



Review

Halal tourism de facto: A case from Fez

Michele Carboni ^{a,*}, M'hammed Idrissi Janati ^b^a CRENoS, Centre for North South Economic Research, Via San Giorgio, 12, 09124 Cagliari, Italy^b Université Mohammed V, Rabat, Morocco

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Halal tourism
Islamic tourism
Islam
Morocco
Fez

ABSTRACT

Launched in 2008 by Moroccan authorities, Ziyarates Fès is a project intended to establish a bed and breakfast network in the Medina of Fez, within the framework of spiritual tourism. About 30 disadvantaged local families host tourists in their own traditional houses. Every aspect of the guests' visits is in line with Islamic prescriptions. Nevertheless, no effort has been made to intercept and embrace the demand for halal tourism market so far. This research investigates the opinions of 11 families involved in this project concerning the possibility of selling their product as halal (or Islamic) tourism. The study shows that interviewees are not familiar with these notions. Even if the idea of exploiting a potentially promising market is not rejected by all of them, in their view the adoption of such a label should not imply restrictions on tourists' nationalities and, above all, faiths.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Contents

1. Introduction	155
2. The vagueness of a booming segment	156
3. Methodology	156
4. Results	157
5. Conclusion	158
References	159

1. Introduction

Over the last few years, the relationship between Islam and tourism has attracted an increasing interest. Islam is growing faster than any other world religion: in 2010 the global Muslim population exceeded a billion and a half and is predicted to rise to 2.2 billion by 2030 (Pew Forum, 2011). Muslims' spending power and mobility for tourism purposes are also increasing (Sandikci, 2011; Stephenson, Russell, & Edgar, 2010). All these trends – as well as geopolitical issues (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004; Stephenson & Ali, 2010) – have called industry attention to Muslims' needs and expectations as tourists (Prayag & Hosany, 2014).

Concepts such as Muslim tourism (Scott & Jafari, 2010), halal tourism (WTM, 2007), Islamic tourism (Battour, Ismail, Battor, & Awais, 2014), Sharia-compliant hotels (Henderson, 2010b) and halal hospitality are receiving increasing attention, both by researchers and the tourism industry. Nevertheless, they are often surrounded by a certain vagueness (Hamza, Chouhoud, & Tantawi, 2012; Henderson, 2010a).

The very definition of halal, Islamic or Muslim tourism can vary, and so can its meaning, contents, implications and extensions. Islam itself is by no means monolithic, and the Muslim world is extremely heterogeneous (Sandikci, 2011; Stephenson, 2014), which might imply that “Halal, Islam and Muslims will always cause brand academics and practitioners problems” (Mohd Yusof & Wan Jusoh, 2014, p. 180).

This paper explores the issue of halal tourism from the perspective of a group of Muslim families – based in Fez, the spiritual capital of Morocco – as part of a project called ‘Ziyarates Fès, logement chez l'habitant’.

Tourism is a key sector of Morocco's economy. In 2013, it accounted for 8.6% of the national GDP and directly supported 814,000 jobs (7.6% of total employment) (WTTC, 2014). In 2013, the country received over 10 million international tourists, of which almost 20% were from France. Morocco has traditionally hosted most Western-European tourists, developing a risky over-dependence on a small number of countries (France, Spain and the UK). Apart from Europeans, Morocco attracts a significant number of Moroccan citizens living abroad, which in 2013 constituted almost half of all arrivals. However, the vast majority of these tourists stay in second homes or at those of their relatives or friends. On the contrary, Europeans choose registered accommodations (Observatoire du tourisme, 2014). In 2013, Fez was the fifth most popular Moroccan

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: michele.carboni@crenos.unica.it (M. Carboni), idrissijanati@yahoo.com (M. Idrissi Janati).

destination (after Marrakech, Agadir, Casablanca and Rabat), receiving 6% of all tourists visiting the country and collecting 5% of overall tourists' nights and 5% of their spending (*Observatoire du tourisme*, 2014).

The Ziyarates Fès project was launched in 2008 by the Conseil Régional du Tourisme de Fès within the framework of heritage and tourism policies aiming at promoting the socio-economic development of the city. This pilot project of proximity tourism (*Chiffolleau & Madoeuf*, 2005) established a network of 30 bed and breakfasts in the Medina of Fez. Tourists and hosts share common spaces and spend some timetogether. Hosts are supposed and willing to introduce tourists to Moroccan culture, traditions and lifestyle. Indeed, most visitors are foreigners, and a large number are not Muslim. Tourists have to respect family rules and habits. Alcohol or drug consumption is not allowed. As the hosting families are Muslim, every aspect of the guests' visits is in line with Islamic prescriptions. Several themes and key words (e.g. spiritual tourism, tangible and intangible heritage, culture, human development, intercultural dialogue, solidarity tourism) are mentioned and used to promote, describe and market the Ziyarates Fès network (<http://www.ziyaratesfes.com/>), but none of them explicitly refers to Islam. Indeed, no effort has thus far been made to reach the booming segment of halal tourism.

2. The vagueness of a booming segment

Nowadays, a broad variety of products and services are labelled as Islamic and halal: food, finance, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, fashion, insurance, pop music, toys, TV and radio stations (*Alserhan*, 2010; *Minkus-McKenna*, 2007; *Sandikci*, 2011). As *Sandikci* (2011) observes:

“The discovery of Muslims as consumers resembles the discovery in the USA of ethnic communities such as blacks, Hispanics and Asians as viable market segments. In all these groups there has been a shift in meaning from ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘marginalized’ consumers to a lifestyle community embedded in the language of consumption”. (p. 251).

