

# Ethics of Ikram al-Dayf for Quality Muslim-Friendly Hospitality Services

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## Article History:

Received: October, 2023

Revised: February 28, 2024

Accepted: February 28, 2024

Published: February 29, 2024

## Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the concept of ikram al-dayf and its potential to be adapted into the Muslim-friendly tourism and hospitality practices. This article also introduces a set of ethical values for honoring guests in reference to the concept of ikram al-dayf. The concept of ikram al-dayf is pertinent to improve the Muslim-friendly staffs' knowledge and understanding on how they should treat their guests better, since their service quality especially related to customer service aspect is still questionable. The article in the beginning presents the Muslim-friendly tourism and hospitality industry scenario and its related standards to show the needs for quality Muslim-friendly guest service. Next, it describes the established dimensions of service quality (SERVQUAL) model. Third, it explains the concept of ikram al-dayf and its relationship to guest service quality. It is based primarily on evidence from the Qur'an and the hadith. Fourth, it inserts ethical values based on the concept of ikram al-dayf into the dimensions of SERVQUAL. Finally, it briefly outlines the importance of applying ikram al-dayf ethics to be applied in Muslim-friendly hospitality practices. The article highlighted four core ethical values, namely qawlan karima, amanah, ta' awun and ihsan which need to be given special attention for the best quality of service. These four ethical values suit the four dimensions of service quality and can be applied in the guest service phases (pre-arrival, arrival, stay, and departure of guests). The findings can then be embedded in the existing SERVQUAL dimensions as an added value for the use of Muslim-friendly hospitality players. The appreciation of ikram al-dayf ethics is not merely meant to portray the beauty of Islamic morality but also to improve service quality and achieve



*higher customer satisfaction. Eventually, it will be a competitive advantage for Muslim-friendly hospitality services to attract more customers especially among Muslims guests.*

**Keywords:** *Customer Satisfaction; Ethics; Ikram al-Dayf; Muslim-Friendly Hospitality; Service Quality*

## INTRODUCTION

The current global tourism industry recognizes the importance of Islamic tourism and hospitality. Looking at the position of Islam as the second largest religion and the fastest growing size of Muslims in the world (Kalesar, 2010; Mohsin *et al.*, 2016), there is confidence that the Muslim lifestyle market and Muslim tourist spending will grow constantly. Therefore, it is not surprising that Islamic tourism has great potential as a tourism product of Muslim countries and the benefit from the industry is promising.

Malaysia is still maintaining its position as the first choice for travel destinations in the global Muslim travel market for many years, closely followed by countries such as Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey (Mastercard & Crescent Rating, 2023). As Malaysia received millions of visitors from other Muslim countries, there is a need for accommodation that provides facilities, products and services that may ease Muslim guests to perform their religious duties (Hussain *et al.*, 2021). To meet the needs of Muslim tourists, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia has introduced Muslim-friendly hospitality. It refers to the services that cater the needs of Muslim tourists including accommodation, halal food and beverages, worship facilities, communication, transportation and entertainment (Zawawi & Ramli, 2017; Rababah & Rababah, 2016; Department of Standards Malaysia, 2015).

The criteria of Muslim-friendly accommodations have been further developed by researchers such as Rosenberg and Choufany (2009), Henderson (2010), Mohd Yusof (2011), Che Omar *et al.* (2013), Battour *et al.* (2013), Razalli *et al.* (2015), Karim *et al.* (2017), and Tukiran

and Kamri (2018). There are also standards such as MS2610, Islamic Quality Standard for Hotels and Salam Standard that help researchers to come up with a more comprehensive criteria of Muslim-friendly accommodation based on Sharia which embrace its activities, operations, facilities and management. The term Muslim-friendly itself also signifies “an attempt to make the tourism experience enjoyable to observant or practicing Muslims” (Battour, 2018) which not only provides the Islamic attributes but also serves the customer in quality manner (Hussain *et al.*, 2021). Unfortunately, those criteria are yet to cover the aspect of “ethics” in delivering services, an aspect which deserves greater attention.

Customer service often faced various issues. Among the issues which frequently voiced up are unfriendly and inefficient hotel staffs. On the other hand, service providers must regularly entertain fussy, careless and unpunctual customers (Lewis & McCann, 2004). Based on a study by Bastaman (2019), it is found that most of guest complaints and comments in Trip Advisor concerning three hotels which provide halal services are not related to any halal matters but on the service delivery their staff. Another study also mentioned that hotel guests are very concerned with the communication delivered by the staff, and not merely looking at its facilities (Ezeh, Okeke & Nkamnebe, 2022).

Responding to these issues, the Muslim-friendly facilities should be incorporated with high quality of customer service. Therefore, the model for a Muslim-friendly hotel should not ignore the basic principle of high quality of communication and customer service (Bastaman, 2019). The ability of organizations to serve their customers well will have a good impact on their services and customer satisfaction.

