HALAL TOURISM: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE CORE THEMES REVEALING HALAL TRAVELLERS' NEEDS AND THE CHALLENGES FOR HALAL TOURISM

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Abstract—*The concept of "Halal Tourism" or "Islamic Tourism" has picked up great speed in different countries, including the Muslim majority countries and the non-Muslim majority countries. In most Muslim majority countries, the effort was made by investing in the development of Muslim friendly travel environment such as increasing the number of "Halal" certified restaurants, "Shariah" compliance hotels, prayer facilities and enhancing the local Muslim culture. For non-Muslim countries, awareness of the concept of "Halal" is being created among the non-Muslims and the governments are more concerned about the needs of the Muslims travelers compared to 10 years ago. However, the mutual benefits of both Muslim and non-Muslim travelers must be taken care of despite the speedy progression of "Halal Tourism" in order to ensure the sustainability of this industry.*

Tourism recognizes the growing interest in Halal Tourism from the perspectives of both industry and research. "Halal Tourism" can be summarized as 'any action or object which is permissible to be used or engaged in the tourism industry, according to the Islamic teachings." Therefore, the success for developing and marketing "halal Tourism" destinations must be guided by the adoption of Islamic teachings and principles in all the aspects of tourism activities.

KEYWORDS*: "Halal Tourism", "Islamic Tourism", Muslim travellers, Islam, Halal market and Tourism Industry.*

1. INTRODUCTION

(a)Overview

The tourism industry today recognizes the growing importance and interest of Halal Tourism from the perspectives of both the practitioners and researchers. Those involved, stress the fact that any strategy to develop or market Halal Tourism products and services must be guided by the Islamic Law (Shariah). This growing interest in Halal Tourism could partly be due to the growth of the Muslim population worldwide. Marketers and policy makers who are concerned with the issues of Halal Tourism need to understand the Islamic requirements relatedto Halal Tourism. The knowledge of Halal Tourism concept and components are pertinent to industry players alike in developing Halal Tourism infrastructure and facilities, halal travel packages, and halal travel activities.

It is recently noted that there is a challenge to identify the right terminologies as well as the proper clarification on the concept of Halal Tourism. T the moment, the most commonly used terms are 'Halal Tourism' and 'Islamic Tourism.' Due to the multi-disciplinary scope of the subject matter, there exists confusions regarding the two terms. As a result, the two terms are often inter-changeably used by researchers in both conceptual and empirical papers as if the two concepts are similar (see e.g. Battour, Battor, & Bhatti, 2013; Battour, Ismail, & Battor, 2011; Battour, Battor, & Awais,2014; Battour, Ismail & Battor, 2010; Henderson 2009; Jafari & Scott, 2014; Stephenson, 2014; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). However, using 'Halal Tourism' and 'Islamic Tourism' as the same terms could be questionable.

(b)Understanding the concept of 'Halal'

The concept of Halal Tourism has been recognized for decades. The example of Halal Tourism, as already known 'Haj' (the central pilgrimage) is a journey obligatory for every Muslim who has reached the age of puberty, and is of sound mind. This must be performed at least once in one's lifetime provided that he or she is physically capable and has the means to do so (Jatari and Scott, 2011).Halal Tourism has emerged as a new concept which means tourism based on the Islamic teachings and ethical codes (Shariah compliance).

According to one very authoritative book entitled 'The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam', which was written by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a globally respected Islamic scholar and

Chairman of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, the term 'Halal' is defined as "That which is permitted, with respect to which no restrictions exists, and the doings of which the law-giver, Allah, is allowed" (Al-Qaradawi, 2013; p. XXV). Therefore, 'Halal' means 'permissible' according to the Islamic teachings (Shariah Law). 'Halal' is also one of the five actions (al-ahkam al-khamsah) that categorises the morality of human actions in Islam, others being 'Fard' (compulsory), 'Mustahabb' (recommended), 'Makruh' (disliked), and 'Haram' (forbidden), (Faruki, 1966). From Islamic perspective, 'Halal' as defined above, refers to any practice or activity in tourism which is 'permissible' according to the Islamic teachings.

The term 'Islamic' is precisely applied only to that which relates directly to the faith and its doctrines (such as Islamic law/Shariah, Islamic values, principles and beliefs), (Douglass & Sheikh, 2004.). It is therefore closer to the Arabic term 'Mu'minoon' (Ibn Kathir, 2000). This is because Islam indicates the faith as an ideal based on the core Islamic sources which are the Qu'ran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (Arjan, 2014; Battour et al., 2010).

