Beauty Treatment and Spa Design from Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

The paper aims to study design and spatial relationship in health & beauty treatment by blending modern setting within Islamic perspective. The chosen case studies are Islamic Spa in Klang Valley adopted Islamic Spa Practice (ISP). The methodology used is on-site observation and survey questionnaires. Outcome from the research shown that respondents agreed and satisfied with the design aspect also the implementation of ISP within the selected case studies. Based on Malaysia cases, it is imperative to apply and develop the design according to the ISP as it is a flourishing tourism industries based on specific niche market.

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Keywords: Beauty treatment/spa; space design; islamic spa practice; islamic perspective

1. Introduction

Beauty salon or beauty parlor means a business dealing with cosmetic treatments for men and women which is from the hair to the toes. Other variations of this type of business are including hair salons and spas. A beauty salon has become an almost iconic image in Malaysian culture. It is a place where people go for beauty treatment and to purchase beauty product. A beauty salon is also a center for community news and confessions. Each salon tries to have its own distinct identity and ambience. Some cater to a particular section of the society, while others meet the demands of certain ethnic communities.

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Today women are very much different than earlier time those women because most of them are working and their career nowadays same level as men. Therefore, they are really giving emphasis to appearance, health, and pleasant personality. They are constantly looking to improve what they have or give themselves a whole new look start from the root of the hair to the tip of their toes. They drop by the nearest hair salon and spa to be pampered by stylist and beauticians to style their hair, massage their body, and get the manicure and pedicure treatment even using lots of cash, and an hour in a beauty salon every month. It is no wonder that hair salon and spa business remains one of the rapidly growing industries today. The successful hair salon and spa business is one that offers excellent service, use quality products, and provide an enjoyable atmosphere at an acceptable price. According to industry insiders, the growing popularity of day spas account for the increase in sales on the hair and salon industry.

The rising demand for spa is related to the changing lifestyle that requires a person to relax, reflect, rejuvenate and rejoice oneself. Segerberg, an international spa professional, elaborates that spa guests have the opportunity to take time to listen to their souls and bodies. Malaysians are no exception. According to Spa Industry Profile Malaysia 2002-2007, Intelligent Spas has identified spa numbers in Malaysia have grown over 200% since 2002, identifying 151 spas currently operating and 25 spas under development (Clark, 2005). From the data, 54% were day spas and 40% were spas located in hotels, resorts or retreats which so called destination spas. The average indoor area of spa facilities in Malaysia was 393 square meters and contained 7.7 treatment room on average. 50% of spas owned a relaxation room compared to 16% that arranged access for their visitors to use a nearby relaxation room. Whereas, herbal tea was the most common complimentary food or beverage item provided by spas, with 87% offering to visitors. Besides, the increasing interest in traditional massage treatment was most current industry trend observed by spa owners and managers. In addition 26% of spa surveyed stated that there was increased customers awareness about spas.

Today beauty industries are very much different than earlier time. Nowadays, most women are working and their career nowadays same level as men. Therefore, they are really giving emphasis to appearance, health, and pleasant personality. They are constantly looking to improve what they have or give themselves a whole new look start from the root of the hair to the tip of their toes. They drop by the nearest hair salon and spa to be pampered by stylist and beauticians to style their hair, massage their body, and get the manicure and pedicure treatment even using lots of cash, and an hour in a beauty salon every month. It is no wonder that hair salon and spa business remains one of the rapidly growing industries today. The successful hair salon and spa business is one that offers excellent service, use quality products, and provide an enjoyable atmosphere at an acceptable price. According to industry insiders, the growing popularity of day spas account for the increase in sales on the hair and salon industry.

However, to succeed as an industry is not an easy as there is many problems and difficulties to be overcome especially in Islamic entrepreneur. In Islamic basis, there are a lot of things to consider such as the using of beauty products either halal or non-halal and they should consider about the services offered meets the Muslims needs. Moreover, the important of Islamic beauty salon and the difference between Islamic and normal beauty salon is the design of the space planning itself which is closed and hidden from non-muhrim’s view. In addition, they must ensure that all their employees are women and better they hire Muslim women employees as an Al-Quran said, Islam does not forbid women to beautify themselves, but it must be moderate and does not exceed Islamic limits. As the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to make this prayer:

“O Allah! You made my appearance beautiful so make my conduct excellent.”