Hence customer service area in the Islamic hospitality industry needs to be given priority as good physical facilities alone without proper human touch is insufficient. Both physical condition of

facilities and the process of delivering services- observed from the attitude of the staffs- often valued together by guests and contribute to organizational success (Schall, 2003). Therefore, customer service based on the concept of *ikram al-dayf* which is the ethics of honouring guests in Islam are worth to be taken into consideration. Respecting and honoring guests aligns with the Sunnah of the Prophet, who serves as the exemplary role model. Prophet Ibrahim notably exemplified this by warmly welcoming guests into his home and serving them with utmost hospitality. The Prophet PBUH said:

*"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should not hurt his neighbor and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should serve his guest generously and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should speak what is good or keep silent."* (Narrated by al-Bukhari)

Therefore, this study aims to introduce the concept of *ikram al-dayf* and its relevant ethical values to be applied in Muslim-friendly hospitality services. It will be presented with the existing established SERVQUAL model that is widely used in various sectors with some modifications.

## METHOD

A qualitative approach for data collection and analysis was adopted in this research. The discussion of the concept of *ikram al-dayf* for Muslim-friendly hospitality was based mainly on the evidence from the Qur'an and Hadith as well as its commentaries such as *al-Tafsir al-Wasit*, *al-Tafsir al-Munir* and *Mukhtasar Tafsir Ibn Kathir*. All the collected evidence are then analyzed using thematic method. To make the discussion easier to follow, the evidence that have been classified according to the predetermined themes are presented based on four dimensions of SERVQUAL model, namely reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Need for Muslim-Friendly Customer Service Standards

As mentioned earlier the existing standards on Muslim-friendly hospitality do not spell clearly about the “ethics” in dealing with customers. There are however several clauses in the standards that indirectly touch the aspect on how to serve the customers whilst providing Muslim-friendly facilities.

For example, the CrescentRating Standard which is claimed as the world’s leading authority in halal travel rating agency simply validate premises based on their halal food and prayer facilities as well as the permissibility of its activities ([CrescentRating, 2022](#)). Meanwhile, the customer service aspects are identified briefly in relation to communication and customer safety in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI). GMTI also gives greater attention to physical facilities in its index evaluation ([Mastercard & CrescentRating, 2023](#)).

In Malaysian context, among the clauses related to the customer service quality in MS2610: 2015 Muslim-Friendly Hospitality Services are “to ensure tourism sector organisations and employees are trained, aware of Shariah needs and requirements” and also “to ensure that all legal requirements related to hospitality are fully observed” ([Department of Standards Malaysia, 2015](#)). While based on the seven levels of IQS rating, there are only two items that briefly touched on the aspect of customer service, namely “staff on duty 24 hours” and “staff gives good service to all customers” ([Othman & Othman, 2012](#)). Similarly, Salam Standard and Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Recognition (MFAR) by the Islamic Tourism Centre Malaysia also merely focus on physical facilities in their rating assessment given to hotels and accommodations ([Salam Standard, 2021](#); [Islamic Tourism Centre, 2024](#)).

Based on the brief survey of existing standards above, it is found that the aspects of customer service and quality of Muslim-friendly

hospitality services has yet to be given due attention. Currently, the concept of Muslim-friendly hospitality is often associated with tangible halal products such as halal food menus, availability of worship facilities and separate recreational facilities (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2023). It emphasizes more on Islamic rules on halal and haram aspects. Little attention given to the values and ethics on how the service and products should be delivered (Hanafiah et al., 2022).

Hence, Muslim-friendly hospitality should not be confined merely to the tangible aspect but should also embrace the aspect of intangible values. The players in the industry hence should be provide not only “friendly” accommodation but also deliver “friendly” treatment as both aspects are significant for them to remain relevant in the tourism industry as understood from the following table (Md Salleh et al., 2019).

**Table 1**  
*Muslim Travellers’ Needs Regarding Hotel Services*

Hotel Services	Tangible	Intangible
Front office		quick service, personalized
Food and beverage	no alcohol, no pork, Halal food	
Room	amenities	
Entertainment	Islamic entertainment	
Facilities	Islamic call to prayer, prayer facilities	
Staff	Islamic dress code	Friendly
Services	cleanliness	quick service, good customer relationship
Recreation	no mixing of females and males, non-mahram	
Others	convenient hotel location, near mosque, activities in Ramadhan	

Source: Md Salleh et al. (2019).

Currently, accommodation providers often follow entirely to the modern guest service quality. As Muslim-friendly hospitality service has distinct features as compared to the current established one, we believe that there should be a specific measurement of the former's quality. Hence, an Islamic etiquette of hospitality should be introduced based on the Prophet teaching as He clearly says:

*"Indeed I was sent to perfect morals."* (Narrated by al-Baihaqi)

### **Dimensions of Service Quality**

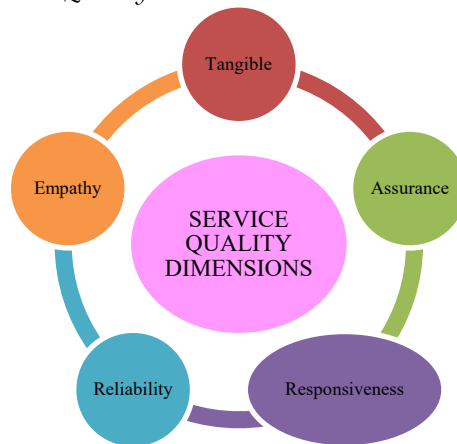
Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) defines service quality as a comprehensive assessment of overall service excellence. It is closely related to customer satisfaction as mentioned by many researchers (Shemwell *et al.*, 1998; Sureshchandar *et al.*, 2002; Özlen & Djedovic, 2017; Nayanajith & Dissanayake, 2019; Hussain, 2019; Prabhu *et al.* 2020; Ali *et al.*, 2021). It is a critical component in the hospitality industry (Siguaw & Enz, 1999) as it provides value and profit to the industry (Schall, 2003). The satisfaction level of hotels' guests will determine their loyalty to the hotel and their recommendation to other potential visitors (Kalia *et al.* 2021; Nyagadza *et al.*, 2022; Khoo, 2022). According to Zeithaml *et al.* (2002), by maintaining the service quality, competitive advantage can be achieved and long-term relationship with customers will be established. Islam *et al.* (2019) discovered a positive relationship between hotel service quality and customer engagement in terms of brand experience and intention to revisit the same hotel in the future. Therefore, the service quality is always given due attention by service firms.

