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# ISLAM AND TOURISM

## Patterns, Issues, and Options



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**Abstract:** This paper describes the pattern of tourist arrival in Muslim countries and examines the extent to which the religious factor has bearing on policy and development strategy affecting tourism. Drawing illustration from Malaysia where Islam is the state religion, this study suggests that, although the doctrine of Islam encourages travel and hospitable behavior, it has little influence on the mode of tourism development in Muslim countries. While certain regulations prohibit prostitution, gambling, and the consumption of alcoholic beverages in most Muslim countries, religion does not exert any significant influence on the operation of tourist-related activities. Indeed, virtually all ideas and policy precepts which inform tourism planning and management are western-inspired. **Keywords:** Muslim countries, Islamic travel, impacts, development strategies, Malaysia.

**Résumé:** L'Islam et le tourisme: tendances, problèmes et options. Cet article décrit les caractéristiques des arrivées touristiques aux pays musulmans et examine le degré d'influence du facteur religieux sur les stratégies de politique et de développement qui impactent sur le tourisme. Tirant des exemples de la Malaisie, où l'Islam est la religion d'Etat, la présente étude suggère que, bien que la doctrine de l'Islam encourage les voyages et le comportement accueillant, elle a peu d'influence sur le mode du développement du tourisme dans les pays musulmans. Bien qu'il y ait dans la plupart des pays musulmans certains règlements qui prohibent la prostitution, les jeux d'argent et la consommation des boissons alcoolisées, la religion n'exerce pas une influence significative sur la question des activités ayant un rapport au tourisme. Effectivement, presque toutes les idées et tous les préceptes de politique qui influencent la planification et la gestion du tourisme s'inspirent de l'Occident. **Mots Clés:** pays musulmans, le voyage islamique, impacts, stratégies de développement, Malaisie.

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## INTRODUCTION

Beyond the specific interest in pilgrimage practices, which some scholars regard as forms of tourism (e.g., Cohen 1979; Ritter 1975), there has been very little attempt by social scientists to consider the

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religious factor in tourism studies. Yet accounts of travel, dating to the Age of Discovery, provide ample evidence to suggest that the religious factor plays an important motivating role. Besides pilgrimage practices, missionary travels since the Crusade, and more recently, state-sponsored visits such as those to Israel and Libya, are quite often strongly inspired by religious considerations. Furthermore, even when the religious-political motivation is absent, religious attributes in the guise of architectural forms, history, festivals, rituals, and lifestyles have always featured prominently in the promotional literature. Religion also appears as a distinct category of attractions in the planning literature, as it frequently does in the analyses of the supply factors by social scientists.

In the Muslim World, the relevance of religion seems even more pronounced. The only author who has commented on tourism in Muslim countries observes that Islamic precepts have clear imprints on policies affecting tourism development: "There are—and this is perhaps unique in the world—a number of Islamic countries having high touristic potential that are frankly not interested in having non-Islamic visitors" (Ritter 1975:59). Ritter's viewpoint is, unfortunately, flawed when he equates Arab countries with Islamic countries. As Kessler (1980:2) suggests, stereotypes about Muslims have origins in the distant past,

Not since the time of the Crusade, in fact, have Westerners been at once so aware of and unaware about Islam and its political dimension as they are today. And today's perceptions and misperceptions of Islam are descended from those of the Middle Ages. Thus, whenever Islam manifests itself politically in the contemporary world, popular Western perceptions of these developments are doubly distorted: by fears inspired by recent events, notably in Iran, and also by a whole legacy of adverse European and Christian attitudes towards Islam, the religion and culture of the infidels of Araby.

Although Muslims will recognize distortions, Ritter is correct in his description of the general Western perceptions of Muslims as being conservative and anti-Western. Such images, however untrue, certainly have bearing on the degree of attractiveness and appeal which Muslim countries command in the international tourism market. These stereotypes, nonetheless, do apply in terms of intolerance of voyeurism, sexual permissiveness, consumption of pork and alcohol, gambling, etc., which are common ingredients in the Western tourist industry today.

Given the lack of information on tourism development in Muslim countries, any attempt to examine the nature and validity of the above images would certainly be illuminating (e.g., Said 1981; WTO 1984). This paper, however, takes them as given and assumes that Islam, both as bearer of its stereotypes and as a source of policy precepts, does have influence on the mode of tourism development in Muslim countries. The aim here is to examine the extent to which such influence matters; this can be done by first looking at how popular Muslim countries are as tourist destinations, and then proceed to identify some of the factors which account for such level of popularity. The purpose is to determine

the extent to which Islam has bearing on policies affecting tourism development.

To gauge the popularity of Muslim countries as tourist destinations, a generalized pattern of tourist arrivals in Muslim countries is first presented, followed by the secular "needs" of modern tourism. Attention is also drawn to the manner in which these needs are adapted within the different Islamic contexts. A more detailed illustration of some of the dilemmas faced by decision-makers are then discussed based on the Malaysian experience. Finally, the notion of appropriate tourism for Muslim countries is explored, followed by some speculation on the future of tourism in Muslim countries.

Throughout this paper the term "tourist" refers to international visitors who cross the border into Muslim countries and remain in the destination for more than twenty-four hours without involvement in any forms of pecuniary employment. The term "Muslim countries" refers to countries where the majority of the population are Muslims. The proportion of Muslims in each country ranges between 55% in Malaysia to almost 100% in Bahrain and North Yemen, but in the main, most of them have more than 90% Muslim proportion.

## TOURIST ARRIVALS IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES

The World Tourist Organization (WTO) has published a compendium of country profiles, which are the best data source pertaining to tourist arrivals in Muslim countries (Table 1). Even here details on the relevant country indicators such as the balance of payment accounts, GNP, tourist receipts, etc., are irregular, hence of little use. Entries on population and tourist arrivals, however, appear to be complete and current for the 34 countries which have Muslim majority. If it can be assumed that there has been no drastic change in population and tourist arrivals between 1984 and 1986, to allow for intercountry comparison, it is then possible to describe the overall picture concerning the significance or intensity of tourist arrivals in each country.

