

Islamic Tourism: The Impacts To Malaysia's Tourism Industry

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This paper seeks to explore the evolution of Islamic tourism in the world especially in Malaysia as a multi-cultural nation. Since the religious factors have been brewed in Islamic tourism, it most likely influences the pros and cons of its growth in Malaysia. The data gathered from literature review were critically debated to fill the gaps in understanding the emergence of Islamic tourism. Therefore, the main issue address in this paper is to highlight as to how Islamic tourism (or so called religious/spiritual tourism) could give significant changes and impacts towards Malaysia's tourism industry. The findings of the study provide the impacts of Islamic tourism from the aspects of economics, socio-culture, politics and environment. Since the tourism industry itself is a profitable chain, it also helps to be as a weapon of poverty reduction to Muslim countries while preserving and conserving the Islamic socio-culture. Islamic tourism helps to stabilize the politic issues and provide less pollution to the environment.

Key words: islamic tourism, Malaysia, religious tourism, tourism impacts

Introduction

The tourism industry is well known with the visitation of tourists from one place to another. Travel and tourism relate to the activities whereby travellers having a trip outside their usual environment with the duration of less than one year (WTTC,2012). There are types of tourisms which are, mass tourism, sports tourism, heritage tourism, island tourism, adventure tourism and agriculture tourism. However, a new tourism product that's based on religious or spiritual attribute has emerge such as Islamic tourism through events, volunteering and community based initiatives. This requires understanding that leads into need of in-depth study on how it was perceived in terms of demand and supply.

The emergence of Islamic tourism has a significant relation to the tragedy of September 11, 2001 whereby the Middle East tourists started to change their travel flow from Western countries to other Muslim countries especially in Asia (Hanim, Redzuan, Hassan & Safar, 2010; Zulkifli, Salehudin, Maimunah, Zulhan & Kamaruzaman, 2009). Taking into advantage is Malaysia as a new destination to be visited by Middle East tourists (Hanim et al, 2010) and other Muslim tourists, this

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study trying to understand and explore the impacts of Islamic tourism to Malaysia's tourism industry as a review for further studies within this context.

Literature Review

Tourism Industry in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the Tourism Department has been established in 1985 to organize the movement of tourism industry in Malaysia. Since 1970's, Malaysia has emphasized on primary sectors which were focusing on productive industry. After the economic recession in the 1980's (Hanim et al, 2010), the government was trying to find new industry which can contribute to high revenue for long term economic development to the country. With that concern, the tourism industry has been recognized as a new industry that can contribute to high revenue. (Yusof, 1991) and Malaysia has established Ministry of Culture, Art and Tourism (MOCAT) on 1987. With the rapid growth in tourism industry in the globalization era as well to Malaysia context, Malaysia has divided this ministry into two different ministries, Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Arts and Culture in 2004 so that the government can focus more on developing this industry to the higher level.

In the 10th Malaysia Plan, through the Economic Transformation Program (ETP), 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs) have been identified in which tourism industry is one of the lists to leverage competitive advantages. This is due to the significance of contribution to the Gross National Income (GNI) and therefore, as an economic driver to the nation (ETP, 2011). The growth of tourism industry became faster and wider parallel with the advancement of the technologies. With that concern, Ministry of Tourism has established Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) on February 2009 to support and focus on developing the strategies of Islamic tourism in Malaysia. The definition of Islamic tourism has given by ITC stated as below:

Islamic Tourism definition from ITC (2009):

“A sphere of interest or activity that is related to travel to explore Islamic history, arts, culture and heritage and/or to experience the Islamic way of life, in conformity with the Islamic faith”

While the Islamic Tourism definition from OIC, 2008 (Henderson, 2010b):

“Muslims tourists travelling to destinations where Islam is an official or dominant faith, often for reasons connected to religion”

Islamic Tourism Concept

Historically, Islamic tourism related to people who are travelling to Mecca for pilgrimage practices to perform one of the pillars in Islam, with an average of 8.6 million people visit the sacred place (Zamani & Henderson, 2010). In Islamic history, travelling by Prophet Muhammad to spread the Islamic teaching has encouraged Muslim tourists to travel to learn more about Islamic thought and civilization. Besides that, Islam also encourages its people to make a journey to one place to another to appreciate and educate person as stated in Holy Quran, Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 20 below:

“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.”

