**Standing Committee
for Economic and Commercial Cooperation
of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC)**

COMCEC

DRAFT COMCEC MFT GUIDELINE
FOR REGULATING ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS

**COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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With the rising numbers of Muslim travelers, who have unique faith-based needs, tourism businesses around the world have started to pay attention to the needs of this growing and lucrative market segment. Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) is defined as "the activities of Muslim travelers who do not wish to compromise their faith-based needs while travelling for a purpose, which is permissible."[1]

Given the growing importance of the MFT market, COMCEC commissioned the following three studies on MFT:

1. *Muslim Friendly Tourism: Understanding the Demand and Supply Sides in the OIC Member Countries*
2. *Muslim Friendly Tourism: Developing and Marketing MFT Products and Services in the OIC Member Countries*
3. *Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT): Regulating Accommodation Establishments in the OIC Member Countries*

The findings of the third MFT study - *Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) Regulating Accommodation Establishments in the OIC Member Countries* were presented to the 9th Meeting of the Tourism Working Group held on February 16th, 2017 in Ankara.

In recent years, the tourism industry has started to grasp and address the distinct needs of Muslim travelers. Muslim-friendly travel is seen as a promising niche market by many accommodation providers. There is no current consensus on which MFT elements to incorporate, however, accommodation establishments make their decision based on the ease of implementation, the cost, and the impact on non-Muslim guests. Previous research studies show that needs of Muslim and non-Muslim travelers do overlap in some areas, such as a hotel's location and price, which are critical for travelers, regardless of faith. Furthermore, Muslim and non-Muslim travelers alike value many of the characteristics captured by conventional quality standards, including cleanliness, spaciousness and convenience. However, research has indicated that Muslim travelers have specific faith-related needs; some of which may even clash with the needs of non-Muslim travelers, including, for instance the absence of alcohol from hotel premises. Given the varying levels of MFT services and facilities offered in the tourism industry, there is a need for regulation, especially in the accommodation sector.

Based on the COMCEC *Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) Regulating Accommodation Establishments in the OIC Member Countries* study which includes insights from case studies, surveys, expert interviews as well as an analysis of existing standards, this document presents basic MFT Regulation guidelines for OIC and Non-OIC countries. It presents key considerations in evaluating and setting up of MFT guidelines, and general MFT services & facilities guidelines for different levels of MFT readiness across the OIC Member Countries. Finally, market positioning options for MFT travel are also summarized in this document.

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[1] "Muslim-Friendly Tourism: Understanding the Demand and Supply Sides in the OIC Member Countries." COMCEC, Feb. 2016. Web.

Evaluating & Setting-Up for MFT Guidelines

The aforementioned study strongly recommends the regulation of MFT elements within the accommodation sector (albeit at varying level depending on individual country environment and maturity), given the strong feedback provided by surveys and a clear articulation of the types of services required.

In the consumer survey that was conducted for the purpose of this study, respondents attached great importance to Halal food being regulated by a Muslim-friendly accommodation standard; 99 percent of respondents rated it as important (83 percent rated it as extremely important). This was followed by offering Ramadan services, such as breakfast buffets, which 95 percent of respondents rated as important, followed by having Qibla direction in the hotel room, which 94 percent of respondents rated as important.
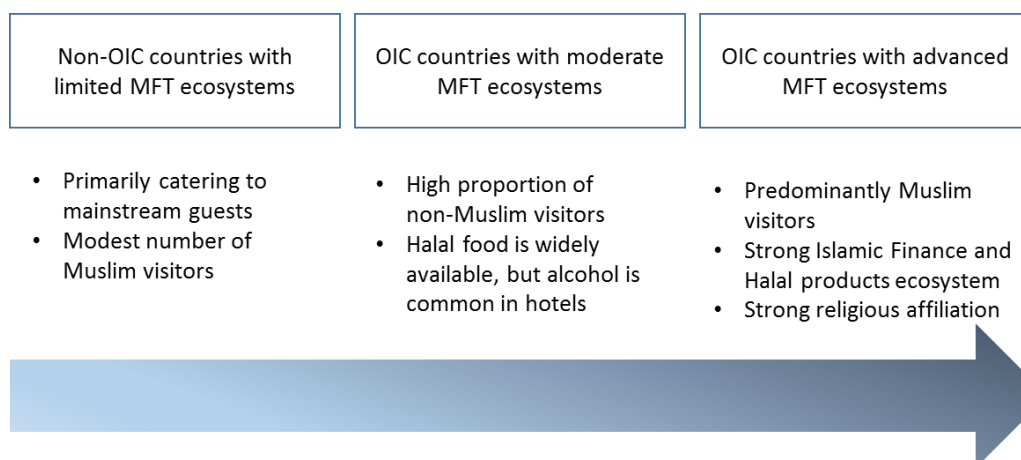
MFT regulation provides guests with an assurance of authenticity, especially in case of Halal food, provides consistent expectations, and supports a family-friendly ecosystem, which is beneficial to both Muslim guests as well as to mainstream guests traveling with their families.

The analysis and main findings of the research report titled "*Muslim Friendly Tourism: Understanding the Demand and Supply Sides in the OIC Member Countries*" and "*Muslim Friendly Tourism: Developing and Marketing MFT Products and Services in the OIC Member Countries*" which have already prepared for the COMCEC TWG, can also be utilized by member countries in their efforts towards regulating MFT accommodation establishments.