The pattern of 1985 arrivals is clearly uneven among Muslim countries (Table 1). Over 80% of the total arrivals are received by the top nine countries. Malaysia, the most popular destination, receives 13% of the total. The tourist-population index (TPI), which is calculated as a quotient based on the expected ratio between tourists and population, shows variations which range from 0.018 for Afghanistan (a landlocked and war-ridden territory) to 63.42 for the sultanate of Brunei. The high value for Brunei, as in several Arab states, seems to suggest an inflation due to the definition used in visitor counts which presumably includes border crossings made by expatriate workers who come from the neighboring countries.

Taking into account such neighborhood effect and enumeration problems, the Republic of Maldives stands out as a destination which has the highest intensity of tourist visitation as indicated by over 23 times its expected arrival. Other countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, and Malaysia are relatively popular although, for various reasons particularly the population parameter, the intensity of tourist visitation is somewhat obscured. In other countries which display low TPI

Table 1. Tourist-Population Indices in Muslim Countries, 1985

Country	Population (000s)	Income Per Cap (US \$)	Tourist Arrivals	Cumulative Percentage	Tourist Per 1000 Population	Tourist Population Index
Malaysia	15,680	1,867	2,906,000	12.96	185.3	6.50
Turkey	51,400	1,064	2,614,771	24.62	50.9	1.78
Morocco	21,940	670	2,403,460	35.34	109.6	3.84
Iraq	15,900	2,817	2,153,000	44.94	135.4	4.75
Tunisia	7,080	1,260	2,072,771	54.18	292.8	10.27
Jordan	2,700	2,875	1,889,707	62.61	699.9	24.54
Egypt	48,600	720	1,529,284	69.43	31.6	1.11
Oman	1,500	3,000	1,432,666	76.82	955.0	33.49
Syria	10,270	1,805	985,514	80.21	96.0	3.36
Indonesia	163,390	640	748,351	83.65	4.6	0.16
Algeria	21,060	2,380	713,900	86.72	33.9	1.19
Somalia	7,596	400	500,000	88.96	65.8	2.31
Pakistan	96,180	368	440,544	90.92	4.6	0.16
Brunei	220	20,520	397,926	92.69	1,808.8	63.42
Senegal	6,500	815	241,012	93.76	37.1	1.30
Mauritania	1,900	466	212,000	94.71	111.6	3.91
Bahrain	420	1,014	207,000	95.63	492.9	17.28
Bangladesh	98,700	130	146,000	96.28	1.5	0.05
Maldives	170	420	114,554	96.79	673.9	23.63
Libya	3,600	8,275	100,000	97.24	27.8	0.97
Qatar	310	20,600	98,000	97.68	316.1	11.08
Kuwait	1,710	14,267	95,907	98.11	56.1	1.97
Iran	44,210	2,500	89,419	98.61	2.0	0.07
Gambia	696	350	78,000	98.85	112.1	3.93
Nigeria	95,200	770	50,061	99.07	0.5	0.02
Yemen (A.R.)	6,850	510	40,420	99.25	5.9	0.27
Sudan	21,600	500	36,130	99.41	1.7	0.06
Yemen, South	2,500	332	30,000	99.54	12.0	0.42
Niger	6,250	190	28,960	99.67	4.6	0.16
Mali	8,210	140	28,000	99.79	3.4	0.12
Djibouti	297	1,034	18,794	99.87	63.3	2.22
Chad	5,180	90	9,383	99.91	1.8	0.06
Afghanistan	18,140	168	9,000	99.95	0.5	0.02
Comoros	469	400	5,335	99.97	11.4	0.40
Total	786,317		22,425,769	100.00	28.5	1.00

Source: WTO (1986); The World Almanac (1987).

values, tourism may be quite dense in specific localities such as Bali (Indonesia), Algiers (Algeria), Lower Cassamance (Senegal), Aegeon Coast (Turkey), and Alexandria (Egypt).

The relative tourism intensity or exposure of Muslim destinations, however, can only be better appreciated when their overall performance is compared with the rest of the world. For instance, considering that Italy alone receives some 28 million tourists a year, the Muslim countries (several of which possess many of the same tourism resources as Italy) can be considered undeveloped or perhaps can more accurately be described as self-effacing.

## REASONS FOR LIMITED TOURIST INTEREST

Several factors probably account for the lack of tourist popularity in Muslim countries. The first factor would be the state of socioeconomic underdevelopment prevalent in most Muslim countries. Per capita income figures, for instance, suggest that, with the exception of the oil-producing nations, most of the Muslim countries are poor. The average per capita income of the Muslim countries as a whole is US\$2,736. By excluding the oil-rich states such as Brunei and Qatar, where per capita income exceed \$20,000, the group average per capita income is only \$803. Even in the group of rich oil-producing countries, where the top

two richest individuals in the world reside, much of the wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small group, while the majority live in conditions not very different from those in the poor Muslim states. The general state of underdevelopment, notwithstanding the spotty patches of wealth, is clearly evident in the relatively low Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) among Muslim countries which average at 40 (on a scale of 100), compared to a corresponding figure of 96 for the European countries (The World Almanac 1977). Saudi Arabia, for example, already earned a per capita income of \$6,089 by 1975 compared to \$4,995 for the United Kingdom. Yet the PQLI for the former was at a low 21 compared to 94 for the latter, suggesting a lack of development and an extreme pattern of wealth concentration in Saudi Arabia.

An environment of poverty and destitution has never been an attraction to international tourists, including those from the Muslim countries. Poverty not only tends to breed beggars, criminals, touts, and hustlers, it also means that there is little private capital available for the development of adequate tourism facilities and attractions. This situation, according to the circular cumulative causation argument, is likely to persist if not worsen. Associated with this state of underdevelopment, there is another circular concept which applies to the relationship between tourists and facilities. An increase in tourist arrivals can encourage the development of facilities and vice versa. When there is a lack of growth in either arrivals or facilities, tourism stagnates and the place remains unattractive to visitors, especially in the presence of many and increasingly competitive destinations elsewhere.

