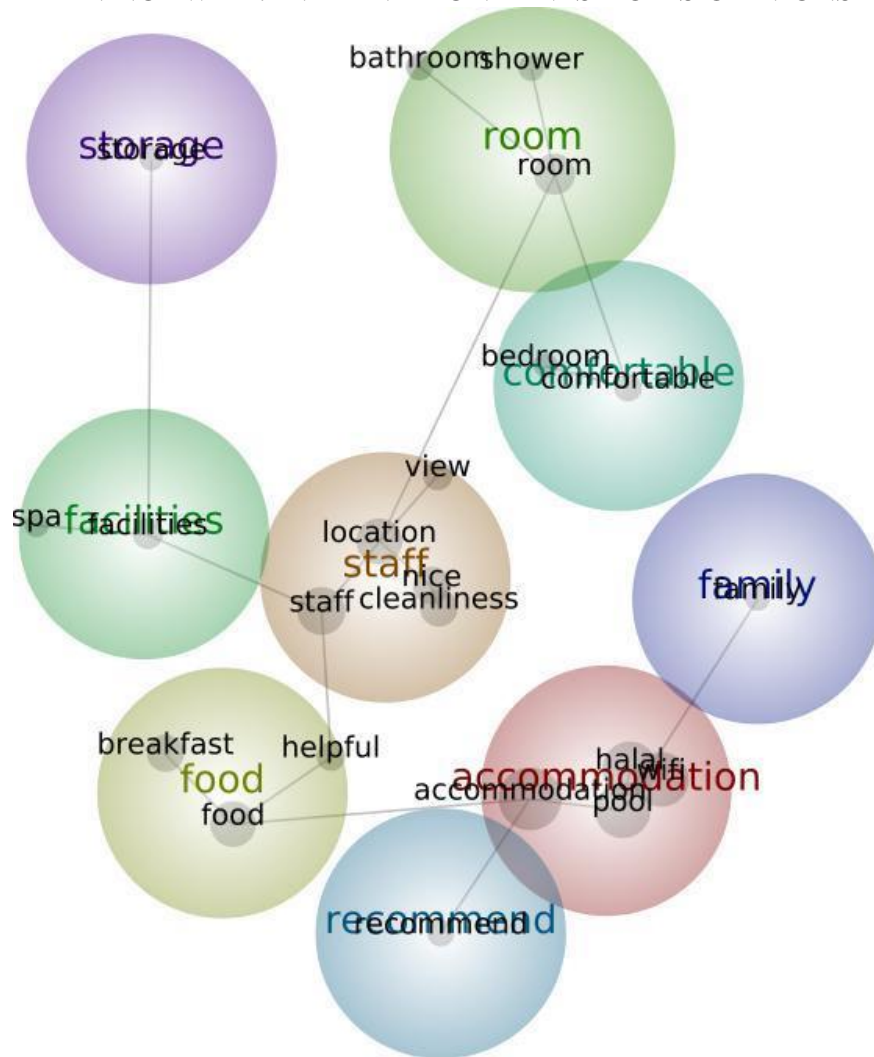


Figure 3 Hotel as the most significant theme

Another visitor shared that "the most affordable for us in expensive Oslo is It is very self-service. You self-check-in (staff at hand if you cannot do it yourself). They do not clean your rooms, change your towels, and you have to remove your rubbish daily, which is OK with us. Pay 30kr for new towels and 100kr if you want the rooms cleaned. The rooms are small and modern, and the beds are comfortable. We were out most of the time and were glad to have a bed to sleep in. The location is perfect for all attractions. There are many halal food joints nearby, even a halal cake shop."

### **Room**

This theme contains the concept of "room" which has 66% relevance, and other concepts, which are bedroom 1%, bathroom 11%, shower 7%, and comfortable 10%. One guest reviewed that:

We are happy with our stay, but there is also room for improvement. We had a room in the second building, which is no problem, but the room was pretty cold. We are nevertheless happy with the size of the room. The room seems renovated, but the bathroom is a bit outdated and worn. The beds are nice, but the pillows are a bit thin for our liking. Plus, for having a small fridge in the room.

Another reviewer commented, "Rooms are quite large, beds and pillows are comfortable. The shower pressure is good, and the bathroom is a good size. "

### **Food**

The theme contains various concepts like food, whose relevance is 61%, and breakfast, 36%. A review by the guest goes as:

I stayed at the hotel for two nights during a business trip. The building of the hotel is atmospheric and very beautiful, especially its exterior, reception area, and the halls. Many old paintings, wood, and cozy armchairs. Breakfast was excellent: good quality food and a wide choice. There was also a complimentary dinner that was a lovely surprise. The food choice for dinner was limited, but it was OK. Having dinner provided at the hotel without any additional fee is very useful in such an expensive city as Oslo!