MFT Services & Facilities – General Guidelines

The relevance of MFT services and facilities will differ by nature of country. The chart below illustrates country segmentation based on whether or not it is an OIC Member Country, and based on the level of MFT ecosystems available.

Country Segmentation - MFT Ecosystem

Non-OIC countries with limited MFT ecosystems	OIC countries with moderate MFT ecosystems	OIC countries with advanced MFT ecosystems
• Primarily catering to mainstream guests • Modest number of Muslim visitors	• High proportion of non-Muslim visitors • Halal food is widely available, but alcohol is common in hotels	• Predominantly Muslim visitors • Strong Islamic Finance and Halal products ecosystem • Strong religious affiliation

Based on the review of various existing MFT guidelines, below are a summary listing of MFT services and facilities guidelines per segment category of country described above.

1. MFT Services and Facilities for non-OIC Countries with Limited MFT Ecosystems

In non-OIC countries, establishments can attract Muslim consumers in a practical way by offering low cost basic services that are easy to implement and have a low impact on mainstream guests.

The recommended services and facilities can be summarized as follows:

1. Provide some Halal food options
2. Remove alcohol from the mini-bar for Muslim guests
3. Provide *qibla* (prayer) direction in rooms.
4. Provide list of local Halal restaurants and directions to local mosque
5. Provide a prayer rug and prayer schedule upon request
6. Train staff on awareness of MFT principles

While very important to Muslim guests, most of these services and features have little effect on mainstream guests and are low cost.

2. MFT Services and Facilities for OIC Countries with Modest MFT Ecosystem

There are three practical MFT services that are important to Muslim guests, are easy to implement and have low impact on mainstream guests, which accommodation facilities in OIC countries with modest MFT ecosystems should incorporate. These three services, as illustrated in the following chart, include the following[2]:

1. Offering exclusively Halal certified food (with a consideration to have the hotel kitchens Halal certified)
2. Providing prayer mats in rooms
3. Accommodating for Ramadan meal timings and menu items.

MFT services and facilities that may be offered by accommodation providers can be segmented based on whether they are low cost or costly to implement as well as on their effect on non-Muslim guests (whether implementing the new service will have a low or high impact on Muslim guests). MFT services that are low cost and have a low impact on mainstream guests are easy to implement, while services that are low cost but have a high impact on mainstream guests are sensitive to implement, etc. (Please refer to Figure 15: MFT Services for Modest Ecosystems in the study).

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[2] An additional service that was rated as important by survey respondents and is not costly to provide is having a "musalla" or prayer area within the hotel.

Additional services, which were rated important and are of medium to high cost to implement are as follows:

1. Installing a bidet or hand shower in bathrooms, both in guest rooms as well as in bathrooms in public areas
2. Providing family-friendly entertainment
3. Being alcohol free and having no casinos or nightclubs on site.
4. Removing adult channels and placing internet content filters
5. Requiring staff to dress modestly

3. MFT Services and Facilities for Countries with Advanced MFT Ecosystems

For OIC countries with advanced MFT ecosystems, the following higher level of MFT services and facilities are recommended in addition to the basic services:

General:
1. Hotel kitchens should be Halal certified
2. No alcohol should be available or allowed inside the hotel
3. Wudu-friendly facilities should be available in public bathrooms and room bathrooms
4. Holy Qurans should be placed in each room
5. Congregational prayers should be held at the musalla/masjid including Friday prayers, and the call to prayer should be broadcast on the speaker system.
6. In Ramadan, in addition to proving iftar and suhoor meals, shuttle transportation should be provided to local mosques
7. Halal certified products should be extended to wellness products such as shampoos and lotions.

Leisure Activities:
8. Gender-separated wellness facilities including gyms, pools, spas, and beaches should be provided, either by having separate facilities, or by allocating certain hours for women.

Managing the business
9. All financing should adhere to Shariah-compliant principles
10. The accommodation's employees should be treated fairly and receive a living wage that is high enough to maintain a normal standard of living
11. Businesses should have eco-friendly processes in place and have an environmental certification.

Family-Friendly and Ethical Positioning

The level of practicality in introducing MFT features varies by country. One of the key consideration is positioning and promoting Muslim-friendly services without alienating non-Muslim customers. Some of the features relating to MFT may be of

higher cost and more difficult to implement; however, several MFT features also accentuate the accommodation facility's family-friendly and ethical positioning. For example, the absence of a nightclub or a bar, not only accommodates the needs of Muslim guests, but also strengthens a hotel's family-friendly positioning, since many mainstream families with children would consider such an environment a safer place for their family.

The table below lists MFT services and facilities that strengthen an accommodation facility's family-friendly and ethical positioning across the different MFT ecosystem levels. Having no alcohol, casinos, or nightclubs, in addition to banning adult channels, obscene artwork and placing internet filters, all accentuate an accommodation facility's family-friendly positioning, in addition to being ethical.

Family-Friendly and Ethical MFT Services and Facilities

Minimum requirements	
Halal Food	Halal food options
Alcohol Policy	Alcohol-free minibar for Muslim guests
Good to have	
Alcohol Policy	No alcohol: no bar or alcohol served at hotel restaurants
Entertainment	No nightclubs on site No casinos on site No adult channels available Internet content filters in place (for obscenity) Family-friendly programming and entertainment on site
Staff	Staff to wear modest clothes
Premium	
Alcohol Policy	No alcohol on site (e.g., at restaurant or on demand)
Entertainment	No obscene, music or artwork that may contradict Islamic values, displayed
Environmental	Environmental certification and eco-friendly processes in place

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