

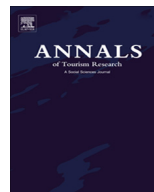


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Review Article

Muslim world and its tourisms

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ABSTRACT

The study of tourism in the Muslim world can be about religious topics such as *hajj* and pilgrimage, but it actually means and involves much more. Because religious life and secular life in Islam are closely intertwined, study of its tourism is also partly about its worldview and culture as well as a means of reflecting on Western concepts of travel and hedonistic tourism. This review article introduces selected aspects of Islam to non-Muslims and reviews the tourism literature to identify themes and areas for further research. In addition to scholarly goals, an understanding of the patterns and requirements of the growing numbers of Muslim travellers is of practical importance for the tourism industry. Significantly, the Muslim world provides opportunities for studying differences in policy and development decisions that can offer new insights and inform tourism by providing alternative perspectives.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this review article is to encourage the discussion of Islam and tourism, a topic that involves both religious and secular issues, of global significance and of academic and practical importance in this field. Within the tourism literature spirituality and pilgrimage have been central themes and indeed may have been historically the impetus and origin for what is today called tourism. Yet while clearly noteworthy, often these topics are discussed without reference to a particular faith; there is an implicit assumption that the study spirituality or pilgrimage does not require a detailed understanding of the religion in which they are embedded and which gives them meaning. Further, this body of work does not discuss the effects of a religion on secular tourism development priorities or the non-pilgrimage travel behaviour by that faith's adherents. This article therefore seeks to draw

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together a fragmented literature at the intersection of Islam and tourism and provide a reference point for the growing number of scholars whose work examines this potent research theme.

The study of Islam in particular is important, as in the Islamic faith, the boundaries of the spiritual and secular are transcended. The holy book *Qur'an* provides guidance in all aspects of human activity, so religion influences the direction of tourism choices that both individuals and governments are making about alternative forms of its development and practice. This unifying tendency is also found in the concept of *ummah* (a world community) and sharing of a number of widely held tenets (Hodge, 2002). However, the study of Islam (or of any world faith) must also be seen in local contexts—as a type of “glocalization” (Robertson, 1994; Salazar 2005)—as a religion’s ideology and practice are elaborated, understood, and subsequently reproduced in particular places (Eickelman, 1982) and communities (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1990). The development of Islam in any country or region has been affected by numerous historical, ethnic, economic, and political factors.

This multi-patterned fabric of similarity and diversity is reflected in a number of branches of Islam of which the most numerous are *Sunni* and *Shia*. Uniting all Muslims, however, are five pillars or basic spiritual duties: declaring one’s complete faith that *Allah* (God) is the only Supreme Being and Muhammad is the messenger of *Allah*; performing five prayers a day; donating 2.5% of annual income through *zakat* (a charity tax to help the needy); fasting (which includes no eating, drinking, nor intimacy) during the daytime in Ramadan; and making a pilgrimage to Makkah (Muhammad’s birthplace) at least once in a person’s life if one is able. Beyond these duties, there is diversity among individuals who self-identify as Muslims (Smolicz, 1981). Thus, within the global Muslim community there is diversity from the blending of religion, culture, politics and historical influences. The Muslim world embodies both a common set of religious beliefs as well as a complexity that rewards investigation and rejects any simple label or categorization. This is reflected, as signalled in the title of this article, by a variety of tourisms: located between admission and rejection of tourism involving lifestyle and behaviour that is forbidden to Muslims, and between pious or pleasurable travel by adherents.

This multi-patterned fabric of similarity and diversity may be unfamiliar to some readers, and so the discussion begins with a brief history of Islam (the religion) and its followers (Muslims), and some of the central tenants of the faith. It is written for a global audience and thus initially discusses some aspects of common knowledge to Muslims but not necessarily known amongst others. While it is likely that non-Muslim readers are aware of the *hajj* as a pilgrimage undertaken to Makkah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for many the history of Islam, as well as today’s population size and geographical extent of its followers may be unfamiliar. Thereafter, studies of travel by Muslims and that of non-Muslims in Islamic countries are discussed. This discourse identifies a rich, expanding body of knowledge, a number of themes and areas for further research.

MUSLIM TOURISMS: UNITY AND DIVERSITY

Islam began in western Arabia with the preaching of the prophet Muhammad ca. 570–632 CE (CE is an abbreviation for Common Era for recording dates, so 2013 CE is 1434 after Hegira, abbreviated as AH in Islamic writing or countries). During his life, Mohammad was able to unite virtually the whole of the Arabian Peninsula under Islam. After his death, it expanded north into Syria (636 CE), east to Persia and beyond (636 CE), west into Egypt (640 CE), and then to Spain and Portugal (711 CE) (Donner, 2004). Dissension about the procedure for choice of the Muslim *caliph* (leader) led to the proclamation of a rival *caliph* in Damascus in 661 CE, and the establishment of the Shi’ite faith (Donner, 2004). Islam arrived in the area known today as Pakistan in 711 CE, when the Umayyad dynasty sent a Muslim Arab army which conquered the north-western part of Indus Valley from Kashmir to the Arabian Sea (Esposito & Donner, 1999). Today, most Muslims worldwide are Sunni, but Shi’ites constitute the majority of the population in Iran as well as millions in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iraq, and Pakistan.

This expansion brought Islam into contact with Christian Europe in a number of border areas. In the Levant, Seljuk Turks defeated the Byzantine army in 1071 CE and cut off Christian access to Jerusalem, leading to a series of religiously motivated crusades from 1095 to 1272 CE. The Ottoman Empire expanded into the Balkan area, taking present day Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Serbia, Macedonia,

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