

## Muslim Tourist and Islamic Tourism

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**Abstract:** The notion of people travelling to seek for visiting and leisure any part of the world stimulates the growth of the tourism industry through multiple activities for over a century. Just recently, however, Islamic tourism is realizing to be a significant potential and is aggressively pursuing a market niche. Although Islamic tourism has created new market opportunities, the misconception of what Islamic tourism could lead to misunderstanding in translating them into practical perspectives. A question of whether Islamic tourism is either a lucrative market or its existence is as part of Islamic requisition to serve Muslim tourists also triggers the uncertainty. This article outlines three critical discussions: (1) An overview of the tourism industry as a whole; (2) A significance of Muslim tourists and travel industry; (3) A discussion on Islamic tourism that constitutes the conceptual understanding of what Islamic tourism is. The conclusion provides several significant findings of Islamic tourism as Muslims makeup one of the largest tourist market segments in the world and the largest contributor to the world tourism revenue.

**Key words:** Islamic tourism • Muslim tourist • Tourism industry • WTO

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism has a significant contribution towards two major aspects: community development and economic development. It has become a key driver of socio-economic progress through the creation of employment opportunity and business ventures associated with tourism. Most of the business involve in the service sector; for example, transportation services (taxi, airlines and cruise ships), hospitality services (hotels, resorts and homestays), entertainment venues (amusement parks, shopping malls, music venues and theatres) and infrastructure development [1]. This industry comprises of interrelated activities, which each of them acts as a complement to each other. Part of tourism activities include the services of transportation, communication, accommodation such as hotel and chalet, food and beverages, shopping and entertainment and etcetera, as well as the activities of social, political, environmental and cultural [2].

In this rapid era of development, the modern tourism is not confined to travel and accommodation, but also includes a vast array of servicing activities ranging from

insurance to entertainment and shopping [3]. The increasing in the rate of employment indirectly affects the wealth and prosperity of economical of the State. Instead of community development, many researchers agree that tourism has a significant contribution towards economic development [4-6]. Most of the tourism activities involve export and purchasing activities. As stated previously, it is a vital industry as it becomes one of the primary sources of revenues to the State. In economics, tourism is an important factor in world trade and balance of payments of all countries that generates foreign exchange through multiple activities by the visiting tourists [7]. It is true with the mushrooming of travel agents and tour, hotel and transport companies which, act as an intermediary between the would-be tourist and a chosen destination. With the expansion of technology in communication, these intermediary companies are now internationally controlling a mass tourism market through global operations in host and home destination countries.

Many researchers agree that tourism has a significant contribution towards economic development [8-10]. In 2013, tourism industry accounted for 9.5% of the global economy whereby; almost \$7 trillion and employed

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Table 1: International Tourism Receipts (2012-2013)

Rank	Country	UNWTO Region	International tourism receipts (2013) in USD billion	International tourism receipts (2012) ) in USD billion	Change (2012 to 2013) - %	Change (2011 to 2012) - %
1	United States	North America	139.6	126.2	+10.6	+9.2
2	Spain	Europe	60.4	56.3	+7.4	-6.3
3	France	Europe	56.1	53.6	+4.8	-2.2
4	China	Asia	51.7	50.0	+3.3	+3.2
-	Macau, China	Asia	51.6	43.7	+18.1	+13.7
5	Italy	Europe	43.9	41.2	+6.6	-4.2
6	Thailand	Asia	42.1	33.8	+24.4	+24.4
7	Germany	Europe	41.2	38.1	+8.1	-1.9
8	United Kingdom	Europe	40.6	36.2	+12.1	+3.3
-	Hong Kong, China	Asia	38.9	33.1	+17.7	+16.2
9	Australia	Oceania	30.9	31.7	-2.8	+4.5
10	Turkey	Europe	27.9	25.3	+6.8	+2.4

Source: UNWTO (2013)

26 million people [11]. The latest report by UNWTO showed that most of the contribution towards economic development comes from visitor expenditure on accommodation, food and drink, local transport, entertainment and shopping [12]. It has become a vital industry as one of the major sources of revenues to the State. UNWTO [13] reports tourism accounts for 6% and 29% of the world's exports of goods and services respectively. In worldwide export, tourism positions itself after fuels, chemicals, food and automotive products; meanwhile, in most of developing countries, tourism is at the first ranking.

