

THESIS

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ISLAMIC TOURISM AS A PROSPEROUS PHENOMENON IN LAPLAND



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Thesis

**ISLAMIC TOURISM AS A PROSPEROUS
PHENOMENON IN LAPLAND**

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Commissioned by The Foresight as a Competitive Advantage for Tourism in
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The general aim of the thesis project was to provide an insight into the potential of Islamic tourism in Lapland tourism context. The particular focus on placed on discovering the needs and demands of Muslims tourists living in Lapland. In addition, exploring the existing resources and entrepreneurs attitude towards Muslim tourists was also the part of that focus in an effort to answer the research questions. Theoretical discussion about this phenomenon has been introduced in a general level from cultural, ethnic and religious perspective with particular focus on the concept of Islamic tourism. Furthermore, as to unleash the prospective benefit and challenges of Islamic tourism, a broad review on respective literature was conducted consequently revealing more broad picture of this dynamic phenomenon and suggestions for future product and service development.

In order to uncover the needs and demands of Muslim tourists and service providers attitude towards Muslim tourists, two empirical researches was conducted. The research method used included unstructured interview with Muslim community and theme interview with tourism entrepreneurs operating in Finnish Lapland. The data acquired from the responses from one interview were categorised using the content analysis. The research questions were formulated in accordance with the selected themes including 1) the needs and demands of Muslims tourists or community 2) existing resources and tourism service provider's attitudes towards Muslims tourists.

The empirical findings suggest that overall needs and demands of Muslim tourists should be regarded as Halal need which is deeply rooted in Muslim lifestyle. Findings also indicated that availability of Halal food, prayer rooms in accommodation facilities, special environment for women such as spa and segregated swimming pool are some of the pressing Halal needs that are yet to be discovered and fulfilled. Similarly, service providers saw the potential of ethnic, cultural, specific focus group such as Muslim tourists as an important factor for future tourism development. Also, tourism entrepreneurs stressed the need for co-operation with tour operators, DMC, hotel, catering service to create more awareness, know-how and information to deal with the halal needs of Muslim tourists. Moreover, findings indicated that how the tourism service providers would contextualize the broad spectrum of this phenomenon in the light of Lapland tourism development is still a big challenge and requires further research.

Key words: Islamic Tourism, halal, Muslim lifestyle, halal needs, segmentation, pilgrimage.

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Opinnäytetyön päätavoitteena oli tuoda tietoutta Muslimimatkailusta Lapissa sekä kartoittaa mitä tämänhetkisiä resursseja ja mahdollisuuksia matkailualan yritykset näkevät muslimimatkailussa Rovaniemellä. Tutkimuksen pääpaino oli kartoittaa paikallisen muslimiväestön tarpeita ja vaatimuksia lomamatkoilla sekä tutkia matkailualan resursseja majoitus-ravintola- ja ohjelmapalvelusektorilla ottaen huomioon myös yritysten asenteet muslimimatkailua kohtaan. Työn teoreettinen perusta koostuu kulttuurisesta, etnisestä ja uskonnollisesta näkökulmasta keskittyen erityisesti islaminuskoisten matkailutottumuksiin. Opinnäytetyön tarkoitus on kerätä hajallaan olevaa tietoa ilmiöstä matkailualan yrityksille tulevaisuuden tuotekehitystä varten.

Empiirinen tutkimus toteutettiin selvittämään Muslimimatkailijoiden tarpeita ja vaatimuksia. Tutkimuksissa muslimiväestölle käytettiin puolistrukturoituja haastatteluja sekä teemahaastatteluja, joiden kohteena oli Rovaniemellä toimivat matkailualan ammattilaiset. Tutkimustiedot analysoitiin sisällön analyysin avulla. Yrityksille suunnattuihin haastatteluihin valittiin kaksi teemaa. Tutkimuskysymykset muotoiltiin valittujen teemojen mukaisesti: 1) Muslimimatkailu ja sen merkitys 2) Muslimimatkailijoiden tarpeet nyt ja tulevaisuudessa. Muslimiväestölle suunnatut haastattelut viittaavat siihen, että Islaminuskoisille Halal-liha on yksi merkityksellisimmistä vaatimuksista lomamatkoilla. Lisäksi vastauksissa toistui toive hiljentyä majoitusyritysten rukoushuoneissa sekä naisten ja miesten erillisten virkistystilojen tärkeys.

Teemahaastattelut hotellissa, ravintola – ja majoituspalveluja tarjoavassa yrityksessä sekä ohjelmapalveluyrityksessä osoittivat, että erilaisten kohderyhmien huomioimisen lisääminen matkailualalla on tärkeää. Haastateltavat painottivat tiedon erityisvaatimuksista tulevan matkanjärjestäjältä. Jokaisessa haastattelussa mainittiin yhteistyön vähyyden matkanjärjestäjien kanssa. Ennakointityötä haastattelemissamme yrityksissä tehdään verrattain vähän.

Avainsanat: Muslimimatkailu, halal, islaminuskoisten elämäntavat, segmentointi, pyhiinvaellus