Another traveler put forth his experience, "You may come to experience, as we did, the breakfast-and evening meal-buffets out of food, sticky buffet floors, juice machines out of juice, spilled food and drinks onto the buffet (and more) without the staff tending to it. A snack on the floor of your hotel room may compensate for the lack of a hot evening meal as promised in the

hotel advertising, but then again, maybe not. However, if you enjoy a tomato sauce-based fish stew, there will be ample for you, as few others do. There are no vegetarian or vegan hot meal options available in the morning or evening."

### **Staff**

The theme consists of 57% relevance of the concept staff and a helpful 9%. A user has stated in his review:

Nice hotel, friendly and helpful staff, great breakfast buffet. A bit low on amenities like toiletries but a pleasant experience overall.

Another guest commented, "We stayed from Saturday to Sunday and could not be more pleased. The staff was excellent, the rooms clean and nice for the price."

### **Location**

The theme consists of location with 48% relevance and views with 12%. One guest mentioned in his review:

Stayed for one-night driving through Norway. It's right on E6 outside Trondheim. Clean room, fantastic view over Fjord. Plentiful breakfast served in a nice breakfast room overlooking E6. Nice staff. Free parking. Gas station on the spot.

A traveler reviewed, "Nice rooms with excellent views, good beds, the front desk is always welcoming you to the hotel, safe parking for your car, shuffleboard for all ages, nice sofa areas, nice breakfast, and when the restaurant is open, nice food there.

### **Cleanliness**

The theme consists of cleanliness with a relevance of 24% and nice 23%. A visitor commented that:

The hotel is just what we needed; neat and clean facilities, kind staff, low price (got an offer at the time of booking). The food is generous and delicious (snacks for tea and dinner included).

### **Facilities**

The theme comprises 20% relevance, along with storage and spa, with a low relevance of 1% each. A visitor reviewed as follows:

From the day I walked in, my check-in was friendly. Quick and very insightful. Not just about what the hotel has to offer and what time the amenities run.

Another visitor had commented, "The swimming pool was awesome, nice feel to the place, always quiet, most likely down to the reason I swam late at night because my days were so busy."

### **Discussion**

According to Abror et al. (2019), visitor satisfaction largely depends on whether their expectations are actually met. The value of services to satisfied visitors, particularly halal-friendly Muslim accommodations, depends on the extent to which these accommodations exhibit the characteristics of halal and whether the visitors who visit them are satisfied with them.

So, for a Muslim-friendly accommodation, the people at the higher levels of decision-makers should give importance to the quality of the services they offer. For example, they treat all their guests with an equal level of quality service. The research is composed of 500 customer-provided reviews, which they published on tripadvisor.com. In contrast to the sample collected reviews of a Muslim-friendly accommodation posted online, the results displayed six different themes, namely accommodation (100%), room (66%), food (61%), staff (57%), location (48%), cleanliness (24%), and facilities (20%). The theme "accommodation" reflected the strongest relationship with this study's other themes.

The second most relevant theme in this study is "room". The study found that the hotel room was highlighted by the user more often by the visitors after "hotel" and was closely shared with the attributes of its themes like bedroom, bathroom, shower, and comfortable. Some hotels in Muslim-minority countries will remove alcohol from the menu list and the room based on a request (Muharam & Asutay, 2019). COMEC (2016) simply stated that the toilets should not face Mecca's direction, at least have water-friendly toilets for the Muslim guests. Also, consist of temporary prayer rooms for meetings and offer Ramadan services. These basic facilities or services play a vital role in visitors satisfaction.

Another critical theme is food which appeared in the analysis. The study presented that food is an essential factor for Muslim Guests and for the accommodation to be considered as Muslim-friendly accommodation. As per a study conducted by DinarStandard (2012), acquiring a

'Muslim-friendly experience' was regarded as a critical factor by approximately 50% of Muslim visitors, while halal food was regarded as the most crucial issue while traveling by 66% of Muslim visitors. Battour and Ismail (2016) mentioned in their study that halal food is one of the essential vital tools that open the market of halal tourism and encourages Muslim visitors to travel to accommodations offering halal food along with other primary attributes like separate sections in the accommodations for food service where there is a ban on alcohol, no bar, and no pork.