Concerning tourism, *Battour, Ismail, and Battor* (2011) define this evolution as an ‘Islamisation’ of the sector. The development of ‘Sharia-compliant’ hotels is remarkable in countries such as Turkey, Malaysia and the UAE (*Eid & El-Gohary*, 2015), and their number is growing in different parts of the world, as are the number of destinations marketed as ‘Muslim-friendly’. As for other concepts related to Muslim customers, the popularity of concepts such as halal or Islamic tourism is steadily growing (*Scott & Jafari*, 2010).

However, as mentioned in the introduction, these expressions are characterised by a certain degree of ambiguity. This research adopts a broad notion of halal and Islamic tourism – used here as synonymous – and defines them as tourism in accordance with Islam, not limited to travel for religious purposes, and not exclusively concerning travel to or within Muslim countries. The Malaysian Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) gives a similar definition of Islamic tourism – “any activity, event, experience or indulgence undertaken in a state of travel that is in accordance with Islam” (*ITC*, 2013) – and extends the concept to non-Muslim tourists who are interested in Islam and travel in the Muslim world. This extended definition is shared by other authors (*Neveu*, 2010; *Zamani-Farahani & Henderson*, 2010), whilst others limit the definition to Muslims (*Henderson*, 2010b; *Scott & Jafari*, 2010). Definitional ambiguities can be connected to different factors, such as the fact that the phenomenon is relatively new and there is a lack of full institutionalisation (*Neveu*, 2010). As highlighted by *Sandikci* (2011), “There is an insistence of halal in both academic and managerial writings. However, how halal unfolds in particular markets and product categories is very complex and dynamic” (*Sandikci*, 2011, p. 252).

Furthermore, Muslims are often seen as a homogeneous group, and their faith is considered far more relevant than other aspects of identity such as age, social class or gender. Besides this tendency to emphasise

segmentation, *Sandikci* (2011) also observes an over focus on differences: “Muslims are generally depicted as consumers inherently different from consumers in general” (*Sandikci*, 2011, p. 252).

Relying on such segmentation and differences, however, risks underestimation of the extreme heterogeneity of the Muslim world (*Stephenson*, 2014). The way Islam influences politics, economics, culture and society varies from country to country (*Henderson*, 2003). Interpretations of religious practices are not uniform, and Islamic practices and observance also vary greatly within the same country (*Henderson*, 2010a; *Zamani-Farahani & Henderson*, 2010).

As a consequence, developing a tourism product in line with Islam entails the consideration of several tangible and intangible elements. The availability of halal food does not simply end the question. Several material and immaterial aspects must be called into question: clothing, availability of places of worship, the gender and religion of staff in hotels, entertainment, sexual conduct and public expressions of affection (*Battour et al.*, 2011; *Henderson*, 2010b; *Weidenfeld & Ron*, 2008). Similarly, ‘non-Islamic behaviour’ and the conduct of non-Muslim tourists, such as nudism, consumption of pork and alcohol, gambling and prostitution, may clash with Muslim values (*Burns*, 2007). Therefore, in some destinations the coexistence of Muslims and non-Muslim tourists may prove to be challenging.

3. Methodology

Based on primary research undertaken as part of a broader study on tourism and Islam in Northern Africa, this article explores one of the key outcomes of the research related to locals' perceptions of tourism products in line with Islamic prescriptions.

The study focuses on a specific case, the above-mentioned Ziyarates Fès project. The choice to focus on this project was based on two main reasons: Firstly, Fez is considered the spiritual capital of Morocco (*Istasse*, 2013). Despite not being representative of the Moroccan tourism industry, research on tourism and Islam in Fez can provide interesting points for analysis for the whole of the country and, more generally, for the topic. Secondly, Islam – as part of Moroccan culture – is an essential part of the project. Tourists have to respect hosts' rules, including religious rules. This makes Ziyarates Fès potentially attractive for tourists looking for halal (or Islamic) tourism, who want to enjoy a Muslim-friendly environment.

Primary research (semi-structured interviews) was carried out in 2014. We interviewed 11 people belonging to 11 families. Respondents were the persons in charge of running the project within each family, that is, those who received the specific vocational training organised within the project. Most of the respondents ($n = 8$) were women, which is representative of the gender balance within Ziyarates Fès; indeed, most of the bed and breakfasts are run by women. One of the three men interviewed is also the current President of the Association of the Ziyarates Fès families. Three respondents were in their 30s, six were in their 40s and two were in their 70s.

As it was not possible to meet all the families involved in the project, the authors made sure to meet a range of families representative of the whole group. To do this, we took into account several criteria that could also influence – as later confirmed by the results – the kind of tourists that the single bed and breakfast tended to receive: the socio-economic conditions of the family (which can be very different, even if they all are supposed to be families in need), the kind of house (all the houses are traditional ones, but some are bigger and more sophisticated) and the geographical location of the house within the Medina. Gaining access to families was not problematic as one of the authors was born and raised in the Medina and had previously researched on the project, though for different purposes.

Interviews took place in families' houses and were conducted in French and Arabic, lasting from one to two hours. The purpose of the interviews was communicated in a general way. On the basis of previous experiences (*Carboni, Perelli, & Sistu*, 2014), the decision was made to

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1013569>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1013569>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)