One of the essential ingredients for tourism development is the provision of adequate infrastructural amenities. Unfortunately, as the PQLI figures suggest, in most Muslim countries there is always the problem of access. The cost of travel both in terms of time and distance can be prohibitive to members of the harried leisure class from the industrial societies. This appears to be a general complaint about Muslim destinations in the Middle East and Africa (ETU 1986:57, 1986, 1988; Hudman 1980:280). While low accessibility is a good indicator of underdevelopment, it usually goes hand-in-hand with the lack of capital and skilled manpower. The latter problem can be solved through importation of expatriate labor, as is commonly practiced throughout the Middle East. Even where menial and skilled manpower exist, because of the nature of resort development which invariably crops up in the periphery, most of the dependable employees can only be supplied from the local labor market where candidates are usually less preadapted, or are from the distant metropolitan centers. Both of these situations result in high turnover rates. This is particularly acute in the Maldives, but appears to be a commonplace management problem in most Muslim destinations.

Similar to other developing countries, the lack of manpower also affects the planning and advisory services where the common practice is to employ foreign consultants to do the job. At the surface, these inputs from foreign consultants appear necessary. They have the professional experience and qualifications, and since most of them come from countries where most international tourists originate, they are expected to be in a better position to advise the local clients. The trick

of the trade, however, as in most business propositions, is to put in the least hours for the most dollars. This is possible through applying the standard recipe formulae which bakes the same cake in different ovens. In other words, plans for resort development, or ideas which inspire national tourism master plans and resort designs have become fairly standardized to such an extent that very often what few unique features each country has will not be fully explored unless there is already precedent models to be emulated from elsewhere (Lanfant 1980; Luxenberg 1985). This results in most countries engaging the service of virtually the same network of foreign consultants who recommend remarkably similar approaches to tourism development and marketing.

Thus, although there may be increasing efforts to develop certain areas or places into attractive destinations, such similarity in approach may result in what Lanfant (1980) calls internationalization of the product, a stage where there would be very few unique or spectacular touristic appeals. In common with other international chain resorts, Club Méditerranée in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Morocco, for instance, adopt nearly identical concepts in product development and marketing. This is not to suggest that such internationalized approaches are not viable; in many instances they have proven to be successful and indeed profitable. It is suggested here that considerations for alternative or complementary approaches to tourism development, which are presently neglected, may help to provide a wider range of product to make Muslim destinations even more attractive. As it stands, with few exceptions, tourist attractions in Muslim countries are not particularly spectacular.

The popularity of destinations is in part dependent on promotional efforts. Information on Muslim countries outside the established destinations, such as Bali, Malaysia, Maldives, Tunisia, and Morocco, are practically unavailable in the media or promotional exhibits that have been held in such countries as Malaysia. Similarly, the larger book stores in Kuala Lumpur usually have a travel section and stock travel guides such as the Apa and Papineau series, but again there is practically no supply of such books on Muslim destinations. There seem to be two explanations. First, because there are so few tourism activities and consequently inadequate facilities and attractions, there is simply very little substance to promote. Second, in some Middle East countries inbound international tourism is actively discouraged (EIU 1985: 50). In all Muslim countries, however, including Saudi Arabia and Libya, where hedonistic forms of tourism are discouraged, certain "purposeful" categories of travel, especially pilgrimage to Mecca, are actively supported (Din 1987a; EIU 1985:50; Ritter 1975).

There is, unfortunately, very little published information on official attitudes to tourism. Whereas the preceding observations indicate a generally conservative outlook, other sources seem to describe otherwise (Hudman 1980:274-280). Nearly all Muslim countries subscribe to membership in the World Tourism Organization (WTO), while most Arab countries are also members of the Arab Tourism Union (ATU). Such memberships indicate, albeit presumptively, an expressed desire to promote tourism professionally. According to EIU however, only two

countries in the Arabian Peninsula, North Yemen and United Arab Emirates, are actively interested in developing the tourist industry (EIU 1985:57). Yet, as the publication titled *Jeddah Today* (1983, see also KLM 1986) shows, the city of Jeddah alone has 30 hotels, 10 of which are rated five star, including Sheraton, Meridien, and Hyatt Regency. The city has 73 travel agencies and it is directly linked by regular air services to 58 world capitals, of which 25 are in Muslim countries. In Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and some other Muslim nations tourism is viewed as one of the available options for economic development.

It is nevertheless safe to suggest, at least based on the media exposure in Malaysia, that promotional efforts among Muslim destinations by the travel media is weak. As to whether such weakness contributes significantly toward making some Muslim countries unattractive no one really knows. But if one considers the influence that a negative image of Muslim countries held in Western media, then the absence of counter promotional efforts may actually perpetuate the stereotypes about Muslims and their countries (Said 1981; Shaheen 1987).

Many Muslim countries have been, at one time or another, involved in war. At present, parts of Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria, Libya, Iran, and Iraq are still fresh battle grounds. Perpetual conflicts and war, perhaps more so than in regions outside the Muslim world, tend to conjure an image of war-prone societies which are not safe for visitors (Von der Mehden, personal communication, 1981). At the same time, the inability to communicate in the vernacular language may encourage a feeling of alienation and insecurity, especially among the mass tourists most of whom belong to the "psychocentric" category (Plog 1973).

The preceding discussion indicates some of the factors influencing the general lack of popularity of the Muslim countries among international tourists. The individual cases, needless to say, vary widely among the leading countries (Malaysia, Turkey, Morocco) and the by-passed countries (Comoros, Afghanistan, Chad). Similarly, the composition of visitors also varies widely with a common tendency for the largest contingent to come from adjacent territories—the distance decay effect. Allowing for this and certain sectarian religious differences, one would reasonably expect that *ceteris paribus*, proportionately more Muslims will visit Muslim destinations. Thus is consistent with the pan-Islamic sentiment embodied in the concept of *al-tauhid* (philosophy of brotherhood and cooperation), and in the obligatory conduct of the *hajj* (Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca).

To examine this possibility, it is necessary to isolate the adjacency factor, which can be done by taking a pair of equidistant examples of long-haul travel to a Muslim and a non-Muslim destination. For lack of better examples, one can compare profiles of arrivals from the Middle East to Muslim Malaysia and to non-Muslim Thailand.