However, the definition of the concept of Islamic tourism is still ambiguous and the ramification of the Islamic tourism terms itself is not clearly defined

(Henderson, 2010). The concept of Islamic Tourism also can be considered as *'ibadah* and *Da'wah* where tourists travel from one place to another place is being seen as a blessing from God by avoid any wrongdoings during the travel. Any other words it can also be translated as religious tourism, spiritual tourism and cultural tourism as well as the claims that characteristics of Islamic tourism itself are flexible, rational, simple and balanced (Laderlah, Rahman, Awang, & Man, 2011).

Furthermore, an Islamic tourism concept also brewed with economic concept, cultural concept and religion conservative concept (Steiner, 2010). Factors that need to be emphasized in promoting Muslim destinations include prayer times, Halal food destinations and travel tips on Muslim conducts (Hashim, Murphy, & Hashim, 2007) in achieving the goals of generic goal, spiritual goal and social goal (Din, 1989). Weidenfeld, 2009 indicated that the relationship between tourism and religion are competition, mutual influence, being complimentary and co-habitualness.

Muslim Countries

Most of the Muslim countries are undeveloped country (Din, 1989; Laderlah et al., 2011). There are a few factors why Muslim countries are not well-known in tourism and has less visitation from tourists. One of the main reasons is because Muslim countries usually involved in wars (Din, 1989) in the last few decades such as Gulf War in 1990 and continues instability of the nations in the Middle East. At the same time, there are less facilities and infrastructures provided in the Muslim countries (Din, 1989). The establishment of Organization of Islamic Conference on 25th September 1969 with 57 members of Muslim countries all around the world helps unify and build rapport among the countries in all aspects especially related to ensuring safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world (OIC, 2012)

Within this context, Malaysia is the most active country in developing and finding opportunities for Islamic tourism followed by Singapura in Southeast Asia region (Henderson, 2010). Malaysia put a lot of efforts in focusing the development of Islamic tourism and took initiatives to organize the first OIC Global Islamic Tourism Conference and Exhibition (Henderson, 2010). Besides that, Malaysia also took initiative to promote products and services based on Islamic lifestyle by organizing events such as Islamic Festival Fashion (IFF), Halal Showcase, Islamic MATTA Fair, and Islamic tourism conferences such as Regional Seminar on Islamic Tourism (ReSIT, 2012) and World Islamic Tourism Mart (WITM, 2012) organized by Islamic Tourism Centre, MATTA and Tourism Ministry.

In 2004, there are four Muslim countries received the highest total of tourists arrival which is Morocco, Egypt, Turkey and Malaysia (Bhuiyan, Siwar, Ismail, & Islam, 2011; Henderson, 2003; Laderlah et al., 2011). In Malaysia, the popular Muslim tourists are coming from the Middle East countries such as Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Syrian Arab Republic and Saudi Arabia (Hanim, Othman, Shaari & Safar, 2010). This shows that the relationship among Islamic countries is going closer not only for the general purposes such as education, but also beyond of it which is people starts to visit destinations which dominated by local people who has the same religion as theirs.

Facts And Figures

Table 1 shows the allocation for tourism industry provided by the government of Malaysia in each Malaysia Plans. The establishment of Tourism Development

Corporation (TDC) on 1972 has appeared in the first plan which was completed in 1975. The federal government has outlined the strategies for tourism planning and development in the National Five Year Plan by providing statistics and allocations for tourism development in every state in Malaysia (Marzuki, 2009). A significant number of funds have been allocated to develop tourism industry as one of the second largest revenue in the country. The fund has increased from 4th Malaysia Plan to the 5th Malaysia Plan which was RM140.50 million to RM533.50 million due to the awareness of high returns in tourism industry. The allocation in the 9th Malaysian Plan however provides more opportunities for tourism industry to grow and develop in order to reach the target of receiving 36 million tourist arrival and RM68 billion revenue to the country in 2020. The implementation of Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) in 1990, 1994, 2000, 2004 and 2007 as shown in Table 2 indicate the successful effort in increasing the number of the tourist to Malaysia.