Table 1 shows the total of tourism receipts for two consecutive periods from 2012 and 2013. The World Tourist Organization (WTO) has compiled a compendium of country profiles pertaining to tourism receipts in countries around the world. To make it profound, only the top ten international tourism destination highest receipts in US dollar (billion) countries as presented in the table. The United States has recorded the highest inflow of income from other countries with a total of receipts reached \$85 billion in 2013. This ranking was followed by the Spain (\$60 billion) and France (\$56 billion) as the top three earner tourism destinations. Of the 10 countries, six countries are from European continent (France, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Germany and United Kingdom), two countries of Asian (China and Thailand) and one Oceania, Australia. However, in terms of growth rate, Asian destinations Thailand, Hong Kong (China) and Macao (China) record among the highest growth rate with increment rate of 23% and 18% respectively. This trend followed by United Kingdom (13%) and the United States (11%) while only 1% to 5% of growth in Spain, France, China, Italy and Germany.

The importance of tourism particularly depends on the nature of the industry itself as it composed of many interrelated major activities. A report by UNWTO recorded those 1.087 billion international tourist arrivals worldwide in 2013 [14, 15]. Table 2 shows the most-visited countries by International tourist arrivals as recorded for two consecutive years 2013 and 2012. A report by UNWTO has recorded Europe as the fastest growth across all regions in 2013, with seven countries listed in the table. However, in terms of growth percentage, Thailand scored the highest growth over other countries with almost 20% increment in a total of tourist arrivals. The above discussion shows that tourism is an important industry and now, it has become one of the largest industries in the World. This substantial expansion makes travel become one of the most influential and economically complex, as well as a social phenomenon in World history. Among those trends of development, one of the main contributors is an increasing number of Muslim tourists that travel abroad for multiple purposes.

Figure 1 shows that global Muslim market has reached over \$126 million of global tourism expenditure, which has become the largest contributor to the world tourism revenue. UNWTO has recorded global outbound tourism expenditure reached the \$1 trillion mark in 2011 as the world recovered from the losses in the crisis year of 2009. Most destinations have reached an estimated \$1, 034 billion and expected to expand at 3.8% annually to \$1.44 trillion across 2020. Meanwhile, the total number of international tourist arrivals has reached 1 billion in 2011 and are forecasted to achieve 1.8 billion by 2030. From the number as recorded, European and North American consumers accumulate for 60% of worldwide tourism. Meanwhile, the growing contribution of travellers from

Table 2: Most-Visited Countries by International Tourist Arrivals in 2012 –2013

Rank	Country	UNWTO Region	International tourist arrivals (2013) – Million	International tourist arrivals (2012) – Million	Change (2012 to 2013) - %	Change (2011 to 2012) - %
1	France	Europe	84.7	83.0	+2.0	+1.8
2	United States	North America	69.8	66.7	+4.7	+6.3
3	Spain	Europe	60.7	57.5	+5.6	+2.3
4	China	Asia	55.7	57.7	-3.5	+0.3
5	Italy	Europe	47.7	46.4	+2.9	+0.5
6	Turkey	Europe	37.8	35.7	+5.9	+3.0
7	Germany	Europe	31.5	30.4	+3.7	+7.3
8	United Kingdom	Europe	31.2	29.3	+6.4	-0.1
9	Russia	Europe	28.4	25.7	+10.2	+13.5
10	Thailand	Asia	26.5	22.4	+18.8	+16.2

Source: World Tourism Organization UNWTO (2013)