Middle East tourists arriving in Thailand constitute 4.3% of a total of 2.4 million visitors to the country in 1985. They represent the group that stayed longest with an average length of stay of 9.16 days (Visetbhakti 1986). In contrast to arrivals in Thailand, Middle East tourists to Malaysia constitute only 0.2% of a total of 2.9 million visitors who

stayed less than 4 days in 1985. This difference in percentages occurs despite the fact that Malaysia, in addition to maintaining ties with Muslim countries, also has a number of governmental and non-governmental institutions which link the Muslim Malaysians to their co-religionists in the Middle East. These include The Pilgrims Management and Fund Board (LUTH), The International Islamic University, World Association of Muslim Youths (WAMY) branch, Islamic Bank, membership of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), and more. In addition, Malaysia also hosts a form of "purposeful" travel—the annual *Mussabaqah* (Quran reading competition) during the month of Ramadan that Muslims fast. In addition, one of the government's deliberate promotional strategies in the Middle East is specifically to promote Malaysia as a religiously "clean destination" aimed at the Muslim segment of the market.

No such strong political ties exist with Thailand. The only significant difference between Thailand and Malaysia is that the former is more liberal in its policy to prostitution. There is no known study on the ethnic profile of the clientele in "flesh trade." The common impression is that Middle East visitors are as enthusiastic about this particular attraction as their non-Muslim counterparts from other sources. According to the EIU, for instance, the three most popular long-haul destinations for tourists from the Arabian Peninsula nations are the USA, India, and Thailand; each with more than 50,000 visitors a year. In 1985, 104,813 Middle East tourists visited Thailand. "The Arab traveler [to Thailand] is typically a young man . . . in his mid-twenties, often intent on having a good time" (EIU 1985:56). Thus from the Muslim visitor's point of view, religious affiliation does not seem to be influential. The opposite effect, however, seems noticeable in the case of foreign Jews visiting Israel or Iran in early 1970s, where the role of religion was found to be crucial (Loeb 1989; Stock 1977). From the hosts' point of view, some tentative evidence even suggests that certain Muslim communities prefer non-Muslim guests rather than their Muslim brethren (Cohen 1971:225; Var and Kendall 1985:656), although other communities appear to have a closer sense of affinity to their Muslim fraternity (Shoup 1985:287).

At the regional level, although there are bilateral and multilateral agreements on tourism among Muslim states (such as the agreement among Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey or the ATU), these regional agreements do not seem to have progressed beyond the declaration stage (cf. OECD countries). Nevertheless, explicit tourism policy by certain individual states do give preferential treatment to their Muslim neighbors such as Saudi Arabia and North Yemen, and between Iraq and the neighboring Arab countries which provide it with 79% of the total number of tourists crossing into its borders (Hudman 1980:279).

## SECULAR NEEDS VS. ISLAMIC INJUNCTIONS

In order to understand the conflicts that have arisen between touristic practices and Islamic values in several destinations (Din 1988b), it is necessary to first examine the secular characteristics of modern tourism. Seen as a system of circular movement, tourism is comprised of



three basic components: origin, linkage, and destination. Beyond this general structure, the characteristics of each component vary according to contexts and the individual tourist profiles. Thus, in describing the secular characteristics of tourism, one can only present the general tendencies rather than the particular. Similarly, when discussing Islamic values, there is a difference between the doctrinal injunctions and the Muslim values which are actually in practice (Ragab 1980). For the purpose of assessing the religious impacts of tourism, however, it may also be instructive to proceed by examining some of the Islamic tenets which collectively define the kind of tourism most desired in Islam.

### *Secular Needs*

The dominant mode of business operations in the international tourism industry today involves a highly standardized arrangement which covers three main functions: marketing, transporting, and hosting. These functional divisions apply to Muslim and non-Muslim countries alike, the difference being a matter of degree rather than kind. The standard marketing approach is to first create a saleable product based on certain motifs or images of the destination, and then to set up marketing outlets. Such outlets provide advertising channels which, in turn, serve to inform and to persuade market segments to visit the seller country. Once the product is "sold," arrangements have to be made to ensure that there is adequate access to destination gateways, as well as accessibility within the destination country. Finally, efforts have to be made to ensure that all the needs of the incoming visitors, Muslims or non-Muslims, are well catered to. Besides inexpensive and dependable ground transportation, other needs which include quality facilities for accommodations, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, and sightseeing are also required. The length of stay, hence the amount of tourist dollars spent, depends on the ability of the host community to provide sustained interest among the tourists. The rating a destination gets from the tourists will have a decisive influence on the probability of repeat visits in the future, and of further publicity by word of mouth.

A common approach to tourism marketing, as Britton (1979) observes, is through deceptive advertising. This technique exaggerates the positive qualities of the host country and downplays or avoids coverage of the less palatable aspects. Thus, trade media images of features associated with the so-called touristic "s" is usually presented, along with a rich congeries of traditional attributes many of which are rarely to be encountered on the ground. For the Middle East, the popular slots include the belly dancers, the camels, and Bedouins in the desert outback, complete with Arab men in *kuffiyahs*, *'iqals* and *dishdashes*, and women in veiled but seductive dresses. In contrast to the Middle East images, the images of the rest of the Muslim world are somewhat diverse but seldom do they exclude images of beautiful women and traditional features, many of which have long disappeared from the ordinary landscapes.

The sunny aspects, usually presented in the most glossy prints or prime time audio-visual slots, are usually produced by advertising firms based overseas. A good proportion of this "managed" information

is piped through expensive overseas tourism offices and through the public relations department of the national airlines. Having been persuaded to take a trip, the prospective visitors are then organized into package groups, to be conveyed to the host country on the national airlines or other carriers. Without exception, travelers are served with, by local standard, a VIP treatment on board the plane, with beautiful flight attendants some of whom are foreign workers. With few exceptions, alcoholic drinks are served on board, and visitors are given the privilege to buy certain items duty free — a privilege denied to national citizens.

Such stereotype impressions and special treatment to foreign tourists are well portrayed in the film *Sun of the Hyenas* (Behi 1977). Upon arrival tourists are treated with great respect and cordiality which seldom apply to the same extent among locals. They will then be conveyed to star-rated hotels. Usually the local (inbound) tour operator will also arrange for country or city tours in the company of friendly guides.