A service quality model known as SERVQUAL model has been developed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988). The model is used to assess the potential gap between expectations and perceptions of customers that includes the internal and external aspects of service delivery. From the assessment findings, SERVQUAL can help service providers to better understand its customer expectations and their perceptions

towards the services provided and to continuously improve the service delivery. The model was further refined in 1991 into five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness. Figure 1 displays these five dimensions.

**Figure 1**

*Five Dimensions of Service Quality*



Source: Parasuraman *et al.* (1988).

Tangible dimension refers to physical facilities, equipment, personal appearance of staff, and written materials. It is translated through interior design, shape and condition of tableware, staff uniforms, store name tags and advertising (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2006). It is used by organizations to portray images and give signals about quality.

Assurance focuses on the knowledge and abilities of staff to foster customer confidence and trust. According to Sadek *et al.* (2010), assurance in banking services refers to courteous, knowledgeable and friendly staff in providing financial advice and ease of access to financial information. Reliability refers to the ability to provide the promised service accurately. It is a critical dimension and often communicated implicitly to customers. According to Saad Andaleeb



and Conway (2006), the reliability of the food and beverage industry can be interpreted through fresh food served at the right temperature.

Responsiveness is meant as a desire to help customers and provide services quickly. This dimension focuses on managing customer requests, questions and complaints promptly and accurately. According to Kumar *et al.* (2009), it also involves understanding the needs and requirements of the customers, appropriate operating hours, individual attention given by the staff, attention to the problems and customers' safety while making transactions. Empathy is referred to as concern in paying special attention to customers. Ananth *et al.* (2011) finds empathy in the bank sector as providing individual attention, appropriate operating hours, caring for customer interests and understanding customer specific needs.

Despite facing considerable criticism regarding its theoretical and operational foundations from scholars, the SERVQUAL model remains focusing on comprehending fundamental aspects of service quality that are universally applicable across different service sectors and industries (Polyakova *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, the model serves as an outstanding tool for gauging customer satisfaction with services (Souca, 2011). This indicates that SERVQUAL remains pertinent as a measure of service quality, including the quality of Muslim-friendly hospitality. Therefore, an Islamic element is suggested to be included in the existing SERVQUAL model suit with the nature of Muslim-friendly hospitality.

### **Guest Service in Hospitality Services**

In the context of hospitality and tourism services, guest service is an important element. It involves the process of understanding and assuming what the client wants and trying to meet those requirements (Stutts, 2001). The process also involves giving necessary help that is requested by guests (Collins English Dictionary, 2023). Staffs who deal

with guest are very important individuals as they carry the image of their organization. Among those who are involved in guest service include front office manager, front desk representative, cashier, telephone operator and guest relation officer (Bardi, 2003; Sriyam, 2010). They are the ones who serve customers such as answering the phone, welcoming them, giving keys, managing payments, issuing receipts and so on. They are the agents that connect customers with the premises and thus determine their level of satisfaction during their stay in the premises (Tarmazi et al., 2022; Bardi, 2003).

Each staff has their own roles and duties in supporting their guests, during their pre-arrival, arrival, stay and departure phases. Pre-arrival is the stage when guests plan to stay. During this phase, guests or prospective guests will inquire about the type of accommodation desired and the facilities provided via phone call, email or other online applications. At the accommodation premises, the front office information system will record the information of prospective guests for room reservation.

At the arrival stage, when guests reached the premise as reserved earlier, front office staff will greet and register the guests in the database before handing over their welcome kits and keys. By then, the period of stay begins, and the front office accounting system starts to track all the guest's charges including food, room service or any outgoing phone calls made through the communication system. Upon request, the staff also needs to arrange transportation or transit during their stay. When the guests are leaving (departure), guests will check-out and staff will ensure that payment are made for the goods and services provided. Front office staff are also required to assist in baggage handling and offer other transportation or transit services.