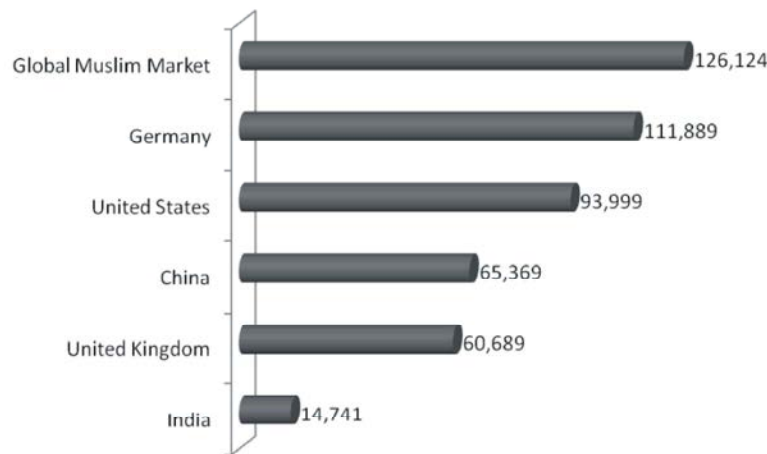


Fig. 1: Global Tourism Expenditure (US\$ Million) in 2011  
Source: Crescentrating (2014)

Asia (which includes MENA based tourists) rose from 23% share in 2000 to 30% in 2010. This increment is due to expansions in incomes from emerging and developed Asian economies [16].

**Muslim Tourists and Tourism:** The Muslim market is significant for both religious and personal reasons. The number of Muslim tourists is expected to increase in the future as Muslim global population increases, along with economic prosperity in Muslim countries and the geopolitical factors [17]. This trend demonstrates positive movement or highly mobility among Muslim tourists and yet it is now becoming boundless in most of the countries around the World. Table 3 shows that there are almost 1.6 billion Muslims in the World, which accumulated 23 percent of the total World population of 6.8 billion [18]. 49 countries of the world constitute the majority of the Muslim population. The research found that 62 percent of Muslims come from Asia, followed by 20 percent in the

Middle East and North Africa. In Europe and Americas, it shows that almost 40 million of the Muslim population where Islam is not the majority population. The ten countries with the largest number of Muslims are home to fully two-thirds (66%) of all Muslims. The largest share lives in Indonesia (13%), followed by India (11%), Pakistan (11%), Bangladesh (8%), Nigeria (5%), Egypt (5%), Iran (5%), Turkey (5%), Algeria (2%) and Morocco (2%) [19].

Recently, over than 50 percent of all Muslims worldwide constitutes in the Asia-Pacific region. Half of Muslims within Asia lives in South Asia [20]. This number was predicted to increase to 2.2 billion by 2030. Taking into account such expansion of the Muslim population around the World, it gives a significant impact on marketing aspects on how to cater and treat Muslim customers perfectly. In this study, serving to Muslim tourists could be realized by observing Islamic teachings in tourism activities. As Muslim population turns out to

Table 3: World Muslim Populations by Region

	Estimated 2009 Muslim Population
Asia-Pacific	972, 537, 000
Middle East-North Africa	240, 632, 000
Sub-Saharan African	240, 632, 000
Europe	38, 112, 000
Americas	4, 596, 000
World Total	1, 571, 198, 000

Source: Pew Research Centre (2009)

Table 4: Muslim Countries International Tourist Arrivals (2010 – 2012)

Rank	Destinations	Million			Change (%)	
		2010	2011	2012		
1	Turkey	31.36	34.7	35.7	10.5	3.0
2	Malaysia	24.6	24.7	25	0.6	1.3
3	Saudi Arabia	10.85	17.5	13.66	61.3	-21.9
4	Egypt	14.05	9.5	11.2	-32.4	17.9
5	Morocco	9.29	9.34	9.38	0.6	0.3
6	UAE	7.43	8.13	8.98	9.4	10.4
7	Indonesia	7.00	7.65	8.04	9.2	5.2
8	Tunisia	6.9	4.78	5.95	-30.7	24.4
9	Kazakhstan	3.39	4.09	4.44	20.6	8.4
10	Jordan	4.21	3.96	4.16	-5.9	5.1

Source: World Tourism Organization UNWTO (2012)

become high growthpopulace with average and younger demographic, the Muslim tourists are also having a growing trend toward travel to other countries for their holidays [21, 22]. Muslim tourism market reached \$126.1 billion in 2011 for outbound expenditure, which is not including core religious travel expenditure of Hajj and Umrah from Saudi Arabia, but including leisure, business and the rest of tourism segments [23]. The fallout from the September 11 causes the contrary reaction of Arab and Muslim tourists to turn away from European and North American destinations [24].