Malaysia holistic spa has its own specialties to offer in order to compete with neighbours like Indonesia and Thailand, and began to challenge them which they are now is dominating our local spa
industry markets. Most of Malaysian Holistic Spas are using Islamic Spa Practice (ISP). Applying the ISP concept is not only on the services offered but also in an execution of business operations including the use of verses of the holy Quran which was also seen further streamline the country’s image as a medium for the concept of halal industry. Besides, spa service, beauty therapist segregation by sex, the use of rooms and the different services to clients both men and women are also among the attractions of this spa in accordance with Islamic law.

Beauty treatment and spa have been widely known worldwide as it is closely related with beauty among women or even men. Unfortunately, most of beauty treatment and spas in Malaysia did not emphasize the Islamic concept itself by do not perform well based on Islamic values. The changes of lifestyles in the context of Malaysia and religiously concern Muslim on their health and beauty treatment has created a niche in the subject itself. The aims of the study is to investigate and identify the design guidelines, standards and main elements based on Islamic Spa Practice (ISP) introduced by Nu’rella Malaysian Holistic Spa (registered trade marks with Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia; TRADE MARKS ACT 1976; TRADE MARKS REGULATIONS 1997). The scope of the study is to focus on Islamic space planning based on ISP where stated that differentiation in gender can be separated for example by different level and provision for musollah/praying area designated. Another emphasize is on the interior design scheme whereby beside ISP’s, experience and reflective appreciations of the selected case study nominated attraction, relaxation and appropriateness. The significance of the study is to bring halal industries to next level, especially in beauty treatments and spas from Islamic perspectives.

2. Background Studies

The beauty treatment and spa industry has experienced successful business over the past couple of years. However, these days many people use the term “spa” and “salon” but they are not exactly the same. They are attempting to beat out the competition by providing many of the same services. While some tend to overlap services that make it appear to fall under either category, it is essential to know the true definition of what a day spa is and what a salon is. The rising demand for spa is related to the changing lifestyle that requires a person to relax, reflect, refresh and rejoice oneself and have the opportunity to take time to listen to their souls and bodies. Spas in the Southeast Asia region are strongly linked to specific heritage and cultural values and Malaysians have long been exposed to the type of spas of the neighboring countries namely Thailand and Indonesia. Spa is designed to keep customers there for long periods of time so that they can take all the time they need to indulge in one-one-one treatment. It also involves more in basic accommodations for its customers such as numerous rooms and facilities where customers can enjoy privacy while getting services.

Besides, spa promotes relaxation by having its customers change into comfortable bathrobes so that they can enjoy their services easier and in a much more tranquil environment. Spa also goes all out to make sure its customers are having a good time. This may include offering complimentary beverages and appetizers or even a small restaurant where customers can have specially made meals. That is why the size of the spa can be quite large in order to fit in all its services and special accommodations.

Though, salon is a place where people are looking for a nice pampering treatment such as a manicure, pedicure, or even a new haircut and it offers services on the go and provides quality results without taking a lot of time out of the day. Furthermore, salon tends to have the most basic accommodations for its customers and the customers are going to a salon appointment often do so in their everyday street clothes and remain in them throughout the entire process. The price is charged for their services and treatments to better accommodate customers that are willing to come in on a more regular basis. For its design, most of salons are generally out in the open so everyone can see who is getting what done and the size tend to be fairly small and quaint.
One great metaphor to use in this differentiation between spa and salon is to picture salons as the “fast food joint” that customers go to in order to satisfy their appetite faster, while spas are the “traditional sit-down restaurant” where customers want when they are craving attention and want to enjoy the atmosphere.

2.1 History of Spas

The word spa in Latin is acronym of “salus per aquam” or “health from water.” Spa is also the name of a small Belgium village where hot mineral springs were used by Roman soldiers to treat aching muscles and wounds from a battle. Before the Bath mineral spring was discovered, Roman citizens bathed daily in the now famous Roman Baths. During the reign of Caesar Augustus (27 B.C. to 14 A.D.), there were approximately 170 baths in Rome. Many of these were public baths were primarily built and used by the Roman soldiers. By 43 A.D. citizens of Rome began to view baths as a way of providing rest, relaxation, and solace to all people, not just those weary of war. In 70 A.D., the Romans built a spa around the hot springs at Bath, England, and a temple nearby to honor the goddess Minerva. By the year 300 A.D., there were over 900 baths throughout the Empire. The oldest Roman spa is still in existence today is located in Merano, Italy (Hunt, 2000).

Baths were an important part of the daily life of both Roman men and women of all social classes and the ancient Romans managed to transform it into an art. While members of the Roman upper class frequently built private baths in their homes or villas, they still favored the public bathhouses. These large public baths were known as “thermae” and frequently spanned several city blocks. There was a fee for using the “thermae”, but it was minimal and could be afforded by most free Romans. A visit to the bath would traditionally last several hours, and included exercise, bathing, and socializing. Roman baths often included gardens, a library or reading room, restaurant, bar, marketplace, museums or theatres. Bathers moved from room to room at a leisurely pace, enjoying the company of fellow Romans.