Table 1: Government Allocation for Tourism Development

Five Years Plan	Allocation (RM in million)
1 st Malaysia Plan (1965 – 1970)	No allocation
2 nd Malaysia Plan (1971 – 1975)	8.59
3 rd Malaysia Plan (1976 – 1980)	27.19
4 th Malaysia Plan (1981 – 1985)	40.00
5 th Malaysia Plan (1986 – 1990)	140.50
6 th Malaysia Plan (1991 – 1995)	533.90
7 th Malaysia Plan (1996 – 2000)	605.50
8 th Malaysia Plan (2001 – 2005)	1009.00
9 th Malaysia Plan (2006 – 2010)	1847.90

Source: Marzuki (2010)

Table 2 below represent the trends of tourists arrival to Malaysia from year 1990 until 2011. Economic recession in 1991, 1996 and 1998 has contributed to negative growth in tourism industry. However, tourism proved itself as resilient industry and fast growing after recovering from economic uncertainty. For example, after the economic crisis in 1991, Malaysia implemented Visit Malaysia Year 1994 and this promotion contributed growth of 10.66 percent instead of -21.47 percent in 1991.

Table 2: Trends of Tourists Arrival in Malaysia

YEAR	ARRIVAL	GROWTH (%)	EVENTS
1990	7,445,908	53.64	Visit Malaysia Year 1990
1991	5,847,213	-21.47	Economic Crisis
1992	6,016,209	2.89	
1993	6,503,860	8.11	
1994	7,197,229	10.66	Visit Malaysia Year 1994
1995	7,468,749	3.77	
1996	7,138,452	-4.42	Asian Economic Crisis
1997	6,210,921	-12.99	Dengue, Cocksackie, Asian Econ Crisis, Haze
1998	5,550,748	-10.63	Asian Economic Crisis, JE, Negative Publicity
1999	7,931,149	42.88	MTA launched
2000	10,221,582	28.88	Visit Malaysia Year 2000

2001	12,775,073	24.98	911 bombing
2002	13,292,010	4.05	Bali Bombing
2003	10,576,915	-20.43	SARS / Bombing in Pakistan
2004	15,703,406	48.47	Tsunami (Dec 2004)
2005	16,431,055	4.63	
2006	17,546,863	6.79	
2007	20,972,822	19.52	Visit Malaysia Year 2007
2008	22,052,488	5.10	Visit Malaysia Year/Global economic crisis
2009	23,646,191	7.2	Global Economic Crisis and H1N1
2010	24,577,196	3.9	
2011	24,714,324	0.6	Earthquake in Japan/Flood in Thailand

Source: Malaysia Tourism Ministry (2012)

As shown in Table 3, Singapore is the highest number of tourists visiting Malaysia, followed by Indonesia and Thailand. In terms of visitation from the Muslim world, Malaysia is a leading destination in receiving number of tourists from the Middle East. At the same time, Singapore setting up of two visa processing agencies in Dubai 2008 to attract this lucrative market (Henderson, 2010). Nevertheless, Malaysia and Indonesia have been considered by Middle East tourist as substitute destinations (Hanim et al, 2010).

Table 3: Total of Tourists Arrival by Countries (2008 – 2011)

Countries	2008	2009	2010	2011
Singapore	11,003,492	12,733,082	13,042,004	13,372,647
Indonesia	2,428,605	2,405,360	2,506,509	2,134,381
Thailand	1,493,789	1,449,262	1,458,678	1,442,048
Brunei	1,085,115	1,061,357	1,124,406	1,239,404
China	949,864	1,019,756	1,130,261	1,250,536
India	550,738	589,838	690,849	693,056
Australia	427,076	533,382	580,695	558,411
Philippine	397,884	447,470	486,790	362,101
United Kingdom	370,591	435,091	429,965	403,940
Japan	433,462	395,746	415,881	386,974

