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Islamic Tourism

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“Travel through the land.” – Qur’an verse, Chapter 29, Verse 20

The tourism industry has been rapidly developed over the past few decades, and it is proving to be one of the most popular and promising industries throughout the world. Tourism is growing progressively in many spheres such as shopping, social, garden and Islamic tourism that is emerging as a new tourism business idea these days. ” Islamic Tourism” is also known as “Halal Tourism” and is becoming an influential and widespread opportunity in the tourism industry. Academic scientific researchers consider these two phrases “Islamic and Halal” tourism as the meaning to indicate tourism products and services addressing Muslim travelers’ needs. As Mohamed Battour (Associate Professor at the University of Sharjah) mentioned, that religion is associated with tourism, regarding tourist behavior and suppliers, as well as the relationship between them (2019). I support this point of view, tourism and religion should cooperate and continue developing, improving the needs of Muslims during their journey and some of Muslims’ needs, wants and issues of them are going to be referred to in the next paragraphs.

First of all, traveling and having a journey are strongly recommended by the Qur’an, it is required to travel and take lessons from Allah’s creations that He gave us with His mercy.

What is Islam Tourism ? So, it is evident from the topic name that this kind of travel is associated with the religious and pilgrimage purposes and trips based on faith of Muslims. That means all the activities and trips must be in accordance with Sharia. For example, Hajj or Umrah (places where people from many countries come for pilgrimage) are located in Mecca and Medina, large and most visited places with spectacular destinations for Muslims. It is a well-established fact that religion has influence on the day-to-day activities of Muslims, whether at home or traveling, and thus it shapes the choice of a destination for discretionary purposes and what is done at the destination (Jafari and Scott, 2014).

Muslim-friendly destinations mean the places where muslims go and their needs, amenities are fulfilled and spiritual senses are respected. Furthermore, the needs of religious travelers include hotels with separate swimming pools or spa facilities for males and females, restaurants without any alcohol services and only halal meals. Also, separate beaches for only Muslims, including the places for praying, as they are ordered to pray five times daily. The mosque or prayer room is considered to be one of the most crucial facilities for Muslims (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004; Syed, 2001). For example, the majority of Malaysians were anxious about the availability of mosques to choose holiday destinations as tourists. Weidenfeld (2006) suggests that closeness to the mosque may impact Muslim tourist reservation preferences of hotels. Regarding eating only

halal food, because pork (and any kind of meal made up of pork) is forbidden meat for Muslims, they request for halal food and even when they visit non-Muslim establishments. The last but not least Muslim need is a dress code, that is one of the most essential characteristics analyzing the religious lifestyles of them. According to the Islamic teaching, Muslim women must not expose their hair and body and also Muslim men are supposed to cover the thighs (Timothy & Iverson, 2006). Battour (2018) advocates, dress codes have been viewed as an important aspect of Islamic tourism because of representing acceptable life under Islam's teaching methods. All the needs that were mentioned above should be developed all around the world, that will additionally help to achieve competitive advantages among other markets of the tourism industry (social, shopping or adventure tourism). Furthermore, non-Muslim tourists should strive for inclusion of religious rules, when they visit holy places, for example mosque (Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, UAE or other mosques). Generally, Halal tourism provide adhering standards to Muslim tourists and it is predicted to expand by 73% from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.76 billion in 2050, and making it the widespread religious community (Global Halal Tourism Organization, 2021)

To summarize, the tourism industry should work with religion in a harmonious manner and encourage an uninterrupted relationship. Additionally, planned and well-managed Islamic Tourism could play an important role in economic revitalization and growth of the countries. From my personal perspective, tourism for Muslims should continue developing and improving, and also offer new unique facilities for them in order to have more travels throughout the world without any refusal needs and develop this sphere of tourism.

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