



## Review

## Current trends on Halal tourism: Cases on selected Asian countries

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## ABSTRACT

Halal tourism is one of the new phenomenon emerged from the growth of Halal industry. As Halal matters advancing tourism industry, many Muslim and non-Muslim countries are set to capture the Muslim tourists market by providing the tourism products, facilities and infrastructures to cater their needs. While affirming this new phenomenon, there remain a shortage of theoretical publications and research in this area. On top of that, when it comes to the real concept of Halal tourism and its trends, it has nevertheless been found that lack of research has been conducted in providing and determining the so called concept. Thus, due to the scarcity of literature and specific studies in this area this paper aims to explore and illustrate the concept of Halal tourism within the Islamic context with special reference to Quranic verse and Hadith (primary sources in Islam). Meanwhile, to appreciate the existing implementation on this concept, this paper will further provide cases on current trend of Halal tourism in selected countries in Asia. This study adopted qualitative research method and employ library research for data collection technique. The outcomes of this study include the current development of Halal tourism concept and comparison on Halal tourism cases in Asia. On top of that, it would also discover its opportunities and potentials for Muslim and non-Muslim countries to embark on the same journey.

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## 1. Introduction

Halal is an Arabic word linked to Islamic faith and is more than just about food products; it includes various types of products and services offered to the Muslim population. Halal can be defined as lawful or permissible under Shari'ah; it is a credence quality attribute (Jafari & Scott, 2014). Muslims, therefore, take a position of avoidance in the face of doubt where a few items could be categorized as 'Makrooh' or

'Shubhah' (questionable or detestable). Therefore, it could be further stress that Halal certification provides assurance to all Muslim consumers as it entirely fulfills the requirement as provided by the Shariah Law, which is obliged for Muslims to be adhered to.

Meanwhile, for the non-Muslims, Halal products are merely associated with quality product. It shall be further notes the element of Halal and quality product which known as *Halalan thoyyiban* have also been embedded and included in the Halal certification requirements (Jafari & Scott, 2014) This signifies that the wholesome of Halal products covers cleanliness, safety and quality in the whole supply chain, from farm to fork (Huat, 2009) and thus, Halal cannot be captured as a brand. In addition, it has been emphasized that "It is a philosophy, which while apparent and effective in branding, marketing and product development; stretches much further into disciplines such as

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management, organizational behavior, cultural anthropology and sociology.” (Wilson & Liu, 2010).

Having said that, Halal tourism is one of the new phenomenon emerged from the growth of Halal industry. As Halal matters advancing tourism industry, many Muslim and non-Muslim countries are set to capture the Muslim tourists market by providing the tourism products, facilities and infrastructures to cater their needs. In spite of this growing demand and interest of this so called concept, there remain a shortage of theoretical publications and research in this area. On top of that, lack of research has been conducted in providing and determining the real concept of Halal tourism within the Islamic context. Understanding the genuine concept of this so called concept would lead to discover the existing development of Halal tourism in Asia. In the effort to appreciate the existing implementation on this concept, current trend of Halal tourism in selected countries in Asia were analyzed with special reference to Malaysia and Japan. Further, the comparisons between these two countries on the emergence of Halal tourism were explored along with discussion on its opportunities and challenges.

Undoubtedly, for Muslim, Quran provides guidance in all aspects of human activities; therefore religion influences the direction of tourism choices by tourists. As a result, many countries provide alternatives for Muslim tourists to choose by upgrading the tourism facilities for the comfortability of the tourists. Moreover, Islam is based on concepts of human well-being and a good life which stresses on ‘brotherhood and socioeconomic justice’. As results, this requires a balanced satisfaction of both the material and spiritual needs of all humans (Rice & Al-Mossawi, 2002). This implies that understanding the central role of the Quran would be a paramount essential before any discussion of tourism in Islam could be conducted (Jafari & Scott, 2014).

## 2. Halal tourism concept in Islamic perspectives

### 2.1. Halal tourism according to Quranic perspective

Islam thus endows travel with important attributes and this is evident based on previous history (Kessler, 1992; Bhardwaj, 1998; Aziz, 2001). Few terms associated with travel and tours have been used based on different situation. The Arabic word on tourism is always linked with *siyaha* which is taken from *saha* which denotes the meaning of “move or flow”. Thus the traveling of a person from one place to another for the purpose of tourism is addressed by the word *siyaha*. The contemporary usage of *siyaha* is traveling to a city or country in order to entertain or explore new experiences (Sohirin & Shah Jani, 2014). Allah SWT has also encourages us to gain knowledge, learning through an experiences through our five senses by traveling. This has put in few places in the Quran where Allah SWT says: “Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts.” (Surah al-Hajj:46).