Contents

LIST OF FIGURES.....	1
LIST OF TABLES	1
1 INTRODUCTION	2
2 FRAMEWORK OF ISLAMIC TOURISM AND CONTEXT.....	4
2.1 OUTLOOK ON ISLAMIC TOURISM.....	4
2.2 COMMISSIONER	5
3 THEORETICAL APPROACH TO ISLAMIC TOURISM.....	7
3.1 INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS TOURISM	7
3.2 CONCEPT OF HALAL	8
3.3 CONCEPT OF ISLAMIC TOURISM.....	9
3.4 CONCEPT OF CULTURAL/ETHNIC TOURISM	11
3.5 TRAVEL MOTIVATION RELATED TO ISLAMIC TOURISM.....	14
3.6 VISITOR SEGMENTATION	18
4 THESIS PROJECT AND METHODS.....	21
4.1 RESEARCH PROCESS	21
4.2 UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW	21
4.3 THEME INTERVIEW	22
4.4 RESEARCH SETTING	23
5 ANALYSIS.....	25
5.1 FINDINGS OF UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW	25
5.2 FINDINGS OF THEME INTERVIEW	33
5.3 INTERPRETING RESULTS	36
6 DISCUSSION.....	38
6.1 FUTURE IMPLICATIONS	38
6.2 LIMITATIONS	39
6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ORIENTED STUDIES	41
7 CONCLUSION	43
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	45
APPENDICES	49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Interrelationship of Tourism and Religion.	19
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.....	25
Table 2.....	26
Table 3.....	27
Table 4.....	27
Table 5.....	28
Table 6.....	29
Table 7.....	29
Table 8.....	30
Table 9.....	30
Table 10.....	31

1 INTRODUCTION

Islam as a religion highly encourages travel. Muslims normally consider themselves closer to God while traveling and prayers are viewed more effective while traveling than when offered at home. Muslims are passionate travellers not only for religious purpose but also in terms of business purpose, visiting friends and relatives. Muslims practice unique behaviours in terms of the food they eat, the company they keep and the activities they undertake. (Timothy–Olsen 2006, 186.)

Few Muslims spend their leisure time at sun and beach destinations. Islamic tradition encourages travelling in groups on holidays to remote places. Religion has an effect on the types of accommodation the holiday makers choose and the facilities where they will eat. For dedicated Muslims, Hotels that provide a gender separated swimming pool and recreational facilities, prayer rooms or hotels that are situated near Mosques or more advisable. In addition, restaurants must serve Halal food produced in suitable manner for Muslim consumption. (Timothy–Olsen 2006, 199.)

Islamic tourism covers tourism activities by Muslims in seaside destinations for the purposes of relaxation and entertainment in hospitality enterprises that apply Islamic principles. The categorization of tourism related goods and services that are designed, produced, and presented to the markets could be considered under Islamic or Halal tourism (Duman 2011, 25). Such use of terminology is already common in daily usage for example halal trips, hotels, airlines, food etc. The concept of Halal, meaning permissible in Arabic, is not just being applied to food, but it includes any Shari'ah compliant products ranging from bank dealings to cosmetics, vaccines and in this case, tourism. This means offering tour packages and destinations that are particularly

designed to cater Muslim needs. As such, countries around the world should start tapping into the unexploited Islamic tourism market by ensuring that Muslim travellers are provided with maximum convenience during their trip and are able to practice religious obligations while on holiday (Crescent Tours 2013)

The research aim is to deepen the understanding of Islamic tourism and how the knowledge on it can enhance the destination management companies', hotels' and catering services' ability to cater for Muslim tourists in Rovaniemi in the future. The undertaken study is very interesting and first in Finnish Lapland. Islamic tourism is very unique and prosperous. It is a global trend in the Muslim world, one fifth of the world population, and globally gaining ground from tourism development perspective. The objective of the research is to target the mainstream tourism service providers' attention and how they operationalize their understanding and perception of this phenomenon in the context of Lapland tourism development. Moreover, the authors have willingness to recognize the implication of this phenomenon that has a different cultural context.

In navigating the research problem, the authors narrowed down the focus of the chosen theme, which led to the formation of research questions. The first part of the study was conducted among the Muslim community living in Lapland. The second part of the study was carried out among tourism entrepreneurs, which also provided the authors with significant information concerning the actual position of the phenomenon.

The aim of the research problem was to identify the needs and demands Muslim tourists have. In addition, to discover the existing resources and attitudes of destination management, lodging and catering service providers have towards Islamic Tourism in Rovaniemi.

2 FRAMEWORK OF ISLAMIC TOURISM AND CONTEXT

2.1 Outlook on Islamic tourism

The world market for Islamic tourism is estimated to be worth \$126 billion, according to a 2012 study by Dinner Standard, a US Company that follows the Muslim lifestyle market. Islamic consumer demand for leisure is rising on a global level. Currently, the estimated population of Muslims in Europe is around 44 million. According to population projections from the US-based Pew Research Center, by 2030 this figure will have increased by almost a third to just over 58 million. The Muslim population is growing rapidly and especially the people possessing fortunes from oil business are spending more on travel. Among the 7 billion people living on earth more than 1.8 billion are Muslims and the money spent by Muslim tourists is increasing (Global Muslim Population, 2011.)

According to statistical information, the authors' consideration of the concept of Islamic tourism should be taken into account. From facts and figures, it can be said that the growing importance of Islamic tourism is massive on the global scale. However, in Lappish context, Islamic Tourism is an unknown phenomenon. The potentiality of this dynamic tourism form has not been substantially explored in the northern part of Europe. Lapland relies highly on tourism revenue and this particular service sector is relatively strong in Finland. This niche of Islamic tourism could be an important tool of economic development not only for Lapland but for Finland as a whole.

Since religious tourism is one of the fastest growing global trends, this possibility has motivated us to consider the Islamic tourism as the theme of our thesis topic. Although numerous studies and researches have been made on cultural, ethnic or rural tourism, yet few had focused on religious tourism. However, growing attention is being paid on the importance of religious tourism. While conducting the literature review of respective topic, the authors have searched for different databases, especially University of Applied Science thesis publications with particular focus on Rovaniemi

University of Applied Sciences, in an effort to clarify the relevant topics related to this thesis. The end result was that Islamic tourism is a relatively new phenomenon with no emphasis placed on before in the Lapland tourism context. "Religious tourism-Finnish perspective" (Nieminen 2012) is one of many theses done on religious tourism in Finland which provided solid ground and justification for us to choose our theme Islamic tourism.