As mentioned earlier, the needs of the individual tourist vary from one type to another, but all tourists need some form of accommodation, food and drink, transportation, (to a lesser extent) staged entertainment, and facilities for recreation and shopping. As a rule, hotels, especially those which belong to an international chain organization, strive to give what has always been presumed to be the “best” services to their guests. There are usually inhouse bars and discotheques, personal escorts, “health” services, all of which serve to satisfy the guests in their animated state, shorn of the inhibitions which they normally feel in daily situations back home. The hotels then become permissive quarters which act as temporary homes for the visitors. The permissiveness allowed in the hotels quite often is carried to the swimming pools and the beaches. On occasions, the hotel guests, who would usually be quite inhibited and sensitive to what neighbors say at home, suddenly become free men and women whose sensitivity to their temporary neighbors in the host community leaves much to be desired (Jafari 1987: 154). The above portrayal is far from universal, but it takes only a minute percentage, Muslims or non-Muslims, to be indulgent as such, to provoke local sentiments against the tourists.

In short, this sketch of what mass tourism as an industry characterized by hedonism, permissiveness, lavishness, servitude, foreignness, with a lack of cross-cultural understanding and communication, is clearly different from the following sketch of what tourism “should” be within the framework of the Islamic doctrine.

## ISLAM AND TOURISM

Unlike the commercial goals of modern mass tourism (i.e., profit maximization and customer satisfaction), the Islamic concept of tourism stresses the sacred goal of submission to the ways of God (cf. Graburn 1977). Muslims as hosts and guests are repeatedly enjoined to support *Fi-Sabilillah* (in the cause of God), and one of the approaches to this goal is through travel. Muslims are encouraged to travel through the earth so that they appreciate the greatness of God through observing the “signs” of beauty and bounty of His creations which can be seen

everywhere, both in the realms of past and present (see, for examples, the Holy Quran (Q) 3:137, 6:11, 12:109, 16:36, 27:69, 30:42, 47:10). As in the case of the various injunctions pertaining to the conduct of the *hajj*, the stress is on ascetic abstinence and humility (Din 1982b). Profligate consumption and all forms of excessive indulgence are prohibited; the goal of travel is to help instill the realization of the smallness of man and the greatness of God. While the spiritual goal is to reinforce one's submission to the ways of God, the social goal which follows is to encourage and strengthen the bond of *sillaturrahim* (Muslim fraternity) among the *Ummah* (Muslim community).

According to the Prophet Muhammad, a traveler is granted similar reward to that given for good deeds practiced at home, as if the traveler was practicing the same while traveling (Sahih Al-Bukhari (SAB 1984) 4:239). 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 (Q 2:198).

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. But in Islam, traveling is viewed as a trying task which subjects individuals to the tests of patience and perseverance. There is no real division between the physical and spiritual aspects of travel. The journey in life is not meant to be easy (Q 9:42, 18:62) and can only be achieved in stages throughout one's life time. For this reason, Muslims are asked to always assist the traveler while, at the same time, travelers are exempted from many duties which are obligatory when they are not on a journey. Travelers, for instance, may postpone fasting when traveling during the month of Ramadan (SAB 3:35); shorten or combine prayers (SAB 3:32, 5:272); and permitted to take ablution by *tayamum* (Q 4:43, 5:6); offer special prayers (*witr* and *nawafil*) while riding on the back of a horse or camel (SAB 2:113, 204); and even, under life-threatening conditions, are permitted to drink the urine of edible animals (SAB 14:1418).

In addition to the above exemptions, travelers are to be treated with compassion. They qualify as recipients of tithe and other religious endowments (SAB 3:641, 895, 527), and they may sleep in mosques (SAB 11:419, 420). Indeed visitors are to be welcomed personally (SAB Chapters 65 and 85) and to be given superior food for at least three days (SAB 8:156). In short, charity to the travelers is obligatory to the host community (SAB 4:141). While on journey, fellow travelers are enjoined to help each other carry the luggage (SAB 4:141). Although traveling alone is not prohibited by the Prophet Muhammad, a woman, unless accompanied by a *mahram* (a non-marriageable companion), is not permitted to travel alone for more than 24 hours (SAB 4:242, 2:194).

In sanctioning compassionate treatment for the traveler and in placing a high premium in travel, Islam enjoins a system of reciprocal

hospitality which would promote fraternal affinity among the *Ummah*, and would enable even the poor and the less fit to travel. As Prophet Muhammad says, "If you stay with some people and they entertain you as they should for a guest, accept their hospitality, but if they don't do [it] take the right of the guest from them" (SAB 3:641). This withdrawal of reciprocal favor is illustrated in another narration by Abu Saïd:

Some companions of Prophet Muhammad went on a journey till they reached some of the Arab tribes (at night). They asked the latter to treat them as guests, but they were refused. The chief was then bitten by a snake. When asked for help to cure the bite, the traveler refused, saying that since they were earlier on denied of hospitality, the travelers would only recite the *Ruqya* for some payment (SAB 3:476).

Host-guest relations can be congenial when both are sensitive to one another's feelings and needs. It is well-established in the literature that tourism also tends to bring in its wake certain undesirable socio-economic consequences. One of these is the display of tourist affluence which can eventually give rise to unwarranted demonstration effects caused by the desire of the host members, especially youths, to emulate the appearance of the richer tourists (de Kadt 1979:65). Furthermore, extravagant behavior can also lead to profiteering and inflationary increase in local prices. In Islam, both the guest and the host are prohibited against excessive display of expensive dress, jewelry, and other personal items (SAB 7:337). Similarly, sexual permissiveness, voyeurism, and consumption of alcohol which are the roots of some misdemeanor in tourism, are not tolerated (SAB 8).

The act of profiteering from travelers is an old art mentioned in the Quran (1983) (Q 34:19). It led to the decline of the booming tourist trade on the Syria-Yemen route which, according to Yusof Ali (comment: p. 3816 in his translation of the Quran), owes to the departure of the locals from the higher standards of righteousness (also see SAB 3:374). Such exploitative tendency towards the tourists may be averted by earnest efforts to eliminate profiteering, which breeds other inhospitable attributes such as hustling, touting, and cheating in many Third World destinations. The prophet's firmness in facing this problem in Medina (Saudi Arabia) should be an inspiration. "Medina is like a furnace, it expels out the impurities (bad persons) and selects the good ones and makes them perfect" (SAB 3:107).