There are several terms on tourism in the Quran. The common expression is the word *al-fasih* as contained in this verse that says, “Go ye, then, for four months, backwards and forwards, (as ye will), throughout the land, but know ye that ye cannot frustrate Allah (by your falsehood) but that Allah will cover with shame those who reject Him.”

(Surah al-Maa'idah: 3).

Apart from that, the word *Ibn Sabil* which somehow reflects on the journey of a person for the cause of Allah as the verse also says, “Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to Truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of Allah; and for the wayfarer: (thus is it) ordained by Allah, and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.”

(Surah at-Taubah 9: 60).

The verse signifies that those who travel for the cause of God need to be given special allotment for charity. Another term is word *hijrah*. Rowley (1997) denotes that *hijrah* for example incorporates migration

and the Hajj to Mecca, one of the five pillars of Islam, requires Muslims to make the journey at least once in their lifetime unless prevented by physical incapacity. Previous history recorded that many companions of Rasulullah (ﷺ) migrated to other parts of Arab region and even beyond that geographical boundary with the sole aim of propagation. Tourism can also be regarded as *hijrah* to gain a new experience. It was proven that through *hijrah* a person may gain a lot of experiences and the increase of knowledge. *Hijrah* would therefore enable a person gaining greater rewards from God whenever it is conducted to respond to His religious call. For this the Quran addresses us as follow: “He who forsakes his home in the cause of Allah, finds in the earth Many a refuge, wide and spacious: Should he die as a refugee from home for Allah and His Messenger, His reward becomes due and sure with Allah: And Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”

(Surah al-Nisa': 100).

Another expression which signifies about the tourism is the word *al-rihlah* (lit. journey) and for that it emerged a lot of books under the topic. *Rihlah* has been used specifically to travel for the purpose of education and commerce (Duman, 2011). The most famous one is the writing of Ibn Batutah. There are some other books such as *rihlah fi talab al-hadith* (journey in search of Hadith of the Prophet. The Quran records *rihlah* among Arabs for business purposes (Sohirin & Shah Jani, 2014). This can be referred to the verse that says, “Their covenants (covering) journeys by winter and summer.” (Surah Quraisy:2).

Analyzing the above term, it was recorded that the Prophet Rasulullah (ﷺ) conducted *al-rihlah* through traveling between Makkah and Syria in series of business patronized by Khadijah who later became his wife. Sometimes the word *rihlah* is also linked with spirituality which means Muslims who travel to visit the shrine in Makkah, Madinah and other places such as Jerusalem can also be called as *rihlah al-muqadassah* or *rihlah al-ruhiyyah* (lit. spiritual journey). *Rihlah* can also be claimed as thoughtful journey whenever he feels more commitment towards religious doctrine.

The category of travel enjoined in Islam may be described as “purposeful” tourism which differs from the common practice of mass tourism which is motivated mainly by pleasure and hedonistic pursuits. Indeed the official definition of the “tourist” excludes those engaged in employment, whereas in Islam work (trading) is encouraged as for instance during the hajj season. The secular meaning of tourism also implies vacation or a non-work involvement which is a form of leisurely diversion from the work situation. The vacation trip is meant to be a relaxing and invigorating experience (Din, 1989; Sanad, Kassem, & Scott, 2010).

Within the spiritual context of tourism, pilgrimage has been central themes and indeed may have been historically the impetus and origin for what is today called tourism (Jafari & Scott, 2014). Religion may 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 & Scott, 2014). Various verses in the Quran encourage people to travel and make a journey as this would instill awareness towards the Oneness of Allah. Allah SWT put his words: “Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation; so will Allah produce a later creation: for Allah has power over all things.”

(Surah al-Ankabut: 20).

This verse implies that one purpose of tourism is for consideration and contemplation. Muslims are advised to travel around the world to contemplate the creation of God. Likewise, in Surat Al-An'am, Allah SWT urges people to roam about the earth to consider the destiny of those who preceded them, especially those who cast aspersions: “Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth.”

(Surah al-An'am: 11).

The similar implication has been upheld where Zakaria & Abdul-Talib (2010) claim that traveling and touring are highly encourage in Islam and normally it is associated and interrelated with hospitality. The similar effect of verse could also be found in another verse where

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