In the thesis project, we are studying Muslim tourists' needs as well as local tourism service providers' existing resources and attitudes on Islamic tourism in Finnish Lapland. We consider Islamic tourism as a potentially growing tourism segment in future in the Finnish Lapland and provide an extensive insight for tourism entrepreneurs to consider new actions for the future.

2.2 Commissioner

The Foresight as a Competitive Advantage for Tourism in Lapland project is in charge for boosting knowledge and actions taken in Lapland tourism industry. The main objective of this foresight project is to gain and apply knowledge generated by tourism actors. One of the central aspects of our chosen theme is to produce knowledge for future tourists in Lapland are that supported by principle objective of foresight project. The thesis ended up being commissioned by the foresight as a Competitive Advantage for Tourism in Lapland. At the moment the Multidimensional Tourism Institute is conducting two projects to meet the growing need for tourism foresight information. Our closest contact person within the project has been Sanna Kyyrä, project manager of The Foresight as a Competitive Advantage for Tourism in Lapland – project.

Foresight and preparing for changes play an important role in the continuously developing world. Foresight reinforces participation in making the future rather than predicting it. The authors saw potential in gathering scattered knowledge and actual resources from the field of Tourism in order to enhance future practices in companies to cater Muslim tourist better.

Foresight enhances the production of innovative products and business models. It also supports networking, organized work, and goal setting in companies and networks.

The target groups of the project are tourism entrepreneurs, regional tourism organizations, and tourism developers in Finnish Lapland. The foresight knowledge acquired from the project will be benefitted in teaching, research, and development activities of the MTI and LUC. Based on the results, the authors will conduct further suggestions for the companies interviewed thus provide the commissioner with worthwhile information from the field.

The Foresight as a Competitive Advantage for Tourism in Lapland project is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (Regional Council of Lapland), 12 municipalities in Finnish Lapland, the University of Lapland, and Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences (Lapland Institute for Tourism Research and Education 2010).

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3 THEORETICAL APPROACH TO ISLAMIC TOURISM

3.1 Introduction to Religious Tourism

Religiously and spiritually motivated travel has become widespread and became popular in recent decades, occupying an important segment of international tourism and it has been growing substantially in recent years. Religious tourism is still one of the less studied areas in tourism research (Timothy–Olsen 2006, 1). In addition, the research on the importance of, and distinction between, tourism as a ritual and as a form of spirituality has not been conclusive (UNWTO 2011, 14). However, A consistent growth in this market segment seems to be a foreseeable trend in the near future. The Trend Religious travel is not considered to be a new phenomenon. For undertaking journeys, religious tourism has long been an integral motive and is usually considered the oldest form of economic travel. Every year millions of people travel to major pilgrimage destinations all around the world. It is estimated that nearly 240 million people a year go on pilgrimages, the majority being Christians, Muslims and Hindus. Spiritually motivated travel has become synonymous with the growth of tourism in modern times. Religion played an important role in the development of leisure over the centuries and has influenced how people utilize leisure time(Timothy-Olsen 2006, 1). Increasing number of religiously motivated travellers has also attracted the attention of scholars, governments and tourism agencies for the general growth of cultural and heritage tourism. Studies show that destinations that attract large number of religious tourists are either associated with the sites from the Bible, Quran or other sacred texts or with spiritual happening such as miracles and vision (Timothy–Olsen 2006, 9)

3.2 Concept of Halal

The word 'Halal' literary means permissible and in translation, it is usually used lawful. The concept of Halal in Islam has very specific motives such as, to preserve the purity of religion, to safeguard the Islamic mentality, to preserve life, to safeguard property, to safeguard future generation, to maintain self-respect and integrity. Also, the definition of halal refers to all facets of life such as permissible behaviour, speech, dress, conduct, manner and dietary (Ijaj 2011).

In addition, the definition of halal are explored in various ways due to the broad sense of use its use in the East and the narrow context in which it is used in the West. For the Muslims, what is made halal or permissible usually falls back to the Laws of sharia which largely remains definite and unaltered unlike any secular law. The sharia is a moral system of living that is not limited to dietary requirements only as Halal Market continues to grow in correlation to the Muslim population. Therefore it is important for halal concept to be part of Brand. (Ijaj 2011).

Moreover, Halal is not merely a brand element-instead it is the part of belief system, moral code of conduct, integral in daily living. Consequently, whether Halal or Sharia compliancy is a process or value gained, it plays a prominent role in shaping the mind of the Muslim consumer particularly when it comes to consumption. However, consumption at product level is what should be offered by many brands as broader approach of definition of Halal should be applied to Brands (Ijaj 2011).As the Halal Market grows, the demographic of Muslim consumer comes increasingly into focus. The new halal consumer suddenly opens up new horizon of possibilities. Big Multinational manufactures of soft drinks, chewing gum, and health supplement, vaccines, infant formula, ingredients and many more targeting halal as new marketing segment. Furthermore, Halal product can be consumer by everyone as global is gathering around this topic (Imarat consultants 2013).

3.3 Concept of Islamic Tourism

Interconnectivity has made traveling indispensable part of everyday life in today's globalised world. Tourism is seen as important source of income for many countries. Halal or Islamic Tourism is emerged as a new product in tourism industry. Therefore, there is a growing need to develop tailor made halal products and services to cater to this dynamic and emerging market. (Nursanty 2011, 1).

In addition, Islamic or Halal Tourism is an important segment of religious tourism which is particularly designed towards Muslims who abide by Sharia rules (Islamic jurisprudence). Hotel or resort in such destinations do not serve alcohol to Muslims and have separate swimming pools and spa facilities for men and women. Turkey, Malaysia and many more countries are trying to attract Muslim tourists from all over the world offering facilities and services in accordance with religious belief of Muslim tourists (Nursanty 2011, 1).