Table 4 shows among the top 10 Muslim destinations that exhibit the highest score of tourist arrival between 2010 and 2012. The two countries that dominate are Turkey and Malaysia, which received over 35 and 25 million tourists in 2012 respectively. There is a call to open and promote Muslim countries' tourism attractions, as reflected, for example, by the November 2005 inaugural Tourism Fair of Islamic Countries in Istanbul [22]. Within some countries in Asian region; for example, in Malaysia, serious discussions about boosting Islamic tourism began in the middle of 2008, during the inaugural Global Islamic Tourism Conference and Exhibition held in Kuala Lumpur. The Islamic Civilization Theme Park in Kuala Terengganu attracted 1.9 million tourists in 18 months from February 2008 when it opened [23]. Meanwhile, in 2007 the largest destination for Saudi tourists in the region was Malaysia

(78, 298), followed by Indonesia (39, 238). The expenditures from Muslim tourists reached US\$126 billion, whereby 60% of total global Muslim outbound expenses were from the Middle East and North Africa tourists [24].

Today tourism for pleasure is highly acceptable in Muslim societies. As Muslims travel over the World, they would expect to fulfil their spiritual needs and practice religious activities comfortably. Their behaviour in terms of toleration towards several matters makes them to be very distinctive; such as, food and travel patterns [25]. They added that there is a critical need to accommodate the increasing numbers of Muslim tourists by offering them. Instead of a focus on developing Islamic heritage sites, a concern also needed on the development of halal segment that fulfilling shari'a rulings, entertainment, gender segregated, alcohol-free hotels and restaurants. In addition, a focus also needs to be concerned on providing a complete array of Muslim information on websites such as prayer times, locations of mosques and halal food, friendly frontline staff with the ability of cross-cultural communication skills. Most of the hotels in the Muslim world are aggressively adopting Islamic values and ethics and re-branding their hotel properties to cater the Muslim tourists markets. The increasing trend of market developments of Muslim tourists' interest towards travel activities depicts the requirements for Islamic tourism. Hence, this article captures a conceptual meaning of Islamic tourism from multiple Islamic scholars in order to identify a precise meaning of Islamic tourism.

**Conceptual Understanding of Islamic Tourism:** As Islamic tourism is becoming popular among tourism practitioners, many countries show wide interest in implementing and promoting Islamic tourism industry by offering travel packages, which might be labelled as Islamic tourism regardless understand it from a true philosophy. Currently, the understanding of the Islamic tourism limits to visiting holy places and sites that relate to the history of prophets and the Islamic empire [26]. However, it is not merely academic in nature, whereby a question that might be raised up whether is that all the meaning of Islamic tourism? The misunderstanding of the conceptual of Islamic tourism could affect either its development or betrayal the doctrine of Islam as a whole. Therefore, it is considerably important to define the truth meaning of Islamic tourism. From the past research endeavour, there are some efforts have been carried over by Islamic and non-Islamic scholars in defining Islamic tourism. ITC has defined Islamic tourism as “a sphere of interest or activity that is related to travel to

Table 5: Definitions of Islamic Tourism

Authors	Definition
Din [32]	Islamic tourism is a travel in a way to appreciate the greatness creations of God whereby hosts and guests are repeatedly enjoined to support Fi-Sabilillah with controlled activities (prohibit gambling, consumption of pork, eating during Ramadhan and provision against khalwat)
Henderson [33]	Islamic tourism has certain qualities that could be at odds attractions of a non-Muslim type.
Bhuiyan, Siwar, Ismail & Islam [34]	Islamic tourism is a way to perform the religious duty that must be respectful of Islamic values and human beings in light of Islam.
Teoman [35]	Islamic tourism represents the demand side which is based on travellers' motivation to choose Islamic lifestyle during their holiday.
Laderah et al [36]	The characteristics of Islamic tourism can be identified as flexible, rationale, simple and balanced. Hence, Islamic tourism is where tourists are motivated to get the pleasure and blessing from God.
Al-Hamarnah [37]	Islamic tourism consists of three concepts; economic concept, cultural concept and religious conservative.