Another common observation among the Third World destinations is that a good proportion of the tourists arrive with a *sahib* mentality, with the presumed liberty to demand the best of service, and to behave (especially with respect to dressing and entertainment) with little regard for the sensitivity of the locals. Prophet Muhammad was apparently conscious of this. When he arrived at Medina and found that Jews observed fasting on the day of Ashura (to glorify their victory over Pharaoh), Muhammad ordered that Arabs also observe fasting on that day (SAB 5:279). The Prophet himself used to keep his hair falling loose while pagans used to part their hair. Soon he also started to part his hair. On another occasion, Aisha (Muhammad's wife), narrated

that Abu Bakr came to her house on the *Eid* day while two Ansari girls were singing the stories of Ansar concerning the Day of *Bu'ath*. He protested, "Musical instruments of Satan in the house of Allah's messenger!" Prophet Muhammad said, "O Abu Bakr there is an *Eid* for every nation and this is our *Eid*, which suggests a degree of tolerance for cultural values of others" (SAB 2:72).

Together, these observations suggest that in Islam, travel is regarded as an instrument for fostering unity among the *Ummah*. Islam deemphasizes profligate consumption characteristics of modern tourism and enjoins genuine, humane, equitable, and reciprocal cross-cultural communication. The journey in Islam is part of a larger journey in the service of the ways of God.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the modern/commercial tourism, the relationship between the host and the guest is a personal one which is directed towards one and only goal—in submission to the way of God. As illustrated from the parable from the sea (Q 10:22) "He it is who enableth you to traverse through land and sea—inventions and discoveries through fruits of genius and talent which God gives." Transportation technologies may have gone a long way from lean camels to jumbo jets or Concordes, but in the eyes of Islam these are only gifts of God to be applied in the way of God. Whatever tourist attractions the traveler sees should make him more aware and appreciative of His greatness. When Muslims know that travel is enjoined by Islam, which in some respect is similar to the *haji*, there is no need for expensive promotional programs in foreign markets.

## HOST-GUEST ENCOUNTERS

Host societies with different outlooks and degrees of crosscultural tolerance react differently in the encounter situation (UNESCO 1976). In some situations, the secular needs of the cosmopolitan mass tourists place demands which appear in stark contrast to the orthodox Islamic values of the host society, while elsewhere Muslim hosts may exhibit a highly tolerant outlook. Nonetheless, from available reports (Knox 1978), certain regularities make the consequences of host-guest interaction quite predictable. In most cases, many of these consequences are not manifest at the surface, but remain at the perceptual or attitudinal level. From the host's point of view, the impacts of tourism are clearly both positive and negative.

On the positive side are the economic benefits of tourism, in money and jobs. Indeed this is often the main, if not the sole, consideration among government circles and other industry insiders. In the Muslim countries, there have also been occasions, albeit very rarely, when the idea of fostering spiritual kinship among the *Ummah* is invoked. Perhaps media analysts would agree that relative silence does not necessarily mean absence.

The list of issues mentioned concerning the negative effects of tourism on Muslim communities, as well as elsewhere, appears to be much longer. Tourism has been blamed for sexual permissiveness, flagrant indulgence in alcohol, gambling, drugs, pornography, voyeurism, and so on. Associated with these patterns of permissiveness is the threat

from the invasive effects of Westernization among local youths. A growing number of them act as middlemen (e.g., as guides or hustlers), and some view "instrumental" marriages with tourists as a way of escaping from the shackles of religious sanctions (Cohen 1971). There are also reports which provide overwhelming evidence of reinforced stereotyping about both the hosts and the guests. These observations cast further doubt on the commonly held belief that tourism can promote cross-cultural understanding among peoples of the world. Other localized objections are raised in the light of Islamic standard of propriety, which include Muslim participation in the handicraft trade (involving graven images), desacralization of sacred grounds, espionage and proselytizing, the nonchalant conduct of normal tourism catering during hours of Friday prayers and during *Ramadan*, and the issue of pork and unkoshered meat. Such violation of Islamic norms are likely to be opposed by the conservative section of the Muslim community.

On the broader level some tourism literature points to the effect of mass tourism in creating economic dependency and the polarization of power and wealth in a community. In the Gambia and the Maldives, and as vividly portrayed in the film, *Sun of the Hyenas*, (Behi 1977), control and ownership of the tourist industry becomes progressively dominated by outsiders as a resort develops to maturity (Ascher 1985). It is thus not uncommon to see tourist businesses monopolized by a few rich families, so that what little economic development occurs has limited effect outside the established groups (Shoup 1985:28). By contrast, other situations exist where the benefits are fairly well distributed through the entire community, as in the case of Pulau Tioman in Malaysia (Din 1988a) and Lower Cassamance in Senegal (Saglio 1979:323).

Local adaptations to tourism may take several directions, depending on particular contextual "mixes" and especially on the scale and stage at which tourism develops. As anticipated in the evolutionary theory of tourism development, during the incipient stage locals have an upper hand in the running of the industry and the character of tourist operations strongly manifests local cultural identity (Pearce 1987:14-18). But as tourism grows towards maturity, both in form and scale, the industry becomes increasingly institutionalized and dominated by outside interests. In the Muslim destinations, local adaptation to the growth process takes three general directions. Tourism is either discouraged, treated with a *laissez faire* attitude, or is subject to certain accommodationist control in which case the popular approach is to isolate it from the mainstream livelihood of the host community.

As in any general proposition, there are always exceptions to the rule, including several permutations of the above three modes of local treatments. In Libya and several other Arab states, tourism is discouraged. In the Maldives and Saudi Arabia, prevailing policy is to isolate hedonistic traits from the public life (Ritter 1982). In most countries tourism is welcomed with varying degrees of enthusiasm, as an option for economic development. In Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia, and Indonesia, more-or-less *laissez faire* attitudes prevail (e.g., Packer 1974; Tempelman 1975; Wagner 1981; Richter and Richter 1985). In every case, however, there is a degree of state inter-

vention, explicit or otherwise, rather than complete reliance on the dictates of free market.