(c)Objectives of the Study

(i)To examine the concept of 'Halal'/

(ii)To understand the meaning of 'Halal Tourism'

(iii)To examine the components of Halal Tourism

(iv)To examine the themes revealing the needs of Halal travellers

(v)To examine the challenges that lay ahead of Halal Tourism

(d)Organisation of the Study

The study consists of 6 sections. Section 1 talks about the research topic and gives an introduction to the topic. Section 2 discusses the existing literature pertaining to this topic. Section 3 identifies the core themes that reveal the needs of the Halal travelers. Section 4 discusses the research methodology used for this paper. Section 5 examines the challenges that lay ahead of Halal Tourism. Finally, Section 6 gives the conclusion of the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

(a)Definition of Halal Tourism

Different researchers and scholars have defined Halal Tourism/Islamic Tourism in different ways in tourism and destination marketing literatures (Battour at al.,2014; Carboni, Perelli, & Sistu, 2014; Din, 1989; Jafari & Scott, 2014; Timothy and Iverson, 2006; Zamani-Farhani & Henderson, 2010). However, most have not taken into consideration the Islamic Law (Shariah), the target customers (i.e. Muslims or non-Muslims), the location of activity (i.e. Muslim vs non-Muslim country), the products and services offered (i.e. food

and facilities), and the purpose of travel. Most of these definitions are loosely defined and used inter-changeably. In other words, Halal Tourism and Islamic Tourism are treated as similar concepts.

Jafari and Scott (2014) defined Islamic Tourism as "the encouragement of tourists likely to meet the requirements of the Shariah Law."

Carboni et al. defined Islamic Tourism as "tourism in accordance with Islam, involving people of the Muslim faith who are interested in keeping with their personal religious habits whilst travelling."

Zamani-Farhani and Henderson (2010) considered that Islamic Tourism and Halal Tourism are the same concepts and thus, defined Islamic Tourism as simply "tourism mainly by Muslims who prefer to stay within their culture."

World Travel Market (WTM) 2007, explains Halal Tourism as "a type of religious of religious tourism that is in conformity with Islamic teachings regarding behaviorisms, dress, conduct and diet." On the other hand, it is claimed that Islamic Tourism attracts many travelers entirely interested in what is termed 'Islamic Culture' (Henderson, 2009; Javed, 2007; Shakiry, 2006).

To sum up, Halal Tourism is "any tourism object or action which is permissible according to Islamic teachings to use or engage by Muslims in the tourism industry."

(b)Components of Halal Tourism

i. Halal Hotel (Islamic Hotel)

Islamic hotels and resorts as well as Islamic destinations and programs are shaping some tourist activities which comply with Islamic teaching. Islamic resorts funded and owned by Islamic finance institutions and there is nodisco/nightlife in its hotels (Samoriand Sabtub, 2014). Further, halal hotels are not confined to the halal foodservice and its operation, but also the management of the hotel have to comply with Islamic principle (Akyol and Kilinc, 2014). The Islamic hotel is known as shariah-compliant hotels, and a shariah-compliant hotel can be defined as a hotel that provides services in accordance with the shariah principles (Razalli et al., 2012). And it called dry hotels (hotels without alcohol). Sharia-compliant hotels (SCHs) and dry hotels concepts become widespread and attractive in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. SCHs represent almost 10% of the global tourism market (Ezzat et al., 2014).

Characteristics of Halal (Shariah) Compliant Hotels

Halal hotels during the Ramadan period the opening hours of the internal restaurants are different: you can eat before the sunrise and after the sunset (Halkiaset al., 2014,). There are a set of attributes and characteristics ofhalalhotels such as (Samoriand Sabtub, 2012; Razalliet al., 2012; Samori and Abd

Rahman, 2013; Battouret al., 2014;Ezzatet al.,2014; El-Gohary, 2015):

1. Only Halal food to be served in the hotel.

2. No alcohol should be served in the hotel.

3. Prayer room should be available in the hotel.

4. Predominatly Muslim staff with proper Islamic code of dressing.

5. Separate salon, recreational facilities and swimming pool for men and women.

6. Separate room/floor for unmarried couple between male and female.

7. Having the Holy book 'Quran', prayer mat and an arrow indication the direction of the Qiblat.

8. Beds and toilets positioned so as not to face the direction of Mecca.

9. Bidets in the bathroom.

10. No casino/gambling in the hotel.

11. No prohibited foods and beverages in the hotel's fridge.

12. Islamic funding to the hotel.

ii. Halal Food

There are a lot of verses in the Quran, asking the Muslim to take halal foods such as in Suraht al-Baqarah: 173 and 168. Halal food and drinks are very much concern in Islam because their impact on our mind, heart, and body (Samoriand Sabtub, 2014).

The preparation of halal food andhygienic accommodations will givean added competitive advantage to the hotel in attracting the localand foreign tourists, especially those fromthe Middle East, West Asiaand other Islamic countries (Samori and Abd Rahman, 2013).