In the 11th century, the King’s Bath was built over the ruins of the temple of Minerva at Bath. By the Elizabethan Era, the popularity of the hot springs at Bath had increased greatly. At this time, the use of spas was becoming more widely accepted attracting many visitors who were searching for cures to various illnesses and ailments. The growth and development continued into the 17th and 18th century when spas were also frequently built in secluded mountain towns providing visitors with majestic views.

It also became a practice for spas to be staffed by medical professionals who prescribed and carefully monitored the treatments provided for each visitor. The treatments of this time consisted primarily of either soaking in or drinking water. These spas were tremendously successful and they grew rapidly, eventually expanding to add restaurants and casinos.

In North America, native Indians were also enjoying the benefits of hot spring therapy as well. Native Americans bathed in mineral springs to enhance their physical and spiritual health. In present-day New York State, the Mohawk Indians use hot springs for their healing properties. The oldest spring known to have been used by the Mohawks is the Saratoga Hot Springs, meaning “the place of the medicine waters of the great spirit”. In 1790, the Saratoga Hot Springs began offering both spa treatments and accommodations for visitors.

As America expanded westward, new mineral springs were discovered that prompted the development of an elaborate new classification system for developing spas, based on the study of geography, geology, mineralogy, and climatology. By European standards, American spas are still in their infancy and the differences between American and European spas are many.

Traditionally, Europeans have viewed spas as a venue for the treatment of present illnesses and the prevention of future ailments. In addition, Europeans also placed special emphasis on the importance of spas in helping visitors relax by combating the stresses of everyday life. In contrast, traditional American
spas have maintained their focus on wellness, attracting individuals who are already healthy with programs in nutrition, exercise, and beauty. More recently, American spas have begun to adopt numerous new programs including meditation and spirituality. While the origins of spas are rooted in the healing waters of natural hot springs, the focus of spas around the world, including in the United States, has shifted. Advances in technology and medicine have developed new treatments that have all but replaced treatments that are more traditional.

2.1. Types of Spas

A visit to a spa, even for just an afternoon for a simple massage gives amazing effects to our state of mind. We feel relaxed and happier and can face the hassles of life in a better way. So it is actually worth it making a trip to a spa at least in our lives. There are basically three types of spas which are:

2.1.1. Day spa

It offers all the facilities and services of a health spa or hotel spa without any residential accommodation. Spa facilities that have no overnight accommodations, most focus on beauty and relaxation programs, such as facial and body treatment, manicure, pedicure, and massage, that may last as few as an hour for one treatment, or even half day or whole day for a combination of multiple treatments.

2.1.2. Medical spa

It offers traditional and complementary medical services administered by medical professionals. It might be either with or without accommodation. It focus on a comprehensive medical and wellness care in a spa setting environment with an integration of spa services, therapies and treatments.

2.1.3. Hotel and Resort Spa

Is a spa section located within a hotel or resort, it's one of a services offered to hotel's guests. It provides a variety of professionally administered spa services, fitness, and wellness programs to enrich your body and mind, mostly are short-hour programs which guests can choose particular services easily on a daily basis. A good thing for this type of spa is when you and your companion have different needs in joining the activities one can choose to go for some treatments at spa while another can go outside for windsurfing.

2.2. Islamic Spa Practice (ISP)

The founder of the Islamic Spa Practice which achieve required standards by Malaysia Islamic Development Department (JAKIM), Mrs. Norulnaha Abdul Razak said, today, almost no one system that can be used as a guide for a nature spa business because the system or procedure is important to be translated into Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) so that it is done according to Islamic law. Thus, applying the concept of Islamic Spa Practice (ISP) is not only in services offered and even execution of business operations, including the use of verses of al-Quran also enhance the image of the country is seen as a catalyst for the concept of halal industry (Norulnaha Abdul Razak, 2007). Islamic Spa Practice gives spa service, beauty therapist segregation by sex, the use of rooms and the different services to clients both men and women are also among the attractions of this spa in accordance with Islamic law. Malaysian Holistic Spa is the first Malay spa concept in this country that used the system of Islamic Spa Practice (ISP). It differs from other spas, especially in terms of décor and treatments available. Despite some similarities of internal décor and ambience, but the concept is applied differently Malay especially in terms of wood carving and interior. The Malay and Islamic spa concept is applied in this Malaysian
Holistic Spa as it compatible with the Malays and the religion of Islam. It is because most of the spas nowadays are more to Bali and Thailand concept which the use of statues is often used in interior decoration. This was clearly contrary to our religion that prohibits the use of statues as decoration.