The Halal or Islamic tourism industry also accommodate flights where no alcohol or pork products are served, religious programs are broadcast as part of entertainment offered on board, prayer timings are announced(Nursanty 2011, 1). International report released at World Travel Mark 2007 in London says there is a potential boom for Halal tourism in Middle East. The report also announces a market for Halal start-up airline, which could provide halal food according to Muslim religious requirement, prayer calls, Quran in seat pockets and provide separate sections for male and female travellers. The report also highlights the potential for halal tourism in Middle East alone; where it forecast 66 percent growth in inbound tourist by 2011 to 55 million people. (World Tourism Market 2007, 1).

The concept of Halal, meaning permissible in Arabic, is not just applied to food, rather it includes any Sharia compliant products ranging from bank dealings to cosmetics, vaccines and tourism. In Tourism, this means offering tour package and destinations that are particularly designed to cater for

Muslim considerations and address Muslim needs. Islamic or Halal tourism, as a form of religious tourism, is commonly associated with Muslim countries when it comes to Hajj package for Pilgrims, thus offering great potential for halal tourism products and services as it has strong demand.(Nursanty 2011, 2).

Moreover, many international hotels serve halal food that is slaughtered in accordance with the teaching of Islamic Sharia Law and is free of any substance forbidden by Islam such as pork and alcohol. Many hotel companies witnessed success of sharia Sharia-compliant banking; halal or Islamic beach holiday and investment sector and saw the opportunity where it encompasses the main aspect of Shaia compliant living such as no alcohol, Halal food, separate mosque for prayer and modest dressing. Hence, the hospitality industry plays an important role in promoting halal tourism and international hotel accommodate to the Muslim tourists' taste and spiritual needs on top of providing a 5 star equality environment of comfort and luxury (Nursanty 2011, 3).

Due to restrictions on improper behaviour and immodest dress, very few Muslims prefer to take holidays to beachfront destinations. The majority of their travel motives apart from religion are visiting friends and relatives. Muslims choose to travel abroad quite extensively for business, shopping and leisure sightseeing. Muslims are very enthusiastic travellers when it comes to the attraction that maintains family themes. Travelling is deeply rooted in Islamic tradition. Islamic tradition advocates travelling in groups on trips to faraway places. Most Muslims in the world prefer to travel in groups of family members, friends and relatives (Timothy - Olsen 2006, 199).

3.4 Concept of Cultural/Ethnic Tourism

The continuous evolution and the ambiguity of the term culture have many definitions of cultural tourism. A contemporary understating or definition of culture is as the appreciation of people's way of living. Example of cultural tourism could include visitation of museum, aquarium, performing art centre, archeologically historical sites, religious centre, zoos comprising a unique combination of aspects focusing on historical, cultural or heritage elements. Cultural tourism is viewed as visitation to any form of social, artistic or intellectual activity such as visiting indigenous communities, heritage, religious sites, attending performing arts, festivals, special events, gastronomic centre. (Barbieri-Mahoney 2010, 12).

Similarly, Cultural tourism responsive act based on desire in which visitors are motivated towards unique cultural setting. Cultural tourism occurs when visitors come into contact with historically unique groups or settings, which may be connected; to a large extend with everyday life of the host community. In addition, cultural tourism might be included within the general category labeled as cultural, heritage, historic or ecotourism. In general terms, cultural tourism refers to the efforts of human species and has the tendency to identify and then conserve and preserve particular elements and resources. In this characteristic, cultural tourism is distinguished from culture itself which is purely dynamic, and subject to alteration, change, and hybridization. By nature, tourism must adapt to the needs, wants and goals of visitor or consumer. Thus cultural material is preserved in a way that is attractive to the outsider or spectators (Donlon--Donlon--Agrusa 2010, 29).

Barbieri-Mahoney (2010) suggested number of important definitions of cultural tourism where they introduced the concept of contemporary definition of cultural tourism in which 'way of living' is pre-dominant in that very definition. It can also be argued from their suggestion that cultural tourism covers wide range of activities that include visiting indigenous communities,

heritage, religious sites, festival, and special events. Likewise, Donlon et al (2010) argued for the visitor's motivation towards cultural tourism, their connection towards host community, and the elements of cultural tourism towards the preservation of identity of local heritage.

We agree with Donlon et al(2010) and Barbieri-Mahoney(2010) for their concept of cultural tourism and how it introduce a broad concept that includes cultural environment that go beyond landscape, historical sites, religious sites and create knowledge, cultural experience and practices. The combination of all these elements forms the essence of diverse national, indigenous and local identities as an integral part of modern life, thus creating instrument for positive change and growth.

Modern day visitors are no more interested in exclusive tours focusing on sun and beach location (Weiler-Hall 1992).Rather; they are more excited in discovering, participating, experiencing, learning about everyday life of the destination. Hence, cultural heritage tourism has been cultivated as distinct body of academic research (Robinson-Novelli, 2005).Culture, nevertheless, is a wide concept encircling everything that defines a community from its way of life to tangible and intangible elements. There are differences between cultural and heritage tourism for instance, heritages tourism focuses on cultural resources while cultural tourism focuses on cultural way of life and visited community. Many authors view heritage tourism within the realm of cultural tourism (Smith, 2003).The heritage and cultural tourism is one form of tourism where the visits by the person from outside the host community wholly or in part by developing an interest in historical, artistic, lifestyle/heritage offering of the community, region or institution (Silberberg (1995, 361). Since, the diversity of products and experiences it construct, cultural heritage tourism can be segmented into smaller or sub-categories defined by specific type of attraction or events (Robinson-Novelli 2005). Religious or pilgrimage tourism could be considered one of those categories.

