

H. Neyir Tekeli

The Concept of Holiday and Travel in Islam: The Understanding of Halal Tourism and Investments Which Serve within the Frame of this Understanding (A Sample Study on a Chosen Pilot Facility)

1 Introduction

The literal meaning of holiday can be conceived as “a period spent for resting and entertainment without having to work as a legal right”. The concept of holiday is directly related to tourism, and within the scope of tourism, people who go on holiday are called as “tourists” (Icoz, 2012: 15).

A tourist is a person who leaves the place he/she lives in to rest as well as having cultural, scientific, sportive, administrative, diplomatic, religious, health or similar reasons and who travels for a certain period of time as a consumer and who does not stay anywhere permanently and who turns to his/her place of residence, without having an aim to earn money (Sezgin, 2014: 16)

Islamic religion generally appears to have a negative approach towards the concept of holiday. Since the word “holiday” is categorized as free time, any period of time that will be spent completely free cannot be accepted by Islamic belief. In the Holy Qur’an, it is pointed out that resting can only be obtained during the time when one “change the occupation”. Muslims should be away from the understanding of “a one-week holiday” on which time will be spent without working like the members of other religions and those who have holiday should avoid of any wicked situations contradicting the religion of Islam or behavior while they are entertaining (Eid & Gohary, 2015: 44). With this understanding of Islamic belief, travelling has more legitimacy and been positively accepted than having holiday.

2 The Concept of Holiday and Travel in Islam

The concept of Islamic tourism is not limited to religious tourism but extends to all forms of tourism except those that go against Islamic values (Hassan, 2017: 57). Islamic religion generally appears to have a negative approach towards the concept of holiday. On the other hand, having vacation has more legitimacy

and has been positively accepted than having holiday. There are many approaches in going on holidays. The most prevalent one is to attach the negative connotation to holiday which has opposite meaning to work. This approach states that there will never be a concept of holiday for Muslims. This belief is based on the 5th, 6th and 7th verses of Sura al Inshirah: "It is natural that every difficulty has its own easy way. Once you finish your work, try to find another one to have a rest." These verses implied that through changing and adapting different works one can easily rest. Not only Holy Quran verses but also the hadith of the Prophet recommends that time should not be wasted by doing nothing (<http://www.diyenet.gov.tr/en/home>)

Islamic belief does not accept to waste time. Holy Quran pointed out that one can rest through doing different things. This can also be defined as "to rest through working". Authorities and scholars of Islam state that People have natural right to have a holiday to rest. This is a necessity. However,

Islamic belief do not approve of wasting things freely, luxury, boasting, extravagancy, and over-consumption.

Having holiday and resting is something but showing off through holiday is something else.

Everybody should have a holiday within their financial capacity (income and budget);

Islamic religion frames the holiday as one should separate the difference of having holiday and resting with extravagancy by showing off. Other religions have similar thoughts. For example, in Judaism, it is compulsive to work on weekdays including Sundays except Saturday starting from the sunset of Friday. Saturday is declared as the sacred 'Holy day' as Sabbath (www.halaljournal.com).

3 The Concept of Halal Tourism

The concept of Halal Tourism has been described as the tourism done under the Islamic manners. It gains particular popularity in Islamic countries. Sustainability is a considerable important income. The number of those halal hotels has reached its peak in 2010, from 5 hotels to 27 hotels. In future, it is anticipated that there will be a burst of those Islamic hotels (www.turizmdebusabah).

Those hotels provide many services and facilities totally in line with Islamic belief: Separate pools for men and women, a small mosque, a special place on which hotel residents do their praying, sunbathing areas for women, a pool filled with sea water for whom swimming in real sea is avoided, a lobby, a restaurant, a café, a pool, a spa center, beach and sea. They are all especially designed for females. A hotel room shows the qibla for those who want to do their prayings

five times a day, prayer beads, a prayer rug, and a holy Quran, a vitamin bar instead of an American bar, closing the hotels to foreign tourists and requesting the press to maintain privacy, a service provided by specially trained staff are the services provided by those hotels (<http://issuu.com>).

The increase in the number of the hotels that provide halal tourism almost could not meet the huge demands. The more those hotels are constructed, the higher they charge for the cost of the room, by increasing the rate from 20%–30 % higher. Those who want to stay there should book a place four or five months earlier. They find their customers through the advertisement and notices published on printed media (Battour, Ismail & Battor, 2011). Apart from conservative Turkish people, the hotels find many visitors from other countries such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The common misconception about those hotels is that they have customers who strictly follow Islam rules. In reality, most visitors are families who do not rigidly obey Islamic rules but prefer to be away from alcohol, noise and nudeness. The popularity of those hotels is getting higher and higher day by day (Timothy & Iverson, 2006: 186–205).