### **The Concept of Ikram al-Dayf**

The term *ikram al-dayf* implies the act of honoring and caring for guests as a practice of social relation between a host and his guests (al-

Harbi, 1986). Honoring and entertaining guests is a righteous deed in Islam. Allah briefly shows how should one treat his guest by narrating the story of Prophet Ibrahim:

*“Has the story of Abraham’s honoured guests reached you? (24) When they entered his presence and greeted, “Peace!” He replied, “Peace!” These are an unfamiliar people.” (25) Then he slipped off to his family and brought a fat roasted calf, (26) and placed it before them, asking, “Will you not eat?” (27). (Surah al-Dhariyat, 51:24-27)*

Imam Ahmad asserts that the obligation of hospitality towards guests, has been exemplified by Prophet Ibrahim through his offer “Will you not eat?” which shows his kindness and compassion. Prophet Ibrahim himself has selected the finest food to offer to his guests (al-Sabouni, 1981). Based on the story, the Prophet has openly welcomed and entertained the unknown guests without hesitation, which further highlights the importance of hospitality. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the Prophet has been known as the earliest man who honors his guests as mentioned in a hadith:

*“Ibrahim, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was the first to give hospitality to the guest.” (Muwatta al-Imam Malik)*

There are many reasons why Muslims are required to honoring their guests. The following hadith describes that the act of honoring guests is one of the signs of one’s faith in Allah and the last day.

*“Let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day either speak good or keep silent, and let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day be generous to his neighbour, and let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day be generous to his guest.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim)*

In other hadith, such a practice is considered as *sadaqa* (charity).

*“Whoever believes in the Last Day, let him honor his guest, and grant him reward for a day and a night. And it is not permissible for him to stay so long that he causes annoyance to his host. Hospitality is for three days, and whatever he spends on him after three days is charity.” (Narrated by Ibn Majah)*

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that the practice of honoring the guest is highly appreciated in Islam and will be rewarded accordingly. Apart from spiritual reward, the presence of guests is believed to open the door of sustenance which is resemblance of opportunities to do more good deeds, social contact and charity.

The ethics of *ikram al-dayf* will create a comfortable and peaceful environment for guests during their stay. The ethics ensures that the rights of guests staying in the premises are fully respected. The owner of rented accommodation must treat his guest well. If one is encouraged to welcome and honor an uninvited guest as narrated in the Quran, it is not an exaggeration if paying guests deserve way better treatment. In fact, they do not only deserve to be treated as guests but also as customers and entitled to rights as tenants based on the prior agreed upon contract. If they are not satisfied due to the damage or negligent, they should be compensated accordingly (Sarif et al., 2020).

Hence the concept of *ikram al-dayf* is relevant to be adopted in the modern practice of guest service. The ethics of honoring guests is not only confined to domestic affairs but can be extended as a part of Muslim-friendly hospitality exercise.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

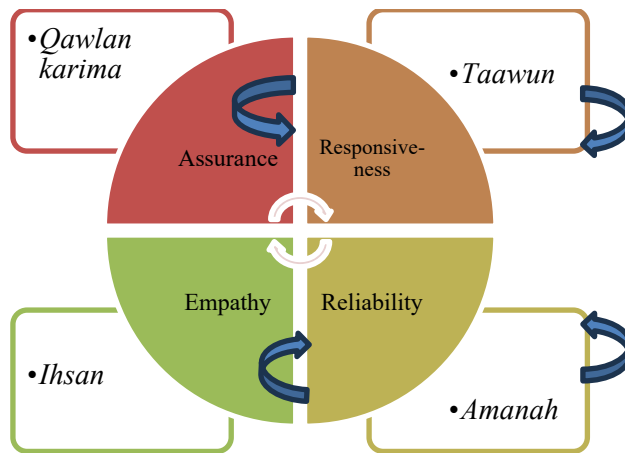
### Ethics of *Ikram al-Dayf* for Muslim-Friendly Service Quality

Ethics is usually established as a guide to the implementation of work in an organization. It contains principles of conduct and moral standards that are considered socially, religiously and civilly correct for an organization. Ethics is always considered in decision making and problem solving in various aspects encompassing the internal relationships of the organization, customers, communities and other stakeholders (Helms, 2006; Velasquez, 1982).

In the context of the hospitality industry, ethics guides staff on how to behave, work, make decisions, and support their guests throughout guest service phases (pre-arrival, arrival, stay and departure). Based on the concept of *ikram al-dayf*, it is found that there are many ethical values which are appropriate to be applied in Muslim-friendly hospitality practices. The ethical values can be classified into four dimensions as detailed in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Ikram al-Dayf Ethics Based on Service Quality Dimensions*



Source: Authors' analysis.

### **Assurance**

Assurance needs the staff to be courteous and able to build trust relationship with guests through ethical communication verbally and non-verbally (Mastercard & CrescentRating, 2023). To fulfill this dimension, the value of *qawlan karima* (noble words) should be put into practice. The exhortation of the value is clearly stipulated in the Quran:

*“For your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And honour your parents. If one or both of them reach old age in your care, never say to them*

*even 'ugh, nor yell at them. Rather, address them respectfully."* (Surah al-Isra', 17:23)

It clearly shows the demand for communication with good and noble words. As per Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim, the verse suggests the use of a mild manner of speech, marked by gentleness and straightforwardness (Al-Suyuthi, 1983). Good vibes in communication will lead to a pleasant relationship with anybody. Although the verse chooses family relationship as an example, the practice of value of *qawlan karima* must be extended to communication with various parties including guests and customers.

Guest service requires each staff to well communicate and being friendly with their guests. It should be established as early as they make reservation (pre-arrival). Guest service staff should be available to provide the guests with the information they need. Therefore, they should be well informed with a wide range of subjects to satisfy all the guests' queries.