The treatment that provided in the Malaysian Holistic Spa is not only focusing on modern treatment although it is focus more on the Malay traditional treatment which has been practiced by our ancestors for centuries. The different treatments between Bali, Thailand, and Malay is Malay massage is a gentler way decent also it is not excessive so as to affect the sensitivity of a shame, especially the preferred time to treatment. A privilege of this Malaysian Holistic Spa is the treatment will begin with the reading of verses from the Quran. Malaysian Holistic Spa is actually more emphasis on water use in the treatment that it can restore the moisture and energy to the clients. In addition, the use of water to refresh, unwind and recharge. For the materials used in the treatment, it is taken entirely from natural resources that have been processed to facilitate the treatment. The existence of Malaysian Holistic Spa is not focuses on beauty only but also open career opportunities to young people who are interested in business. Hope that more traditional Malay concept spa will be opened throughout the country to the generic global.

In addition, there are some forbidden treatments in ISP’s;
- Hair dye with black colour
- Mix with both men & women
- Uncover Aurah
- Shave the eyebrow
- The product are from non-halal sources
- Women customers use men staff to receive treatments or services
- Provide wig treatment
- Neglecting prayers until overpass prayer times

The important and the difference of Islamic beauty salon compared to normal beauty salon is the design of the space planning which is closed and hidden from non-muhrim’s view. In addition, beauty treatment and space practicing ISP should employed women and Moslem employees as an Al-Quran said, “…and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands and their women…” (An-Nur 24:31)

It is permissible for a Muslim woman to appear without hijaab in front of a non-muslim woman, unless she fears that the woman may describe her to her husband or to any other stranger (non-mahram man). According to Spa and Wellness Industry Association of Malaysia (SWIAM), Malaysia can make halal spa as a country trademark and at the same time it can be differentiated between the offerings from Thai’s or Balinese spas. The flourishing of beauty treatment and spas all over Malaysia is due to people are looking for new and unique experience. The main problems in addressing beauty treatment and spa operation from Islamic perspectives are the issue of Mahram/Aurah or separating different gender/disclosing appearance to the others. In Al-Quran, there has state that illegal for Muslimah (female Moslem) to show the aurah to non moslem women.

The implementation of ISP concept is not only on the services offered but also in an execution of business operations including the use of verses of the holy Quran which was also seen further streamline the country’s image as a medium for the concept of halal industry. Besides, spa service, beauty therapist segregation by sex, the use of rooms and the different services to clients both men and women are also among the attractions of this spa in accordance with Islamic law. According to the president of Spa and Wellness Industry Association of Malaysia (SWIAM), Nurhashimah Mohd Ishak said that Malaysia can make this halal spa as an advantages to compete with conventional spa operators. She further added that among the services that could be offered at the halal spa and wellness centre was the separate services for men and women on different floors. By applying Islamic Spa Practice in beauty salon business, it is
somewhere customers can feel comfortable, feel pampered and relaxed, knowing that men and women are separating the services so no-one is going to come in and disturb them. In addition, they can find a high-end beauty salon that can give them the privacy they require as a conservative Muslim.

3. Methodology

The methodology used is on-site observation and perceptual survey questionnaires to visitors and employee of the two (2) selected case studies. The first case study is Nu’della Malaysian Holistic Spa and the second case study is Tajrii Muslimah Spa. Both spas are located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The reason of the chosen selected spas as a case studies are both claim they are spas for the Moslems. Each spa have similarities in facilities and service provided. The only differences are in term of the design concept and implementation of ISPs’. Each key area within the establishment is subdivided to four evaluative questions of interior element finishes, color composition, degree of comfort and lighting condition. Beside design aspect, question also concerns the values of Islamic Spa Practice based standard of practice outlined. In acquiring the objectives of the research; a total of 40 questionnaires for both case study were then distributed to the targeted group to measure the subjective perceptions on the design aspect and application of ISP. The targeted group of respondents were the customers and employee of the establishment. The main reason on the selection of the targeted group was these groups of people are the end user and the question was answered promptly after them experiencing the space. The checklists of design requirements derived from the ISP which achieved the standards by JAKIM were completed based on researcher’s measurement and observation of those facilities.