Looking at the Muslim world as a whole, the encounter situation brings to the fore at least three discernible dimensions: the personality differences between the hosts and the guests, the interaction process itself, and the official response to "manage" whatever conflicts may arise from such interaction. Typically, the hosts and the guests are two different cultural entities each belonging to different socioeconomic, cultural, and even racial identities. They come from different sets of belief and technological systems, different juxtaposition on the work-leisure "rites of passage," and, in particular, different income levels. The mass tourists are by definition rich, in animated state, arriving to pursue pleasure. The host on the other hand, is relatively poor, at work, and is engrossed in his daily state of affair. Their encounter is far from a balanced meeting, which places one as a *sahib*, the other as serf. This difference alone provides seeds for prejudice and resentment which can easily reinforce stereotyping of one another.

These variations coupled with language difficulties, inevitably makes interpersonal communication a problem. Moreover, the interaction may be competitive wherein each individual wants a share of the beach, a seat on the bus, a room in the hotel, or a table in the restaurant. For hotel and restaurant employees, the tourist usually carries the status of a "sir," and the host at the level of servitude. In appearance, the tourist may be quick cast aspersion on what he or she perceives as an out-moded behavior (e.g., the local girl in veiled garb, while the host reacts with disdain to the infidelity of the Western counterpart who sports the G-string on the beach, and at times even on the hotel premises.

Official response to tourism development is usually a political manifestation of public attitude. It depends on the degree of influence religious groups command within a society, a role which may change from time to time and may differ from place to place, even within the same country. Most Islamic governments would not avoid addressing the universal issues concerning indecent behavior, consumption of prohibited items such as alcoholic beverages and pork, sexual permissiveness, and other secular influences which are induced by tourism. In reconciling the attendant conflicts between the secular and the religious values, Islamic precepts affecting tourism governance are manifest in several forms, some explicit while others implicit. These range from facile pronouncements of religious concern at political gatherings, cursory statements in master plans, to detailed provisions contained in local bylaws and departmental regulations.

In certain parts of Indonesia, for instance, ideas from religious groups are solicited for inputs into tourism policies (Adams 1984), whereas in most situations municipal regulations are enforced through the issuance of permits to tourist-related establishments. Some of these regulations, especially those pertaining to the sale of liquor, control of prostitution, and definition of public indecency, draw inspiration from a corpus of other legal sources but coincide with certain Islamic injunctions. As mentioned earlier, official policies on tourism may involve a certain permutation of the rejectionist, accommodationist, or isolation-

ist approaches, but the analysis of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper. Because of the leading touristic position of Malaysia among Muslim countries, one might expect the host-guest encounter to be more problematic; an examination of tourism in Malaysia illustrates some of the above points.

#### MALAYSIAN APPROACH TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Tourism to Malaysia began to attract government interest only in the early 1970s (Din 1982a). Prior to this date, the official attitude seems to have been self-effacing and is possibly attributable to the concern over the "yellow" culture, or the more liberal cultural attributes associated with Western permissiveness commonly attributed to tourism (Din 1982a, 1986). Looking back, tourism in Malasia has always been treated as part and parcel of a *laisse faire* economy which encouraged a market-oriented mode of development. Among Third World countries, the standard format has been the use of outside consultants, to prepare a Master Plan to chart the course of subsequent developments. The Malaysian Tourism Development Plan (1975) was prepared by a Hawaiian-based company (Malaysia 1975). The basic premise is to develop tourism as one of the options for earning foreign exchange and for providing employment for an expanding labor market. Part of this standard approach is to provide special provisions for tourism, as contained in the Investment Incentive Act of 1968 (amended in 1986) (Malaysia 1986). In spirit, the above incentives offer a graduated tax concession scheme which favors investment in the hitherto poor peripheral regions. In some measure, this in itself is consistent with the welfare-oriented philosophy as embedded in the basic tenets of Islam.

The Tourism Development Corporation Act (1972) provides for the implementation of programs aimed at promoting efficient and coordinated growth and development in the industry (Malaysia 1978). There are no explicit pronouncement on Islamic ideas, and very little implicit concerns discernable on Islamic goals. Although the promotional strategies do carry certain Islamic motifs as cultural attractions, (such as mosques, architecture, Muslim festivals, etc.), they also contain side-by-side, inserts on images which border on certain liberal values which are direct affronts to the spirit of Islam (Hofmann 1979). There is a cursory attempt to promote Malaysia as a "clean destination," although the fact remains that Malaysia would certainly be more attractive to certain market segments if it allowed the more permissive features such as the "flesh trade" found among some of its ASEAN counterparts. Indeed this is a clear dilemma with which the government has yet to come to terms—how to compete in the international tourism market without a complete package of secular attractions, without, the magnetic draws of casinos, cabaret, and prostitution.

As noted earlier, Islam regards travel as an exercise in reflective endurance for which travelers need every assistance that can be offered. To some extent in Malaysia, this philosophy is being upheld: there are brochures to help tourists with information, the "smile" campaigns to encourage hospitality, the "no tip" policy, the Tour Operator Business



and Travel Agency Business (TOBTAB) regulations (1985), and the tourism police units to ensure a safe and fair passage against criminals and hustlers. Tourists coming to Malaysia presently receive the courteous and hospitable treatment that is clearly enjoined in Islam. However, unlike the Islamic model, this attitude is superficial—the current goal has no spiritual content. Tourism is marketed as a pleasure industry and there has never been an attempt to even consider the religious values. As one commentator observes, the current tourism policy, “. . . places premium on material aspects to the neglect of the spiritual aspects” (*Watan* 1987:13; Din 1987b).

The above criticism may be refuted by invoking the anti-vice activities of state religious departments whose licencing policy prohibits prostitution as well as restrictions placed on gambling and the sale of liquor. In addition to these, one can also refer to municipal bylaws which contain stipulations on the accommodation industry. In the city of Kuantan, for example, all first class hotels must provide prayer rooms fully equipped with prayer mats, the Quran, *Surah Yasin*, and *Tasbih*, plus an arrow on the ceiling of every room pointing the direction of the *Qiblat* (facing Mecca). The supply of Bibles frequently provided in hotel rooms elsewhere is prohibited, and alcoholic drinks can not be conspicuously displayed. In addition, separate kitchen utensils and cutlery are required for Muslim guests. In other towns, municipal enactments for lodging establishments explicitly forbid activities of vice, and unmarried couples are forbidden entry. There are also provisions in the common law which, *inter alia*, prohibit indecent exposure and nuisance in public, together with strict anti-drug laws. These official policies clearly coincide with Islamic injunctions (Mohammed 1981).