One of the significant essential themes in this study is "staff", which is crucial in determining where the visitors visiting these Muslim-friendly accommodations are satisfied or dissatisfied. It consists of various factors like helpfulness and others. Suhartanto et al. (2021) study suggests that staff involved in halal tourism activities must be able to deliver services while following Islamic values, and the ability to do so will attract attention and benefit the destination. If the tourism destination managers can see these things and provide basic training and etiquette, then that destination, accommodation, or service offering organization will be able to satisfy and meet the expectations of Muslim travelers. Another study by Arasli, Saydam, et al. (2020), where he had studied cruise travelers' experiences, also had similar findings that the theme hotel has a close relationship to the characteristics of the employees, for example, friendly, helpful, and others.

Other themes examined in the study are "location", "cleanliness", and "facilities" were view, nice, storage, and spa. A study by Wardi et al. (2018) presented how a small map of location towards the praying direction of the map can make a difference in the service effectiveness. Knowledge, courtesy, and aspiration aspire to quality service delivery and experience for visitors (Badrudin et al., 2012). The presence of water-based cleanliness facilities also is a key for the Muslim-friendly accommodations (Battour et al., 2011)

### **Conclusion**

The guests seem highly dissatisfied with most Muslim-friendly accommodations as per their experience. Similarly, it is observed that most international visitors are satisfied with the attributes of their rooms. Although guests were seen to be impressed with room sizes here in this study, we also observed issues with them as most popular accommodations were old and needed to be updated to modern-day facilities that support halal friendliness. The significant factors that shape these Muslim-friendly accommodations are food and staff. Here, the satisfaction of the visitors with the attribute of food is observed to be relatively low from a Muslim-friendly perspective, as the guests are seen reviewing that there were very few to no options available for halal meals for them, and they needed to go to other service providers for the food outside their organization. Whenever the staff is relevantly good, as it is observed that as an attribute that contributes to the Muslim-friendly accommodations, the staff are very friendly, nice, and helpful and, with a little bit of guidance and push, could be more appealing for Muslim friendliness in halal perspective.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study offers insights into the factors contributing to the perspectives of a Muslim-friendly accommodation service present in Norway and what shapes their level of quality service for international visitors visiting Norway. Firstly, these critical insights highlight the importance of UGC in hospitality studies rather than the primitive and time-consuming data collection methods through handwritten questionnaires or interviews conducted by the authors. Secondly, the study provides a deep context for understanding the reoccurring themes in the visitor reviews of Muslim-friendly accommodations done online, portrayed through the help of concepts and themes in an image. Third, this research studies international visitors "satisfaction" or "dissatisfaction" with the Muslim-friendly accommodation services quality. It provides an understanding of the

customers' experience at the various interaction points and focuses on customer experience to create marketing strategies while utilizing one unique selling point (Rahimian et al., 2020). The study emphasizes the value of the online reviews about the Muslim-friendly accommodation providers, which they can work on and utilize as a potential marketing tool. Also, Leximancer software analysis and research put forth visitor's perceptions regarding the quality of the various attributes of a Muslim-friendly accommodation.

### **Managerial Implications**

Many functional implications can be derived for the bodies in charge of them. Firstly, the value of the ratings can be seen to indicate that the expansion of the halal-friendly foods on the menu and serving them can be done. If the accommodation management can do so, the reviewers' ratings can be improved. Secondly, the formation of marketing strategies should enable these Muslim-friendly accommodations to promote their unique selling points, which can also help attract visitors. From a marketing standpoint, the findings of this study show that potential visitors are well-aware of halal tourism and halal services (Harahsheh et al., 2019). The study's findings should assist marketers in better understanding "Islamic tourism," developing marketing strategies to attract Muslim visitors, encouraging repeat purchases, and how a destination can increase the likelihood (Battour et al., 2011). Thirdly, focusing on providing the visitors with the utmost care and following the halal regulations can highly influence their satisfaction. The staff can be introduced to and trained about and implementing these regulations will benefit these accommodations. The study by Usman et al. (2020) revealed that Muslim visitors who place importance on the Muslim-friendly compliance are more inclined toward the accommodations that provide these services as they find them more positive and satisfied experienced during their visit to such accommodations.



**Limitations and future reference**

The current study has some limitations. First, the study included only 500 narratives. The sample size for the study could be expanded to include ratings of these accommodations, such as three-star accommodations. Larger sample size would allow the study to characterize their similarities and differences, which would allow future researchers to establish relationships between accommodations at a deeper level and provide more accurate information about satisfaction and concepts about their experiences and satisfaction. Second, the research is based only on the use of a single UGC platform among the various online platforms, such as Airbnb, Google Maps, and others, for it can be utilized for a better understanding and provide the researchers with new dimensions and information about the attributes considered by international visitors who prefer Muslim-friendly accommodations.

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