Referring to the Quran, there are verses that show how should a host treat his guest. As mentioned earlier, it is reported that the Prophet Ibrahim has entertained his guests well with greeting and food offering. It is a righteous deed in Islam to greet others by good words such as "May peace be upon you". Exchanging greetings indeed aligns with the Sunnah, while it is obligatory to reply to them (Abdullah, 1998). Allah says in the Quran:

*"And when you are greeted, respond with a better greeting or at least similarly. Surely Allah is a Reckoner of all things."* (Surah al-Nisa', 4:86)

In a hadith Prophet PBUH describes basic rules for greeting.

*"The riding one should greet the walking one, and the walking one should greet the sitting one, and the small number of persons should greet the large number of persons."* (Narrated by al-Bukhari)

According to the hadith, the staff is highly encouraged to greet the guests upon their arrival as the greeter will be rewarded better as compared to the receiver. The Prophet PBUH, in a hadith has

welcomed his guests by saying 'marhaban' (welcome). Hence, the similar salutation still can be used by guest service staffs nowadays. A hadith reports:

The Prophet PBUH said to them, "Welcome, O people (or said, "O delegation (of 'Abdul Qais)." Neither will you have disgrace, nor will you regret." (Narrated by al-Bukhari)

It is very important for guest service staffs who communicate frequently with guests to be thoughtful and polite. Promoting the use of appropriate language and demonstrating good manners should be advocated and implemented as they lay the groundwork for cultivating harmonious and productive interactions (Ridzuan *et al.*, 2021). Numerous verses in the Quran and teachings in Hadiths prohibit the use of derogatory language, criticism, and swearing. Allah punishes those who openly speak maliciously, highlighting others' faults and listing their wrongdoings. Such speech breeds animosity, hatred, and resentment, sowing seeds of bitterness in hearts. Additionally, it offends listeners, tempting them toward misconduct and prompting them to imitate the wrongdoer, thereby leading them into sin, as listening to evil is akin to committing it (al-Zuhaili, 1991).

*"Allah does not like negative thoughts to be voiced – except by those who have been wronged. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (Surah al-Nisa', 4:148)*  
*"The believer is not a slanderer, nor does he curse others, and nor is he immoral or shameless." (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi)*

In another hadith, the Prophet PBUH has even equated those who bad-mouths with disbelievers as their presence in organization may cause disputes among other staffs. Therefore, staffs need to be thoughtful when communicating with guests and colleagues. They should talk nicely and use their wisdom in dealing with customers. The appropriate selection of word and language which contextually accurate is important to achieve the expected meaning (Ridzuan *et al.*,

2021). Allah has mentioned in Quran to invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and kind advice.

*“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and kind advice, and only debate with them in the best manner. Surely your Lord knows best who has strayed from His way and who is guided.”* (Surah al-Nahl, 16:125)

Non-verbal communication is also pertinent in guest service. The staffs should always smile and show nice character and good manner. The following hadith show that good manners are highly recommended and may be regarded as a charity:

*“Your smiling in the face of your brother is charity, commanding good and forbidding evil is charity, your giving directions to a man lost in the land is charity for you. Your seeing for a man with bad sight is a charity for you, your removal of a rock, a thorn or a bone from the road is charity for you. Your pouring what remains from your bucket into the bucket of your brother is charity for you.”* (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi)

Upon arrival of the guests, it is highly recommended that the host offers simple snacks and drinks (welcome drink) for the former to quench their thirst. As they may come from a distance, the simple offering will bring them joy and memorable experiences. In addition, it will also bring a blessing from Allah as mentioned in a hadith:

Anas b. Malik reported this incident pertaining to the feast given by Abu Talha to the Messenger of Allah with the addition of these words: *“Abu Talha stood at the door (to welcome the honourable guest) until the Messenger of Allah PBUH (may peace be upon him) came there, he (Abu Talha) said to the Messenger of Allah: “The thing (we intend to offer you as a meal) is small in quantity.” Thereupon He (the Holy Prophet) said: “Bring that, for Allah will soon bless it (and increase it).”* (Narrated by Muslim)

Based on the discussion above, the commitment shown by the Companions in preparing meals for the guests is worth to be emulated. They are willing to go to great lengths to offer something for their guests.



As mentioned above, a warm welcome and good treatment given to the guests upon their arrival will be a wonderful memory. As for the longer-lasting enjoyment and relationship between them, it is encouraged that the host give a small gift to the guests. There is a hadith that encourages the practice of giving gifts to guests:

*“Give gifts to one another, and you will love one another.”* (Narrated by al-Bukhari)

Hence the practice of giving gift and small souvenir is not something strange in guest service. Apart from being a marketing strategy for the premise to encourage guests to become loyal and repeating customers.