There are seven basic requirements for the preparation of halal food (Samori and Abd Rahman, 2013; Ab Rahman et al., 2011). They are as follows:

1. Sources of halal food and drinks should be halal animal and plant based not containing 'najs'.

2. Does not contain any human parts or its derivatives.

3. Are not permitted Slaughtering for example halal and non-halal animals must never slaughtered together.

4. Product processing, handling and distribution should comply with halal Regulations.

5. Product storage, display and serving for instance equipment, machineries and   other materials used must not be made of non- halal materials.

6. Hygiene, sanitation and food safety should comply with the concept of halal.

iii. Halal Package

The content of the Islamic tour packages must be based on Islamic principles. And should include visits to the Islamic monuments, mosques and promote event during the Ramadan. (Akyol and Kilinc, 2014).

Malaysian communities' interest of halal activity should be to attract the Muslims tourists to come toMalaysia. The strategy of halal tour package should guide and support tourism related business development. Muslim tour packages have to offer halal accommodation, food serves and should provide educational and religious value. Each Muslims travel and tour trips isincluding of tour destination withIslamic heritage and in some sectorsthe tour include visitation to the local Muslim communities and mosque (Othmanet al., 2016).

iv. Halal Transport (Airlines)

The focus here is on cleanliness, non-alcoholic drinks and publications which are harmonious with Islam. (Akyol and Kilinc, 2014).

v. Halal Finance

The financial resources of the restaurants, travel agencies, the airlines and hotels have to be harmonising with Islamic principles. The Islamic finance requires participation in sharing the profit and loss among of all parties (Akyol and Kilinc, 2014).

vi. Halal Certificates and Logo

"Halal certificate is a document shows that products and services are compliance with Islamic rules and the life style". There are two types of halal certificates (Akyol and Kilinc, 2014):

1.Specific product certificate.

2. The site registration certificate

3. CORE THEMES REVEALINGTHE NEEDSOFTHE HALAL TRAVELLERS

There are 3 core themes that reveal the needs of the Halal travellers –

1. Maximising Trip Value

• Halal seekers plan their trip to maximise their experiences.

• Halal Travellers often adopt a hyper-planning holiday mode

• Halal Travellers like packages, but find them basic and inflexible.

- Travellers are more motivated to use agents for "complex" trips.

Travellers adopt a hyper planning mode to ensure they maximize their trip value and have a smooth travel experience with their families –

When traveling with their families, Halal seekers want to ensure that everything is as smooth as possible, they like to rely on travel agencies specially for complex trips (not known/ first time destinations, longer vacations, multi-destination, extended family).

They appreciate the possibility of booking in advance however they want to travel packages that are flexible, can be changed and tailored to their specific needs.

2. Relevant Accommodation

- They prefer Halal-friendly accommodation that gives them freedom.

- Apartments / chain hotels are preferred.

- Hotels/resorts must support 78raveler's 'cultural comfort': many hotels currently fail to meet prayer and dining requirements.

- Women struggle to find relevant hotels

Halal 78ravelers are looking for family-friendly accommodation that gives them freedom and respects religious principles –

- Finding the right accommodation is a key concern (family trips can be long, many family members).

- **Hotel chains** guarantee a strong brand and standard services (consistency expected across markets); some already provide adapted services.

- **Serviced apartments** are a valuable option: offer independence while providing key service, appropriate space and dining capabilities.

Main needs expressed in relation to accommodation:

- Respect of Muslim principles (in relation to alcohol, dining, entertainment areas, praying facilities, etc)

- Women want to be able to relax in relation with what they consider suitable (dress code, gender segregated areas, etc).

APARTMENTS/PRIVATE VILLAS	APART- HOTELS	HOTELS

Pros	Cons
- Large family can stay in one apartment - Cooking facilities	- Family can stay in one apartment - Cooking facilities - Hotel services on hand (room service, varied dining options, etc.)	- Easy, convenient - Full service - Well located - Concierge on hand (trust concierge)

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Cons		
- Can be far away from centre and/or key sights - No 'go to' in case of issues or problems - No cleaning service	- Expensive - Often not large enough for whole family (more like small serviced apartments)	- Expensive - Limited inter-connected rooms - Cultural comfort - Changes to room booking

3. Family – friendly Destinations

- At destination, Halal seekers want to explore within their comfort zone.

- Aiming at adapted excursion plans catering their requirements.

- Personalized dining options fitting different preferences.

- Smart transportation at destination, ensuring knowing the way.

Excursions, dining and ground transportation are key success elements aiming at a personalized travel experience-

- They would like to book in advance "family-friendly" (i.e. wife and kids not seeing inappropriate behaviour) destination activities –especially when travelling with the extended family- but often agents lack information / right offers. This means that travellers end up booking with providers or hotels directly. Excursions integrating Halal dining options and praying possibilities would be a plus.