Source: Malaysia Tourism Ministry (2012)

Tourism development can be designed to support the local economy growth and helping in reducing poverty with a substantial reorientation in favour of the poor (UNEP, 2011). Table 4 indicates the the breakdown of tourism income and pro-poor income (PPI) contribution in Malaysia. In case of accommodation, most income captures by the hotel owners with share 88.4 percent of tourism revenue and 7.3 percent share of pro-poor income. The highest income share, particularly in restaurants may reflect the initiatives from public and private to employ or involve locals in tourism business operations.

Table 4: Breakdown of Tourism Income and Pro-Poor Income (PPI) Contribution in Malaysia

	Share in Tourism Revenue (%)	Share of PPI (%)
Accommodation and hotel meals	88.4	7.3
Restaurants	4.4	47.09
Retail	3.7	27.09
Tours and excursions	3.0	18.8
Others	0.5	n.a

Source: Tourism Planning Research Group, TPRG (2009) in UNEP (2011)

World religion population represented in Table 5 below. The highest religion adherent is Christian with composed of 33.35% (of which Roman Catholic 16.83%, Protestant 6.08%, Orthodox 4.03%, Anglican 1.26%), while Muslim with 22.43%, followed by Hindu 13.78%, Buddhist 7.13%, Sikh 0.36%, Jewish 0.21%, Baha'i 0.11%, other religions 11.17%, non-religious 9.42%, atheists 2.04% (2009 est.) The growing Muslim religion in the world shows that Islamic tourism has high potential to success in the tourism industry as Muslim people started to travel to destinations which could provides comfortable Islamic lifestyle.

Table 5: World Population by Religion 2012

Religion	Percentage (%)
Christian	33.35
Muslim	22.43
Hindu	13.78
Buddhist	7.13
Sikh	0.36
Jewish	0.21
Baha'i	0.11
Other Religions	11.17

Source: World Demographic Profile (2012)

While Table 5 shows the current percentage of religion population in the world, Table 6 represents the estimation of the world Muslim population for 75 years starting from year 2000 until the year 2075. The data denotes significant growth for every ten years and up to 33.14 percent for the year of 2075.

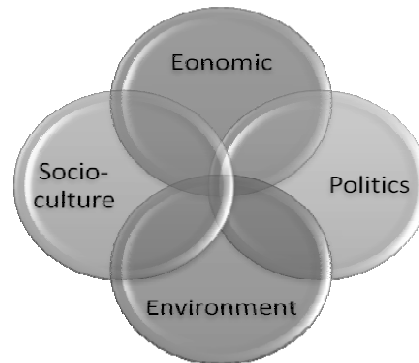
Table 6: Estimate of the World Muslim Population from 2000 – 2075

Year	World Population	Muslim (%)	Muslim Population
2000	6,150,471,087	22.72	1,397,526,691
2010	6,925,824,107	23.90	1,654,941,394
2020	7,798,921,234	25.13	1,959,770,095
2030	8,782,084,481	26.43	2,320,726,124
2040	9,889,189,225	27.79	2,748,211,429
2050	11,135,860,028	29.22	3,254,412,872
2075	14,984,127,319	33.14	4,966,253,886

Source: Houssain (2010)

Discussion

Islamic tourism can give high impacts on Malaysia's tourism industry from the perspectives of economic, social, environmental and politic. This is because Islamic tourism provides new peculiar and universal needs which will influence to the development of tourism industry in Malaysia.