In global market, the marketing reality proposes that the more creative you are the more successful and advantageous you become in tourism. The hotels that provide halal tourism are the overt evidence of their sustainability.

4 The Investments of Halal Hotels

A brief explanation on halal hotels are provided in the previous part along with the services they provide. Therefore, the attention of tourism investors must be pulled on a specific point that whether in Turkey or abroad the charge of those hotels are higher than those of the same rank.

The general profile of the tourists who demand halal tourism consists of families with children. Families with children arrange their holiday times by matching the school holidays. (Eid & Gohary, 2015b: 44).

Halal hotels are located in the Mediterranean and Aegean part of Turkey (See Tab. 7–16). The holiday period lasts from April to October. The temperature of sea and the weather are the reasons why they pick those periods as holiday term. The school time of the children and the Ramadan month coincides in summer time limit the period of holiday time to minimum for those families.

In Ramadan, people who fast do not swim. Therefore, those people prefer to go on holiday in December. Because of the high demand, the cost of the hotel becomes higher than the other types of hotels. While constructing those types of hotels with Islamic trend, the cost of their charge rises to 30–40 percent higher (turizmdebugun.com).

Tab. 7-16: Shows the Names, Types and the Location of Those Hotels That Declared Themselves as the Provider Halal Tourism. Source: <http://www.tuik.gov.tr> (Accessed on 22.05, 2017)

Name of the Investment	Type of the investment	The Location	The Area
ALiye Adin Beach	Hotel	Alanya/Antalya	Mediterranean
Maritem Resort	Hotel	Kas/Antalya	Mediterranean
Bal Beach	Hotel	Bodrum/Mugla	Aegean
Club Familia	Holiday Village	Cesme/Izmir	Aegean
Yesiloz	Hotel	Side/Antalya	Mediterranean
Cam&Cam	Holiday Village	Kusadasi/Izmir	Aegean
Onemli Hisar	Hotel	Bodrum/Mugla	Aegean
Bera	Hotel	Alanya/Antalya	Mediterranean
Demirtas Huzur	Hotel	Alanya/Antalya	Aegean
Burc Klub	Hotel	Kusadasi/Izmir	Aegean
Caprice	Hotel	Didim/Aydin	Aegean
Yeni Meltem	Holiday Village	Cesme/Izmir	Aegean
Silver Pine	Hotel	Bodrum/Mugla	Aegean
Turgut Suit	Hotel	Alanya/Antalya	Mediterranean
Elizan	Hotel	Bodrum/Mugla	Aegean
Inanc	Hotel	Bodrum/Mugla	Aegean

5 The Islamic Hotel Sector: Principles and Practices

In examining ways in which Islamic principles and instructions can be integral to the hospitality industry, it is essential to acknowledge how specific forms of religiosity are expressed and how tangible forms of hospitality are produced and consumed.

Therefore, Islamic philosophy can play a potent role in the hotel sector, though this would depend on the extent to which Shari'a law applies. Consequently, for a hotel to be classified as Shari'a-compliant it would normally have to contain the following features associated with five key components:

1. Human Resources: Traditional uniforms for hotel staff; dress code for female staff; prayer time provision for Muslim employees; restricted working hours for Muslim staff during Ramadan; staff (and guest) adherence to moral codes of conduct; and guest-centric strategies underpinning service delivery.
2. Private Rooms (bedrooms and bathrooms): Separate floors with rooms allocated to women and families; markers indicating the direction of Mecca;

prayer mats and copies of the Qur'an; conservative television channels; geometric and non-figurative patterns of decoration (calligraphy); beds and toilets positioned away from facing Mecca; toilets fitted with a bidet shower or health faucet; and halal friendly complementary toiletries.

3. Dining and Banqueting Facilities: Halal food with no pork; soft beverages only (no provision or consumption of alcohol); dining quarter provision for women and families, in addition to communal area provision; art that does not depict human and animal form; and no music expressing seductive and controversial messages.
4. Other Public Facilities: No casino or gambling machines; separate leisure facilities (including swimming pools and spas) for both sexes; female and male prayer rooms equipped with the Qur'an (also available at the front desk); built-in wudhu facilities located outside prayer rooms; toilets facing away from Mecca; and art that does not depict human and animal form.
5. Business Operation: Ethical marketing and promotion; corporate social responsibility strategies (linked to Islamic values) and philanthropic donations; and transactions and investments in accordance to principles and practices associated with Islamic banking, accounting and finance (Bon, M., & Hussain, M. 2010: 47 e 59).