### **Responsiveness**

In this dimension, staffs are required to be quick to respond to guest needs, ready to help and provide the immediate service requested. The prompt service often becomes guest priority (Schall, 2003). In this context, *ta'awun* (cooperation) is an ethical values that compatible for this dimension. The value demands that everyone is ready to help and ease others whenever needed. Allah says in the Quran:

*“Cooperate with one another in goodness and righteousness, and do not cooperate in sin and transgression...”* (Surah al-Maidah, 5:2)

As per *al-Tafsir al-Wasit*, this verse underscores the instruction to cooperate in engaging in virtuous actions for the benefit of both individuals and society, while also prohibiting collaboration in sinful and wrongful deeds, as well as any actions that jeopardize the well-being of individuals and communities (Thanthawi, 1973). It is clear from this verse that the value of helpfulness or cooperation is highly exhorted and will be hugely rewarded. On the other hand, Muslims must refrain themselves from committing misdeed and transgression. Prophet PBUH says:

*“A Muslim is a brother of (another) Muslim, he neither wrongs him nor does hand him over to one who does him wrong. If anyone fulfills his brother’s needs, Allah will fulfill his needs; if one relieves a Muslim of his troubles, Allah will relieve his troubles on the Day of Resurrection; and if anyone covers up a Muslim (his sins), Allah will cover him up (his sins) on the Resurrection Day.”* (Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim)

In the context of guest service, staffs should always be willing to help others and assist their guests. Guests normally demand good facilities and highly convenient service from the accommodation providers. Hence, all processes during their stay must be done smoothly. The convenient ambiance and good feelings will create sweet memories and establish long lasting relationship between guests and service providers.

There are many services that can be offered to the guests during their stay in the premise such as pick-up service, porter service and tour guide. All of these are services that should be made available as to honor and show appreciation to the guests that stay in the premise. Prophet PBUH in a hadith says that all the aid provided are considered alms or charity.

*“Every joint of a person must perform a charity each day that the sun rises: to judge justly between two people is a charity. To help a man with his mount, lifting him onto it or hoisting up his belongings onto it, is a charity. And the good word is a charity. And every step that you take towards the prayer is a charity, and removing a harmful object from the road is a charity.”* (Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim)

During the stay of guests, the premises must provide any needed assistance for them. The assistance must be made available as long as they do not contradict with Shariah principle. These include food delivery, cleaning and information services. The premises can also provide various ancillary services such as tour packages, logistical assistance and money exchange. These support services can be offered alone or with other strategic partners. In offering all these initiatives

and support, the spirit shown by the Companions from the *Ansar* group to help *Muhajirin* should always be used as an example.

When the emigrants (*Muhajirun*) reached Medina, the Messenger of Allah PBUH established the bond of fraternity between 'Abdul Rahman and Sa'ad bin al-Rabi'. Sa'ad said to 'Abdul Rahman: *"I am the richest of all the Ansar, so I want to divide my property (between us), and I have two wives, so see which of the two you like and tell me, so that I may divorce her, and when she finishes her prescribed period (i.e. 'idda) of divorce, then marry her."* 'Abdul Rahman said: *"May Allah bless your family and property for you; where is your market?"* So they showed him the *Qainuqa'* market. (He went there and) returned with a profit in the form of dried yogurt and butter." (Narrated by al-Bukhari)

Based on the story, it is clear that Sa'ad bin Rabi', as a host, was always willing to go the extra mile to help his friend 'Abdul Rahman bin 'Auf. Nevertheless, what requested by 'Abdul Rahman was only a place and initial capital to enable him starting a business. This shows that both people are admirable as the former has been a good entertaining host while the latter has been very considerate and gratified guest.

The service for the guest does not end upon departure of the guest but could go beyond that. In this case, the host may offer appropriate extra time for check-out to guests in need. They should also be provided with transportation to their next destination whenever needed. Such a service has become the practice of the Companions in serving guests during the Hajj season. It is reported that a Companion known as 'Abdullah bin 'Amr bin al-'As had provided 300 camels to carry his guests who came from various countries during the Hajj season (al-Harbi, 1986).

The service practiced by the Companions in the past should inspire the modern accommodation providers to offer similar service for their guests. The service does not merely facilitate them but also ensures their safety in the journey for next destination.

Apart from that, the value of responsiveness also demands the staffs to handle their guest's complaints well. In this regard, the staffs should kindly respond, discuss and explain to any complaints raised by their guests. They need to abstain themselves from having any unnecessary arguments with guests as to avoid a bigger conflict although they may be on the right side. The Prophet PBUH said:

*"I guarantee a house in the surroundings of Paradise for a man who avoids quarrelling even if he were in the right, a house in the middle of Paradise for a man who avoids lying even if he were joking, and a house in the upper part of Paradise for a man who made his character good."* (Narrated by Abu Daud)

However, if the dispute between them is still unresolved, it needs to be handled by higher ranked officials based on existing rules and regulations. A more effective and comprehensive resolution procedure should be established in accordance with current requirements.

## **Reliability**

In this dimension, *amanah* (trustworthiness) is a significant value to increase the reliability level of guest service. Trustworthy or reliable is an important value that must be upheld in the Muslim-friendly hospitality service. Al-Qaradawi (1995) defined *amanah* as delivering every right (*haq*) to its owner. It also means not taking more than what is rightfully his and not diminishing the rights that belong to others, whether in the form of prices, wages, rents or services (Ibn Manzur, 1990).

Islam requires its people to always be reliable in performing their duties. They have to be responsible for their actions and will be deemed questionable before Allah in the hereafter. This is based on hadith:

*"Surely! Everyone of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges. The imam (ruler) of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects; a*

*man is the guardian of his family (household) and is responsible for his subjects; a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and of his children and is responsible for them; and the slave of a man is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it. Surely, everyone of you is a guardian and responsible for his charges.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari)*

The reliability covers a wide scope including financial transactions, property, dignity and privacy of guests.