However, some of the above regulations which control activities such as gambling, consumption of pork, alcohol, unkoshered meat, eating during the *Ramadan*, and provisions against *khalwat* clearly apply only to Muslims. Thus, the Malaysian authorities have been both strict and moderate in regulating the travel industry. By adopting a double-standard policy—one for the local Muslims and another for the non-Muslims—the current approach permits a workable compromise between the secular needs of the tourist and the religious values of the local Muslims, and appears to be viable.

Just as in any compromise situations, tourism can cause some alienation between the liberals and the orthodox. Legal provisions, unless reinforced by strict and effective surveillance, tend to leave the encounter problems unresolved. As indicated in the profusion of adverse press reports (more than fifty inserts between 1985–1987, see Din 1988b), the magnitude of the problem is bound to persist and even increase in the future as Malaysia enters the tourism decade of the immediate future. Since the sensitivities of the host community in Malaysia and in all Muslim destinations are always keyed to specific problems pertaining to alcoholism, public sexual indulgences, and gambling, a realistic approach would be to attempt to contain these issues. Prudence mandates the inclusion of local religious groups in any discussion towards tackling them (Naizan 1987).

## NOTION OF APPROPRIATE TOURISM IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES

What little discussion on Islam and tourism as exemplified by the Malaysian media have to date been lop-sided with a singular preoccupation on the religious strictures relevant to the leisure conduct of the tourists. Aside from the practice of the *hajj*, few Muslim hosts pay close attention to explicit Quranic injunctions which call for a spiritual reconstitution of the travel industry. The goal of tourism, already platitudinous, is to promote cross-cultural understanding, which in Islamic terms is a prerequisite to the unity of the *Ummah*. Muslims today carry the burden of a negative stereotype which can perhaps be redressed through exemplary behavior during the interpersonal encounters with the non-Muslim tourists. The conduct of Prophet Muhammad, both as host and guest, enjoins traits of humility, compassion, and a magnanimous degree of tolerance. Travelers, as the Prophet repeatedly said, must be accorded with the most selfless generosity.

This philosophical notion of generosity to travelers is a far cry from today's customary treatment of tourists who are invariably viewed as objects to be fleeced for pecuniary gains. It would be painful to admit that whatever the approach taken in Muslim countries today — either rejectionist, accommodationist, or isolationist — are reminiscent of *Jahiliyah* (pagan era) traits which see tourists either as a corrupting force or as an easy prey for monetary gains. There is factual basis for this in the universal disposition among Muslims; one can easily be accused of being puritan or idealistic to stray from this mainstream tendency.

The Christians have a specific Papal decree on tourism, as well as an active worldwide organization: the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism in the Third World (Mansap 1984; de Souza 1988). In addition, wayfarers of all denominations can seek accommodation in seminaries and YMCAs/YWCAs. Buddhist travelers are welcome in the modest quarters of *ashrams* and temples. Does one ever hear of such facilities for Muslim travelers — the *musaffir khanah*, one available in Kufah during the Caliphate of Othman? Can one now boast, of a local mosque giving shelter to *musaffirs*? In Malaysia the mosque represents one of the most ubiquitous and lavish buildings, together with its *wakf* (public endowment) properties. But facilities for the pious and the poor travelers, including those who travel *Fi Sabilillah*, are, for all intents and purposes, rarely available (Mohammed 1983). Mosques always appear on the tourist landscapes as photogenic items (especially for the Japanese tourists), but they seldom provide usable facilities for the modest *musaffirs*.

Islam encourages travel and indeed life itself is meant to be an ascetic journey in the way of God. But Islam does not encourage the kind of opulent trips frequently undertaken by the rich Muslims from the Middle East to Europe or Bangkok. Travel is meant to be *spiritually "purposeful," to make Muslims aware of the greatness of God, through observing the "signs" of history and natural and manmade wonders, all of which are gifts of God.* Muslims are thus encouraged to visit and to be visited by their Muslim brethren. In this sense, there is reason for Muslims to support sponsorships given to certain "purposeful" travels by governments such as in

Libya, Saudi Arabia, and others. At the domestic level, however, very little encouragement has been done along this line.

The question arises as to how Muslims should treat the non-Muslim travelers. Briefly, if Muslims believe that their way of life is the correct one, then they should share it with foreign guests, as the Senegalese have done in Lower Cassamance (Saglio 1979). This way they may be able to convince their guests of the virtues of their ways. Direct contacts, rather than enclave formations, seem to be more effective in promoting tourism—by word-of-mouth, rather than deceptive advertising overseas. Granted that nowadays it would be exceptional to find Muslims as hosts who possess the selfless characteristics as outlined in the *Sunnah* (Islamic scriptures), individuals should at least be mindful of the spiritual goal in travel. Like others, Muslim societies have been so deeply immersed in the Western capitalistic economy that the ideal expectations of the individual Muslim appear to be somewhat wishful.

The tourism portfolio alone cannot create ideal interpersonal cross-cultural relations. It requires concerted efforts from all directions—education, politics, ideology, administration, and more—to develop a secular host community that approximates the ideal Muslim host. There is no ready formula by which to achieve this goal except for the Muslim community to explore various alternatives. Islamic tenets enjoin reciprocal visits among Muslims (and non-Muslims) within the country and visitors, irrespective of creed, should be received in a most generous manner. Only then can travel serve its ultimate purpose, of making individuals aware of their rights and responsibilities to God and to other individuals. Only then can Muslims be absolved of the negative stereotypes that have separated them from other fellow humans. The Muslim island of Lamu in Kenya has been singled out as a “paradise” by the few world travelers (who have to-date visited it) for its architectural and environmental attractions and the friendliness of the host community. If only other Muslim destinations can be considered as such, not on account of permissiveness, but on the friendliness of Muslims, then part of their religious obligation on this earth is achieved.

This article has deliberately omitted discussion on the distributive aspects of the earnings from tourism. As suggested elsewhere, the monetary benefits from tourism should be equitably shared among the host communities (Din 1987c). Such sharing is indeed conducive to any attempt to inculcate a hospitable and congenial disposition to tourists among members of the host community (Ngunjiri 1985). To Muslims, this, however, is only a means of the End. □□

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