Religiously motivated travel is probably the oldest and most prevalent type of travel in human history (Vukonic 1996) dating back to the beginning of many

world's religion. And it is still the one of the most meaningful type of tourism by its volume and prevalence (Timothy-Olsen 2006). Nevertheless, many academics, governments, tourism agencies have started to observe the increasing number of religiously motivated traveller and the increase in the visitation to the sacred religious sites. Consequently, growing number of journal, articles and books have appeared over the last 15 years, which frame the history of pilgrimage and transformation of devoted journeys into modern day tourism (Timothy-Olsen, 2006) and support this phenomenon. Moreover, growing importance of religious heritage tourism can bring economic benefit for the local communities. Traditionally, religiously motivated travel harmonize with pilgrimages taken for motives such as visiting places where one is expected to fulfil religious obligation, obtaining forgiveness for sins, praying or seeking a cure for illness (Timothy-Boyd, 2003). In addition, the benefit associated with the development of religious tourism are not only of economic nature. Religious tourism also offers the opportunity to reduce tension and prejudice, foster the change of attitude and bridge the gap between cultural differences through the contact of other cultures (Khamouna-Zeiger, 1995)

Many writers seem to believe that cultural or religious heritage tourism are not one and the same thing categorically rather these two tourism form the unique type of tourism where cultural resources and cultural way of life are combined together. Moreover, they also argued for the similarities and contrast between cultural and heritage tourism and how these two are inter-related with religious heritage tourism. . According to Silberberg (1995, 361) it has been suggested that, due to the diversity of products and experiences that cultural heritage tourism constitute, it can be incorporated into the concept of religious or pilgrimage tourism as part of the segmentation. On the other hand, some writers pointed out how religiously motivated travel is increasingly gaining the attention of academics, tourism agencies, practitioner, and governments by its volume and influence while others believe that it can be a great source of economic benefit for the local communities.

We agree with several researchers about the concept of cultural and heritage tourism and their relationship with religious heritage tourism. However, cultural resources of Muslim tourists are yet to be discovered in the argument. Although, it is believed that Islamic tourism is part of cultural/religious tourism as Islamic tourism has those elements to be part of but it is yet to be part of wider concern of academics, government and tourism practitioners in our opinion. We also think that religious heritage tourism has tangible and intangible elements to reach the communities way of life which is deeply embodied in the concept of Islamic tourism. Moreover, religiously motivated travel being the older form of travel, our argument for Islamic tourism as part of the religiously heritage tourism can be supported by the economic benefit it could bring for the host and local communities. In conclusion, Islamic tourism is a part and parcel of religious heritages tourism which can offer lot of opportunities to reduce tension and prejudice, to foster the environment of positive attitude towards each other, to bridge the gap between cultural differences and to finally create an atmosphere of mutual understanding of Muslims tourists and the host communities.

3.5 Travel Motivation Related to Islamic Tourism

Motivation has been the focal point of tourism research since the beginning of tourism studies. Travel motivation is one of the useful ways in comprehending travel needs and tourists behaviour. While several theories and models concerning travel motivation, a few adopted the existing theoretical methods. The theory of push and pull motivations is among the accepted one. The main reason behind this theory is that people tend to travel because they are pushed and pulled to travel by satisfied forces. The push factors include escape, novelty, prestige, enhancement of kinship relationships, and relaxation/hobbies, while the pull factors consist of budget, culture and history, wilderness, ease of travel, cosmopolitan environment,

facilities, and hunting (Yousefi-Marzuki 2012). It is obvious that Yousefi-Marzuki (2012) clearly described the main driving forces that motivate travelers to travel.

Similarly, According to Vukonic (1996, 46), tourist journeys have not only been motivated by objective, but by various subjective factors. Traveler is moved by wide range of desires predisposed by the person with all the psychological components of his or her personality. Vukonic (1996, 46) further argues that journeys and tourism caused by social instinct, the search for relationships and contacts, friendship, love, art and culture, the desire to communicate and play, prestige, fashion and religious purpose. Therefore, all these important factors are deeply rooted in the in the psychological domain of the traveler.

On the other hand, Vukonic (1996, 54) claims that the term "religious motives" is a complex concept with more than one meaning, owing to the fact that there are different ways in which motives is evident in tourism. Recent research suggest that, due to the constant growth in the world population and the growth of the world tourist demand, there has been a convincing increase in the mass of religious tourists which contributed to a unpredictable flourishing of certain places of pilgrimage.

It is quite certain that Yousefi-Marzuki (2012) argues for different types of model and theories concerning the travel motivation and factors that motivate the travelers to make travel decision. The focal point of their analysis is pull and push factors that causes travelers to make the travel decision. Similarly, Vukonic (1996) highlighted several subjective and objective factors concerning travel motivation that also support the argument of Yousefi-Marzuki (2012) ideas. In contrast, Vukonic (1996) provides strong argument about the concept of religious motives and factors that contribute to the increased number of religious tourists in the world.

All writers namely yousefi-Marzuki (2012) and Vukonic (2010) maintained a good flow in their argument about the travel motivation in tourism. Yousefi-

Marzuki (2012) concentrates on the factors of travel motivation in tourism in general while Vukonic (2010) combined factors of travel motivations with those of religious motives. However, what is missing in their argument is the motives of Muslim travelers when it comes to travel decision. It seems certain that large portion of their argument about travel motivation is deeply rooted into the psychology of Muslim travelers while making travel decision. However, little academic research has been done about the travel motivation of Muslim travelers. Therefore, it is obvious that this analysis of travel motivation could prepare a good insight into topic of future of Muslim travelers and good understating of the travel behavior of Muslim tourists

More journeys are available now days by believers who travel in a group, some under the advocacy and with the participation (in the organization of the journey) of the Church, Mosque. What is crucial here is the companionship and social life of the believers while the destination do not necessarily need to have a religious character. Similar journeys are mostly of a tourist nature, even though the itinerary often includes excursions to sacred buildings of the travelers' own creed, but also other creeds, as well as many other holy places and sites (Vukonic, 1996, 57).He further argues that what makes such journeys religious is the obligation to discover religious customs and ceremonies during the stay, prayer, attending mass and other religious rights. Within this classification of religious-tourists journeys, a specific group of journeys aim to visit religious manifestation or event which is considered to be an important motive of tourist religious movement.