- Halal travellers want to have dining alternatives: some want high end or gourmet options. Others want to be able to experience local cuisine in a Halal way. Others simply want access to the Halal equivalents of the popular 'fast-casual' eateries.

- Large travelling groups mean Halal Travellers often want to tailor their transport: private drivers in particular appeal husbands who are sometimes concerned about not looking 'expert' in a country, a private driver allows them to avoid these situations.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on secondary data sources. The main data sources are the various books on Halal Tourism, Islamic Tourism, research papers and articles on Halal Tourism and various internet websites providing information on the topic.

5. CHALLENGES THAT LAY AHEAD OF HALAL TOURISM

There are challenges in developing and marketing Halal Tourism. According to Battour and Ismail (2016) marketing of Halal Tourism is not easy since the demands of Muslim and non-Muslim tourists vary. As there are variances in the demands of Muslim and non-Muslim travellers, Halal Tourism could be seen as a constraint for tourism planning development. Thus, to ensure the mutual understanding and needs of both Muslim and non-Muslim travellers, the planning and designing of the tourism industry must be very comprehensive to figure out a way to encounter this challenge. This concept was supported by Battour *et al* (2010) where they stressed onthe challenges faced by some of the secular governments in some countries especially the non-OIC countries as thetourism developers may oppose the Halal tourism development and create restriction with it. The main reasonbehind the hindrance is the profit-based policy which the consequences of losing a huge number of non-Muslimtourists are unbearable. The tourism developers concern about the implementation and practices of halalhospitality according to Syariah law will limit the services provided and thus drives non-Muslim travellers away.

Furthermore, some Muslims travel to learn and experience the culture available in those particular countries. For example, Malaysians especially the young and self-planned travellers tend to travel to the small cities in Japanto experience the traditional culture of the Japanese. However, the awareness of Muslim travellers needs were not recognized in those small and out skirted cities. In short, the tourism suppliers have low awareness on the Halalconcept, for instance, the proper way to prepare Halal food is not educated to them. This can reduce the possibility of Muslims travellers to visit those places. Thus, increase the awareness of Halal Tourism especially among tourism suppliers will undeniably motivate and attract more Muslims to visit those places without hesitation (Samori et al.,2016).

On the other hand, language barrier is also one of the challenges in faced by implementing Halal tourism thoroughly. The local societies speak and communicates in their mother tongue language and has low recognition in international language. Difficulties arisen for tourists including Muslim and non-Muslim travellers when they acquiring information regarding the destinations, transportations and even communicate with local people. The difficulties of communications will set the travellers off by selecting others communicable tourist destination instead of having uncertainties while travelling in these countries Therefore, all information for tourist should be provided in English in any reachable media such as social media, travel webpage and also mobile application including Muslim friendly application (Battour and Ismail, 2016; Samori et al., 2016).

Besides, since alcohol is forbidden as it does not comply with the Shariah requirements; some countries may not try to implement halal tourism. Typical international hotels will provide some specific services by serving variety of alcoholic drinks that earned them a high ranking for their hotel. As Islamic law is conflicting with the current world standards, this can be a challenge causing some countries not opt for this Halal tourism. Some countries even impose penalties to the hotels which forbid alcohol that refer to the case of the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Egypt. TheEgyptian tourism ministry threatened the hotels by decreasing its class from five stars to three stars if they continue to exclude alcohol drinks from their restaurant 's menu (Battaour et al., 2010).

Halal Tourism practices and activities are affected by the political environment in the Middle East. The Arab Spring affects the outbound tourists from the Middle East. Although the Arab Spring proved beneficial for the tourism industry in the UAE, Turkey and Malaysia where there was a recorded increase in the demand for hotel rooms from Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Libya. However, the number of Muslim tourists could be affected in terms of inbound tourists to the non-Muslim countries.

Another challenge is the proper use of social media, digital marketing and proper geographical marketing. The fast process of information dissemination of Muslim friendly destinations through social networks or geographical proximity is still very weak. The geographical marketing programmes should be designed and disseminated to places where majority of the Muslims are located.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper highlights the concept of 'Halal', 'Halal Tourism', the core themes revealing the needs of the Halal travellers and the challenges that lay ahead of Halal Tourism. The countries developing and marketing Halal Tourism as their key driver need to face all the challenges in providing halal tourism such as to provide the services that cater to the needs both Muslims and non-Muslims, to increase the awareness of Halal Tourism among tourism supplier, to overcome the language barriers among Muslims 'tourist and the destinations and lastly, to resolve the conflict between current world standard and Islamic teachings.

Despite those challenges, the growing Muslim population, the increasing access to travel information and many destinations that have begun to adapt their products and services to fulfil the needs of Muslim travellers will become the key drivers for Muslim to travel to those countries. In a nutshell, Halal tourism is an emerging trend and can be seen as market opportunities to OIC member countries and non-OIC member countries

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