6 An Interview on Halal Tourism

In this part of the study an interview has been done with a manager of a five star halal hotel who prefer to stay anonymous, therefore, his name kept unrevealed.

Q. 1: How long have you been in the market of tourism?

A: Since December 1996, we have been in the national and global tourism market.

Q. 2: How are the occupancy rates of your hotel?

A: We are fully occupied in half of the year.

Q. 3: Which countries demand halal tourism?

A: Apart from Turkey, there is a demand from the countries like Emirates of United Arabs, Syria, Iran and Kuwait.

Q. 4: Please give us short information on the services that you provide in halal tourism.

A: We have separate pools for men and females. Since we have a thermal spa, we offer thermal facilities for families separate for men and females. In particular times of the year, especially in our high times, we organize religious conversations, conferences given by religious authorities and Islamic scholars

and Sufi concerts. The five-star hotel has the same service and facilities as a five-star hotel provides.

Q. 5: When you advertise, which part of your hotel has been prioritized?

A: Our advertisements are different from the advertisements given for other types of hotels. We especially choose particular media which are followed by our target customers. This is also valid for our global advertisement. The motto we use in our commercials is: ‘The freedom in Holiday (Now everybody can swim.).’

Q. 6: We know that you have two hotels. What is your future plan?

A: Apart from these two hotels, we are building a new hotel in Istanbul, which will be opened in 2020. It is a source of excitement for those who are interested in halal tourism.

Upon the interview we have done above, we conclude up that the owner of halal tourism investors are contend with their service. Their investments on halal hotels made excessive profit as the new face of tourism.

7 Results

After the Second World War, there has been a significant increase in the income of individuals worldwide. The increase in income has proportionally brought about more work, tiring working conditions and the fatigue of the working life. These factors along with ecological components, employees’ need for rest, the spread of mass media, and the advancement of technology have been influential in the development of tourism. As a matter of fact, these developments have been growing and growing every year. The number of tourists has increased every year giving rise to increased international tourism revenues.

It is expected that Halal tourism industry could be competitive in the coming next years. Destinations, hotels and resorts, airlines and travel agents are recommended to position itself in Halal tourism market. The tourism services made within the frame of Islamic concepts have shown a growing trend in all over the world. Everyday some news on halal food and beverages and travel services pops up from Middle Eastern and Asian countries. Even in Turkey, which is known as a secular country, there appear so many investments on “Halal Tourism”. The contentment of investors and tourists is the indication that such investments on halal tourism will be increased day by day. Within the travel concept in Islamic belief and point of view, the tourists who get halal service provided by those hotels are happy due to the service they received as well as realizing and fulfilling their religious duties. It is an undeniable fact that, for the rest

of the tourists who have secular tendencies does not prefer that types of hotel. Within these considerations, we will see the future of this alternative tourism in the following years.

Bibliography

- Battour, M., Ismail, M. N. and Battor, M. (2011), "The Impact of Destination Attributes on Muslim Tourist's Choice", *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 13 (6), pp. 527–540.
- Bon, M. and Hussain, M. (2010), Halal Food and Tourism: Prospects and Challenges, In *Tourism in the Muslim World: Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice*, (pp. 47–59), Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley.
- Eid, R. E. and Gohary, H. (2015), "Muslim Tourist Perceived Value in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry", *Journal of Travel Research*, 54 (6), pp. 44.
- Hassan, A. R. (2017), "Islamic Tourism Revisited", *Islamic Tourism Journal*, 32 (2), pp. 57.
- Icoz, O. (2012), *Turizm Ekonomisi* (1st Ed.), Istanbul: Turhan Publications.
- Sezgin, O. (2014), "General Tourism and Tourism Regulation",
- Timothy, D. & Iverson, T. (2006). *Tourism and Islam: Considerations of Culture and Duty*. In *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys* (pp. 186–205). New York: Routledge.
- <http://www.diyenet.gov.tr/en/home>, (Accessed on 16.06.2016).
- <http://www.halaljournal.com/>. (Accessed on 05.05.2017)
- www.turizmdebusabah.0, (Accessed on 4.05.2017), <http://issuu.com/the-halal-journal>, (Accessed on 17.04.2012).
- www.turizmdebugun.com, (Accessed on 28.4.2017).
- <http://www.tuik.gov.tr>, (Accessed on 22.05.2017).