Source: Munirah *et al.* [40]

explore Islamic history, arts, culture and heritage or to experience the Islamic way of life, in conformity with the Islamic faith", meanwhile, the definition by OIC identified that "Muslims tourists travelling to destinations where Islam is an official or dominant faith, often for reasons connected to religion" [27]. There is a different between these two statements in terms of the purpose of travel. OIC has directed the meaning of Islamic tourism as travelling to Islamic countries, whereas, ITC tends to be more accurate in defining this concept from the underlying Islamic principles of travelling. These principles will be discussed further in literature review section. Islamic tourism also has been defined by several identified researchers from past researches. Farahani and Henderson [28] have defined Islamic tourism as tourism practice that is compatible with Islam which, it requires adherence towards attitude, food choice, dressing and prayer. Table 5 shows a summary of previous definitions of Islamic tourism with several updating field.

From many past researches on Islamic tourism, a study by Othman Bakar [29] has determined the definition of Islamic tourism from two main principles: tawhid and shari'ah. Tawhid-compliance used as a basis for ideas and beliefs; meanwhile, shari'ah-compliance acts as a threshold at the level of practices and ethical values. These two principles determine the scope of Islamic tourism, which is strictly only for Muslims; for example, pertaining to halal food. In Islam, tourism acts as a major part of contemporary human civilization. He argued that Islamic tourism directly associated with what have been defined according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO). Whereby 'tourist' and 'tourism' largely correlate with the large-scale tourism in human history, particularly the religious institution of pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca, the question of what is Islamic tourism needs to be scrutinized beyond the conventional tourism by looking at wider angle of Islamic philosophy. He contemplated

Islamic tourism as an alternative to conventional tourism in terms of three aspects; avoidance of Haram products and services, entrenched spiritual-moral terms, which is known as knowledge-tourism (k-tourism) and a clear cut of objectives of Islamic tourism.

The process of transforming tourism from conventional to Islamic perspectives can be classified as the process of Islamization or the Islamicity of tourism, namely, as 'Islamic tourism'. In Islam, Othman Bakar [30] argued that Islamic tourism fundamentally associates with a universal history of mankind. As Allah created the first man and the first Prophet of God, the Prophet Adam A.S. was sent to the earth till Rasulullah S.A.W. and the universal history of Islamic travel began. As Allah mentioned *Al-Ankabut*, verse 20:

*"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"* (Qur'an, 29:20)

In the Qur'an, Allah did mention in 13 different verses of asking man to travel through the earth to see the historical sites. It does reflect the view of learning about the historical fates of human communities, which led ways of life and lifestyles that went against the divine laws governing the moral universe [31].

## CONCLUSION

This paper highlights a stimulating of niche market of Islamic tourism and Muslim tourists. It also reveals that Islamic tourism is relatively untapped theoretical field in its practical domains. Thus, it provides an opportunity for further scholarly activity to scrutinize and explore from Islamic perspectives, particularly from Islamic worldview. Its coverage also provides an insight into the nature of

Islamic tourism and discusses the growth of Muslim tourists around the world. In the beginning, an overview of the tourism industry, its growth and trend provides unprecedented findings. The development of tourism industry accelerates and balances economic benefits and the social impacts particularly Islamic tourism in terms of the significance influence on the values and beliefs of Islam, its implementation in tourism policies and planning. The mobility of Muslim tourists to travel around the world boundary less encourage them to meet the requirements of shari'ah law, which is most likely subjection to halal and Haram food and services, gender segregated and accommodation. Finally, the discussion of Muslim tourists and Islamic tourism provides a useful perspective with which to view the discourses of its actual meaning and contents that must be differ substantially from conventional tourism. In these and other respects, this article indicates areas for future research that can be undertaken within the connection between Islam and tourism in terms of appropriate lifestyle for Muslim travellers, Islam tolerance or intolerance towards Western norms and standards and the practicality aspect of Islamic tourism implementation among tourism operators including governments.

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