It can be argued that Vukonic(1996) stresses the need for socio-cultural factors that motivate the people of faith who are motivated by social life to travel religious sites, events and discover religious custom and religious rights according to the belief of certain segment of religious tourists. This argument is highly speculative especially in terms of Muslim tourists who are motivated by social life to travel the places of interests, discover religious customs and ceremonies during their stay.

Likewise, Vukonic (1996) also suggests that, although religious journeys should be understood, analyzed and observed within the framework of religion, these journeys may also be investigated from the aspect of tourism. Apart from the motivation of the tourists to some extent, their behavior during the journey to a lesser extent, and during their stay in the tourist destination to a greater extent, they do not contradict other segments of tourist's demands. It is the view of Vukonic, (1996) that a religious tourists could be viewed as a participant of another segment of tourists demand, where religion is not an important motivating factor when it comes to the differentiation among particular group of religious tourists on the basis of intensity and degree of their religious belief. Such tourists may have the chance to express their religious needs during their stay in a tourist's destination. But tourists don't express their religious belief quite often rather they act like ordinary tourists.

We agree with Vukonic(1996) that religious journeys should be understood from wider perspective for instance, within the context of mainstream tourism. Also, Vukonic (1996) provided good insight into the distinction between the intensity of mainstream tourism and degree of the religious belief of tourists and gave the real analysis of why religious tourists should not be considered as separate segment of tourist demand when religion is not a motivating factor for travel. In addition, this analysis also supports the idea of Muslim tourists not to be polarized as separate segment of tourist demand. In conclusion, religious tourists should be motivated enough to express their religious belief while acting as a normal tourists in tourist destination.

Lapland as a destination is not following strict religious policies, it enables people with diverse religious background to travel freely and practice their religion. Challenges lie in whether destination cater different religious group according to their demands and needs.

3.6 Visitor segmentation

Segmentation is the focal point of many business related discipline including tourism leisure and recreation (Chen 2003) and marketing (Kotler 2000). Segmentation is important for both managers and academics. Segmentation permits a focus on particular customer types that lead to the efficiency in marketing and a better understanding of market structure and customers. Therefore, it helps to develop or modification of the products that better matches the market need. The concept of segmentation constructs the theories of tourism such as destination life cycle model Scott-Parfitt (2004, 125). They also argued the fact segmentation approaches has been categorized in terms of bases or variables such as observable age, gender and non-observable psychographic and motivation. The degree of observability of segmentation is an important consideration in the development of marketing program to enlighten decision about consumer product or service.

It is obvious that Scott-Parfitt(2004) highlighted number of important factors regarding segmentation and segmentation approaches of particular group on the basis of variables such as customer's age, gender, psychographic and motivation and how these factors form the basis in targeting the specific customer group and the role they played in forming effective marketing program to match the specific market need. Similarly, the model or theories such as destination life cycle model could be instrumental in determining the segmenting of Muslim tourists according to their motivation and needs and demands.

According to Vukonic (1996, 58), all the alternatives of religious feeling and the motivation for tourists journeys and rest should be taken into consideration and establishing these as the characteristic of a unified unique segment. In addition, Vukonic (1996) induced the relationship between this segment and other segment of tourist demand.

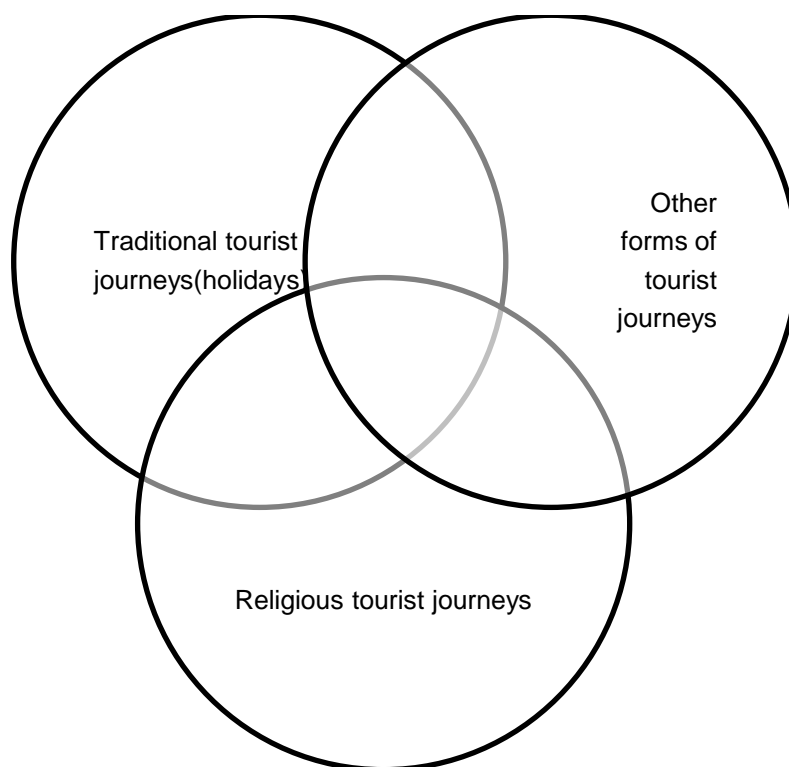


Figure 1. Interrelationship of Tourism and Religion. (Vukonic 1996)