Impacts on Economic

Tourism industry is the second largest sector which contributes to the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of Malaysia. Thus, tourism is an activity which promises a profitable chain of economic opportunities (Othman, Mohamed & Aziz, 2012). There are increasing number of travel agencies starting to develop Muslim packages in Malaysia and even outside Malaysia. This will help to generate more income to Malaysia especially through tourist from the Middle East who well known with high spending power. Islamic tourism product can be as the medium to attract more tourists and becoming a powerful weapon to meet the attraction of visitors religious fulfilment (Bhuiyan et al., 2011) which will help to contribute to the development of the local economy and poverty reduction (UNEP, 2011)

Islamic tourism provides a lot of job opportunities for local people especially for those who are emphasizing the Islamic lifestyle. For example in hospitality, this industry usually hardly hiring workers who are wearing hijab especially in the hotel industry. Similarly, Islamic tourism has triggered the establishment of a Syariah compliance hotel where workers are free to wear hijab to serve their customers. The relationship between hosts and guests is conceived primarily for the blessing of God and other aspects are secondary (Zamani & Henderson, 2010). In 2011, travel and tourism industry generated 98,031,500 jobs with 3.3% of total employment around the world and expected to grow to 100,292,000 with 2.3% growth and 3.4% of total employment in 2012. With the existence of new tourism products such as Islamic tourism, the job employment for travel and tourism is expected in 2022 will account for 120,470,000 jobs directly will be achieved (WTTC, 2012)

Impacts on Social

Islamic tourism seems to act as a factor or medium to increase the relationship between Muslim people around the world. Leisure and mass tourism usually related to negative impacts to the local residents especially for social and cultural impact (Marzuki, 2012). However, the relationship of tourism and religion can reduce the risk of negative encounters between tourist and the host (Weidenfeld & Ron, 2008).

This is due to the claims that it provides less negative tourism impact to since it does not involve prohibited activities such as drinking alcohol, illegal spouse according to Shariah, and kissing openly in the public.

In contrast to cultural impact, Islamic tourism seems as a medium to preserve and conserve the Islamic civilizations and its monuments. For example, the visitation to Mosques and other places related to Islamic based theme development such as Islamic Civilization Park (TTI) will help to increase the appreciation of the Islamic architecture while conserving the history and civilization of Islam in Malaysia.

Impact on Politics

The advantages of easy and reachable destination between OIC countries also play its role since most of them located within six to seven hours flying distance between Southeast Asia, in comparison to Europeans and Americans (Henderson, 2010). This helps both regions to cooperate each other in all aspects. This contributes to the political stability externally and also positive economic growth for both regions due to plenty of flights between Muslim countries has been introduced.

The development of Islamic tourism denotes that Malaysia is a Muslim country which has put a lot of efforts to develop Islamic tourism products including new Islamic theme attractions such as an Islamic Civilization Park (TTI). Besides that, to balance the needs and demands of mass tourists, Malaysia also developed the lavishness tourism products for them. In this context, it indicates that politics in Malaysia have emphasized high tolerance and consideration to balance the mass tourism and Islamic tourism to its tourists. As Muslim country which dominated by more than 60 percent of Muslims, Malaysia can be a role model of Muslim countries in Asian for the stability of development in all aspects.

Impacts on Environment

Islamic tourism contributes less environmental impacts since this product usually related to the place with controlled activities such as visitation to mosques, pertaining Halal food and high consideration to cleanliness since Islam taught is very particular about it. Since the activities of Islamic tourism consist the appreciation of God's creations, less vandalism will happen to the environment due to the belief that the environment is also the creatures of God that need to be conserved and preserved.

Conclusion

Islamic tourism is a new trend of tourism product which seen as a new contributor to Malaysia economic especially in the tourism industry. The emergence of Islamic tourism around the world has triggered Malaysia to develop more strategies and plans to provide sufficient products and facilities to Muslim tourists. Malaysia has large opportunities to develop Islamic tourism due to Islam is the official religion of the country and taking advantage to the stability of politics and economics. Furthermore, Islamic tourism can be considered as sustainable tourism because it contributes positive impacts to environmental, preserving and conserving the socio-culture value while generating income to local people, whereby mostly local people serve the tourists with Islamic value considerations. Thus, the study of this paper would assist to give some review and knowledge theoretically and practically to the public and private sectors in implementing the Islamic tourism strategies successfully with the

consideration of economic, socio-culture, politics and environmental aspects. The study also contributes a review concept of tourism impacts of new tourism product, which is a religious tourism called as Islamic tourism within the Malaysia context.

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