Interviews with the owners of both case studies were also done to investigate their personal views in regards to the implementation of ISP in the assessed buildings. This qualitative method may enrich the study because, unlike quantitative methods, the qualitative method of semi-structured interview allows the researcher to focus more on the interviewee’s voice and thought (Bryman, 2008). This study also analyzes the architectural plan of the buildings in order to assess the areas that meet the guidelines of ISP.

3.1 Butik Kecantikan Ainaa-Ailaa Sdn Bhd (Nu’della Malaysian Holistic Spa)

Butik Kencantikan Ainaa-Ailaa Sdn. Bhd. located at Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor. It was incorporated in 30th. November 2001 founded by Ms. Norulnaha Abdul Razak. The company was established to fill the needs for Islamic spa, beauty and health treatments in Malaysia. With ten staffs Nu’della gives services to both men and women but segregately using ISP where each gender get their treatments respectively. Nu’della also provide treatment course which held at mini hall at first floor of the building. Services or treatments rendered by Nu’della are body massage, facial treatment, pedicure, manicure, sauna and hair treatment.

3.2 Tajrii Muslimah Spa

Tajrii Muslimah Spa located in Melawati Urban Centre, Kuala Lumpur. Tajrii, in the language of Arabic literally means water flowing, and it is suitable for the concept itself which is peaceful and relaxing. Tajrii Muslimah Spa is a complete range spa based on tropical herbs and essences with emphasis on traditional malay treatment. Tajrii Muslimah Spa provides facilities such as massage, body treatment, pre-natal treatment, post-natal treatment, facial treatment, sauna, pedicure and manicure.
4. Findings & Discussion

The data collected from questionnaire survey and on-site observation were analyzed and interpreted accordingly. The data and result were then elaborated using descriptive statistic. 40 sets of questionnaire were distributed, 40 returned. This represents 100% of respond rate. The tabulation of the questionnaires can be explained clearly in the table below:

Table 1. Tabulation of the questionnaires

| Variables | Case Study 1: Nu’della Malaysia Holistic Spa | Case Study 2: Tajrii Muslimah Spa | Percentage (%) |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Male      | 5                                          | 1                                | 15             |
| Female    | 15                                         | 19                               | 85             |
| Total     | 20                                         | 20                               | 100            |

Fig. 1. Tabulation of the questionnaires

The study revealed that most of respondents are familiar with Islamic Spa Practice (ISP) and both spas apply ISP concept in the use of halal product based on tropical herbs and essences for the treatments offered. 68% of respondents are familiar with Islamic Spa Practice (ISP) as shown in the Table 2.
Table 2. Design Factors VS. Islamic Spa Practice (ISP)

| Familiarity | Case Study 1: Nu’della Malaysia Holistic Spa | Case Study 2: Tajrii Muslimah Spa | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Yes         | 18                                          | 9                              | 68             |
| No          | 2                                           | 11                             | 32             |
| Total       | 20                                          | 20                             | 100            |

Fig. 2. Design Factors VS. Islamic Spa Practice (ISP)

The findings discovered that the services given are based on the ISPs’, the segregation between both genders where each gender will be treated respectively. This concept applied in the both spas. Thus, applying the concept of ISP is not only in services offered and but also in an execution of business operations, including the use of verses of Al-Quran as a medium for the concept of halal industry.

As for the spa interior design, Nu’della emphasizes Malay Traditional Concept based on ISP. It is focused on the use of the craft with local culture references woven through the use of indigenous people, use bamboo, wicker wood, coconut sheath and other foreign elements, especially without decorative sculpture and the use of candles. The hallway inside the treatment room used ‘mengkuang’ for the ceiling design and there is added lighting like ‘bubu’ pattern at the ceiling. As for Tajrii Muslimah Spa the concept is unique and dominated by green color and water flowing from the mini water fountain.
It will give nice ambience, relaxation and serenity to the customers. Nu’dea also provides musolla for customers to perform their solat and it able to accommodate two people in one time. When the customers step into the Spa, the feeling of different environment than normal spas where all the women workers are required to wear hijaab to cover the aurah. Hence, the concept of the design aspect including appropriate lighting and application of ISP will be an attraction to the Muslim community as well as foreign tourists particularly from Middle East country. It also will help to promote Islamic Spa Industry in local and international market.

5. Conclusion

From the findings the establishment of beauty treatments and spas practicing ISP should have appropriate design concept in attracting the Moslems besides operative guidelines. The main factors that attract the customers are the services, treatments and the privacy of spaces; segregation between men and women. Another important elements based on analyzed case studies that formulate the spaces are the façade design which impress a good Islamic impression; and spatial experience that fulfill the ISPs’ in term of privacy, material quality and standard and soothing light condition.

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