Figure 1 illustrates the three possible cases, or situations that arise from the mutual interrelationship of particular basic kinds of journeys. In the first case, there are two intermixed motives and two kinds of journeys that include the traditional tourist motive of taking a rest and the traditional religious motive of visiting certain religious sites. This intertwined is manifested in two ways either in the tourists' need to satisfy their religious need during the leisure time, that is, during their trip at their tourist destination, or in the needs for religious travelers to meet their traditional tourist needs along with their religious needs as part of their journey. Similar conclusion is drawn in the third case. The intersection in the middle assigns the area where all three

classifications of motives meet and intertwined. However, from the perspective of religion and believers of faith, this might indicate that he or she seeks the possibilities of satisfying the religious needs when leaving a permanent place of residence((Vukonic 1996, 58-59)

In addition, (Vukonic 1996) points out that the size of these segments, their very existence vary depending on the certain limitations that happen in different religion in different ways with different range of obligation. These doctrinal attitudes taken by particular religions cover wide range of areas that include in the domain of economics, the attitude to work, attitude to gaining material things, becoming wealthy and in the domain of tourism: the attitude to nudity, the attitude towards the body, the attitude towards the travelling, towards health.

It might be said that the argument of Vukonic(1996) regarding Figure 1 tend to focus on the interconnection between religious segment of tourist and other categories of tourist motives and the relationship between those very categories. The main focus of the argument is how religious tourists fulfill their religious obligation as both normal and religious tourists and vice versa. Additionally, Vukonic (1996) is correct when he said that these of king segments differ greatly depending on different religions and their doctrinal attitude towards travelling, the attitude towards the body, the attitude towards health, towards nudity. Therefore, we can conclude that analysis of the argument provides strong insight into the fair characterization of Muslim tourists to be identified as an important tourism segment.

4 THESIS PROJECT AND METHODS

4.1 RESEARCH PROCESS

Qualitative research is a method of inquiry in several academic disciplines. It uses different kind of approaches in collecting data ranging from participant observation, Non-participant observation, structured, semi-structured interview, analysis of documents and materials. Qualitative research methods take into account participant's knowledge, practices and allow different subjective perspective (Flick 2006, 16.)

The authors used two research methods such as unstructured interview and theme interview to deal with the research questions. The interviews held for the entrepreneurs were accomplished using theme-interview as a research method. Theme-interview method was chosen because it allows two-way communication without restricting the freedom of expression of the participants.

4.2 UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The definitions of unstructured interview are various. Unstructured interview is a way to understand the complex behaviour of people without imposing any priori categorization. Also, it is a natural extension of participant observation as it often occurs as part of on-going participant observation fieldwork (Wildemuth–Zhang 2006, 1-2).In addition, there is more agreement about the basic characteristic of unstructured interviews. The researcher

comes to interview with no predetermined framework and therefore no hypothesis and questions about the social realities under investigation. As consequences, each interview generates data with different patterns and structures (Wildemuth–Zhang 2006, 2).

Furthermore, according to Wildemuth and Zhang(2006, 2), the decision to use unstructured interviews as a data collection method is governed by both researcher's epistemology and the study's objectives. Researchers making use of unstructured interview often hold a constructivist point of view of social reality and thus design studies within interpretative research paradigm. Also, in an ideal unstructured interview, the interviewer follows interviewees' narration and generates questions on the basis of her or his reflections on that narration (Wildemuth–Zhang 2006, 2)

4.3 THEME INTERVIEW

The concept of theme-interview is rather simplistic; the most efficient way is to ask and respond frankly to the set themes. The aim is to find out the information that interest the interviewer and are connected to the topic of the thesis(Aaltola–Valli 2007, 25). The authors found the used method crucial in terms of collecting scattered data together. According to Aaltola and Valli (2007, 26) there are at least three driving motivators to participate in an interview. The interview has the opportunity express opinions freely and share personal experiences. In addition, earlier successful involvement in an interview can be acquired as a motivating factor for participation.

In order to complete a theme interview the themes are being determined in advance. Yet, in each interview the discipline and wideness vary. The interviewer ensures the themes will be covered thus leaning on a note paper is appropriate without pre-set questions. (Aaltola-Valli 2007, 27–28.)

In a comprehensive study creative mind, question paper as a framework for the interview though not necessarily utilized, theoretical background together

with knowledge of the phenomenon possibly provide a crucial insight to the topic(Aaltola-Valli 2007, 34.)

Choosing the theme interview as a research method provided authors with useful and versatile information relating Muslim tourism as a phenomenon in Lapland. Theme interview method was chosen because it allows the interviews to express the inner thoughts and experiences without limitations. The companies most interested in the phenomenon were the ones with notable resources and a continuous ambition to develop their overall hospitality. By the time the interviews were held, each company had experience of Muslim tourists and was eager to discuss about the future possibilities in order to improve the products and services.

The authors will be using different types of materials for thesis by collecting data from papers, books, research articles, web pages and interviews. In addition scientific journals and university database will be used through our thesis process to gather more concrete materials for our thesis. The authors will use software to make questionnaire and audio recorder devices to record the interviews.

4.4 RESEARCH SETTING

An unstructured interview was conducted among the Muslim community in Lapland. The making of the questions for the interview was initiated in early summer 2013. In mid-summer 2013, the finalization of the questions for the community was done. All interviews were carried out at cozy restaurants and home in the course of one week. As the nature of the unstructured interview not being pre-arranged and preconditioned, the authors designed the questionnaire to include open questions enabling interviewees have more possibility to go deeper into the topic. Altogether 15 respondents with a varying degree of social and educational statuses participated the interview

process. There were both male and female respondents. Due to the time constraints of many interviewees, questionnaires for the interviewees had to be delivered allowing them to answer the pre-arranged questions more elaborately. For this reason we could not record the transcript of most of the interviews, which violated the principle of unstructured interview.