### ***Reliable transaction***

Booking, check-in and payment arrangements must be handled by knowledgeable and reliable staffs. Accurate information needs to be provided to customers and misleading marketing and advertising must be avoided. Prices and any charges must be clearly communicated and must be fairly equivalent to the services offered. This is a fundamental principle in any business.

*“The seller and the buyer have the right to keep or return goods as long as they have not parted or till they part; and if both the parties spoke the truth and described the defects and qualities (of the goods), then they would be blessed in their transaction, and if they told lies or hid something, then the blessings of their transaction would be lost.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari)*

The above hadith states that a blessed transaction carried out with honesty and truthfulness. Both parties also have the right of choice (*khiyar*) to complete or cancel the transaction.

### ***Reliable in protecting guest's properties***

All guests' belongings must be handled carefully to avoid any damage. As to avoid loss or theft, the unattended properties must be stored in a special locked place. Staffs must be extra careful when transporting guest properties from one place to another to avoid any damage due to mishandling or fall off. Should there be any abandoned belongings in the vacant rooms, Islamic lost and found (*luqatah*) procedure must be followed as to return the items to their rightful owner safely. The Prophet PBUH reminds:

*“He who finds something should call two trusty people as witnesses, keep in mind what it is contained in, and what it is tied with, and not conceal it or cover it up. Then, if its owner comes, he has the most right to it. Otherwise, it is Allah’s property which He gives to whomever He wills.”* (Narrated by Ahmad)

### ***Reliable in protecting dignity and privacy of guests***

The guest dignity and privacy must be always protected throughout their period of stay in the premise. In this regard, all guest’s personal information such as telephone number and room number should be kept confidential. No outsider can reach the guest without prior permission. The accommodation provider must also take all necessary steps to safeguard the calm ambiance of the premise and keep them away from any disruption. This is very important to keep them in safe and peace of mind as usually the guests are expecting to have temporary relief from stressful daily life during their stay.

*“When a man tells something and then departs, it is a trust.”* (Narrated by Abu Daud)

### **Empathy**

The dimension of empathy concerns one’s ability to understand and share the feelings of another and tend to give special attention to them. It revolves around the value of *ihsan* (kindness). *Ihsan* is the highest level of Allah’s conscience. It refers to the level of consciousness as “transcendental,” as it helps believers to go beyond phenomenal reality and comprehend transcendental reality (Aydin, 2020).

The idea of *ihsan* enables individuals to consistently exemplify virtue and kindness in their lives (Mohamed et al., 2023). The term also entails many definitions. The most commonly referred to is benevolent, kindness, compassionate, sympathetic and humane deeds

([al-Maududi, 1965](#)). This is understood from the meaning of the following verse and hadith:

*"...Worship none but Allah; be kind to parents, relatives, orphans and the needy; speak kindly to people; establish prayer; and pay alms-tax..."* (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:83)

*"Verily Allah has enjoined goodness to everything..."* (Narrated by Muslim)

The above verse and hadith require Muslims to be good to each other, by showing compassionate to each other in all situations. As stated in *Safwah al-Tafasir*, the directive to engage in goodness applies universally to all individuals, whether they are believers or unbelievers, righteous or immoral. This serves as an encouragement towards embracing good ethics, gentle communication, graceful conduct, and honorable character ([al-Sabouni, 1997](#)).

*Ihsan* is interpreted into high politeness, virtuous and considerate shown by the hosts in glorifying and honoring their guests. It may also be associated with the values of *ta'awun* and *qawlan karima* discussed previously. One with this value will avoid the attitude of pressuring and complicating the situation ([al-Qaradawi, 1995](#)).

From another perspective, *ihsan* also refers to Muslim obligation to obtain perfection and excellence in worship. In doing so, Muslims must try to accomplish their duty perfectly on the belief that they are constantly monitored by Allah. That definition comes from the following hadith:

*"Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not achieve this state of devotion, then (take it for granted that) Allah sees you."* (Narrated by Muslim)

According to the spirit of the hadith, a staff who has the value of *ihsan* will feel close to Allah. He will also control his words and actions on the believe that he is monitored throughout his duty ([al-Jawziyah,](#)

1973). Eventually all the requirement of Shariah will be followed strictly and any malpractice and power abuse will be avoided.

The value of *ihsan* is not merely an internal control mechanism to avoid any personal misdeed, but also to encourage work perseverance, commitment and willingness to give priority to others. Hence, the invigoration of the value of *ihsan* within oneself will produce good and truly valuable results, not only in form of material profit but also moral and religious standards (Yaacob, 1995). Prophet PBUH says:

*"Allah loves someone who when works, he performs it in perfect manner."*  
(Narrated by al-Bayhaqi)

Therefore, the host need to be aware about their guest need during their stay in the premise. For example, check-in process upon arrival should be expedited as the guests may be exhausted after a long journey. Check-out arrangements must also be eased as the guests may be rush for an urgent matter. The compassionate staff who truly understand the *ihsan* value will ensure their guests needs and rights are met to the best of their ability. The rights of guests include physical, social and spiritual aspects of guests' physiological, religious and security needs (Sarif et al., 2020).

Based on the concept of *ikram al-dayf* and its ethical values viewed from the perspective of service quality, it can be concluded that all guests must be well treated. Figure 3 concludes the model of potential application of *ikram al-dayf* ethics for quality Muslim-friendly hospitality services, starting from the pre arrival until departure phases. Fail to do so is considered unacceptable to the extent that Prophet PBUH gives permission to the neglected guest to demand necessary compensation. The hadith below explains this:

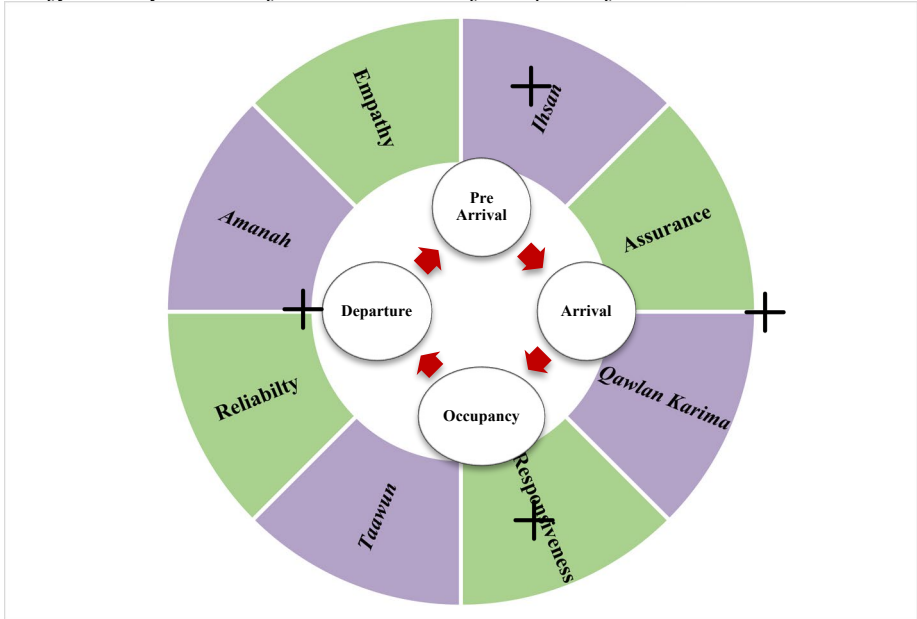
*We said, "O the Messenger of Allah PBUH! You send us out and it happens that we have to stay with such people as do not entertain us. What do you think about it?" The Messenger of Allah PBUH said to us, "If you stay with some people and they entertain you as they should for a guest, accept is; but if*



*they do not do then you should take from them the right of the guest, which they ought to give.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari)*

**Figure 3**

*Ikram al-Dayf Ethics for Quality Muslim-Friendly Hospitality Services*



Source: Authors' analysis

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that *ikram al-dayf* or Islamic ethics of honoring guests is a suitable concept to be applied in Muslim-friendly hospitality services due to several justification. Firstly, as a premise that offers Muslim-friendly hospitality services, its staff should offer a friendly treatment as exhorted and taught by the Prophet PBUH.

Secondly, the core values mentioned earlier i.e *qawlan karima*, *amanah*, *ta'awun* and *ihsan* need to be given special attention for the best quality of service. These four values have suited with the four dimensions of service quality and can be practiced across the phases of guest service (pre-arrival, arrival, stay and departure of guests). The appreciation of these four values will ensure the staff do their best to

satisfy their visitors. They will also provide their best service as to show their faith in Allah SWT as the values have divine connection beyond what have been suggested through SERVQUAL which focused merely to the short-term “worldly” relationship between hotel and their customers.

Third, for those in the Muslim-friendly hospitality services industry, Islamic ethics based on *ikram al-dayf* is more reliable and realistic to follow because it is derived from the Quran and Hadith. Therefore, the call from these sources can be enlivened and materialized in pursuing worldly profit and religious rewards. There is no doubt that some elements of *ikram al-dayf* ethics have already been put into practice in existing work methods. However, it should be given greater attention and acknowledgment so that it can be introduced as a new feature in Muslim friendly hospitality services.

Therefore, the values of *ikram al-dayf* presented in this study are suitable to be integrated as an added value in the existing SERVQUAL model. Compliance with this ethics ensures the work tasks are carried out in the best way, legally and morally sound. This increases the quality standard of services offered, which eventually raises the customers satisfaction. Excellent service in Muslim-friendly hospitality industry will boost up its reputation and sustain its competitiveness.

Nevertheless, the concept of *ikram al-dayf* needs to be further explored and empirically studied to find a better way to implement it. Further research is expected to identify the strengths and weaknesses in its application; hence, a working benchmark and guidelines for its implementation can be suggested to the industry.

### **Author Contributions**

Conceptualization: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Data curation: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Formal analysis: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Funding acquisition: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Investigation: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A.,

& H.A.M.; Methodology: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Project administration: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Resources: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Software: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Supervision: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Validation: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Visualization: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Writing - original draft: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M.; Writing - review & editing: N.'A.K., S.S., N.A.A., & H.A.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

### **Funding**

This study received funding from the Ministry of Higher Education under the FRGS grant (FRGS/2/2014/SS05/UM/02/1), Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya (GPF014L-2018) and Islamic Tourism Centre (GA006-2018).

### **Institutional Review Board Statement**

The study was approved by Department of Shariah and Management, Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

### **Informed Consent Statement**

Informed consent is not required for this study.

### **Data Availability Statement**

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors express their appreciation to the Ministry of Higher Education, Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya and Islamic Tourism Centre in supporting this study.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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