Since the method of collecting data was qualitative, the guidelines and principles of qualitative data analysis were followed in order to make our analysis more understandable for the reader. Firstly, we carefully read the transcribed data of the recorded interviews and did the content analysis of the transcript, then divided the data into meaningful segments. Secondly, meaningful segments were coded in in order to communicate our findings more easily. Finally, participant responses were categorized and displayed in the form of the table.

Theme interviews were conducted in the late spring and early summer 2013. The exact dates were May 15th, May 30th and June 14th in the premises of each company. The interview was a conversation with an important purpose and provided the authors with large amount of relevant information by listening to employees working at the management level. In terms of the overall setting, recording equipment functioned and there were hardly any background noises.

5 ANALYSIS

5.1 FINDINGS OF UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The average age of the respondents was between 21–40 years. People from different background participated into the interview process. However, dominant age group was young students and significant amount of information was collected from that group as compared to those of other groups.

Table 1. Categorization of the Responses: Consideration of Religious Factors while travelling

Table 1

Categories	Participant responses
Religious issues	Seeking Halal food
	Looking for availability of prayer facilities
	Avoidance of alcohol

Majority of the participants (Table 1) expressed the same feeling regarding the issues they consider most important while traveling. Few participants took these issues very seriously as their guiding principle while traveling while others were quite moderate in their statement.

Table 2. Categories of responses: Obstacle while traveling in Lapland

Table 2

Categories	Participant responses
Demands and needs	Lack of halal food shop Tourism service providers unawareness of Muslim tourists needs
Community cohesion	No official registered Muslim community No common place for get together

Most of the respondents (Table 2) mentioned the lack of halal food shop and hotel and tourism service provider's unawareness of Muslim travelers needs as being the primary concern while traveling Lapland while others stressed the need for the establishment of official Muslim community and prayer facilities. A handful of respondents were also concerned about the supermarket and grocery shop for not keeping Halal food stuff.

Table 3. Categorization of responses: Fish and vegetarian food as an alternative option for halal food

Table 3

Categories	Participants responses
Alternative food	Vegetable, fish, lamb meat, beef

Vast majority of respondents (Table 3) do not consider vegetable, fish as an alternative food options for Halal food. The main reason they pointed out is the fact that these foods are already halal and compatible with their faith. In addition, some respondents took very hardcore approach regarding the consumption of chicken, beef, lamb and reindeer meat if those animals are not slaughtered according to Islamic principle. However, significant number of respondents took moderate position on the consumption of these animals meat. The only argument they put forward is the fact that they have to utter religious supplication that is (Bismillah-in the name of God) before they consume these meats if not slaughtered according to Islam. So, there are differences of opinions among respondents regarding what alternative food is regarded halal and what is not.

Table 4. Categorization of responses: Muslim friendly experience while traveling and staying in Lapland

Table 4

Categories	Participant responses
Memorable experience	Place of worship near Rovala to celebrate annual Eid-ul Fitr(Celebration after holy month of Ramadan)

Nearly all the respondents (Table 4) expressed their good feeling of receiving place of worship where they celebrated annual Eid-ul Fitr (Celebration after holy month of Ramadan). In addition, they suggest that it could serve as a good basis for tourism entrepreneurs in terms of attracting lot of Muslims tourists to Lapland through their company marketing activities. Moreover, this place of worship is widely viewed as a good Muslim friendly experience by most of the respondents. Having said that, most of other normal services of Tourism service providers are also regarded as being Muslim friendly.

Table 5. Categorization of responses: Factors to be considered while choosing accommodation

Table 5

Categories	Participant responses
Accommodation facilities	Clean room environment, halal food options, prayer facilities, separated swimming and spa facilities, separated recreational facilities for women

Maximum number of respondents (Table 5) highlighted the need for common tourism facilities while choosing accommodation which are mainstream accommodation facilities. However, some respondent's particularly female participants prefer to have separated swimming and spa facilities due to the privacy reason. In addition, some respondents suggested that Lappish tourism entrepreneur could follow the example of other European countries that are giving similar facilities to Muslim tourists in terms of gaining greater tourists flow.

Table 6. Categorization of responses: Availability of Halal food in Lapland restaurant

Table 6

Categories	Participants responses
Providence	No restaurant found to provide halal food

No restaurant was found to have kept halal food in Finnish Lapland. This experience of not getting halal food in any restaurant is felt among all the participants in general. Some suggested (Table 6) that restaurant owner could put halal food name in their restaurant menu for their marketing purpose to attract more Muslim consumers

Table 7. Categorization of responses: Motivating factors for traveling Lapland

Table 7

Categories	participant responses
Travel motivation	seeking education, pleasure, relaxation, business, natural landscape, unique combination of rural and urban setting

Seeking education, doing business, viewing natural landscape, enjoying northern lights and midsummer are some of the determining factors for traveling Lapland for most of the respondents. However, a host of other participants (Table 7) chosen other motivating factors such as, religion/spirituality, seeking happiness, consumption for their travel motivation. So, there have been a different patterns observed among the participants in their preference for traveling Lapland

Table 8. Categorization of responses: Characteristic of local culture while making travel decision

Table 8

Categories	Participant responses
Cultural aspect	Traditional Finnish life, sauna, social norms and values,

Most of the participants (Table 9) appreciated the traditional local way of life, culture such as sauna, social norms and values. Most of them considered different features of local culture such as their attitudes and behavior towards foreigner before they make travel decision.

Table 9. Categorization of responses: Muslim friendly resources in hotel industry

Table 9

Categories	Participant response

Muslim friendly amenities	Qiblah-direction for prayer in hotel room, halal food section, special women's spa, separated gym facilities, Arabic language sing/translation, Islamic TV channel
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As most of the respondents being Muslim, they are quite familiar with these types of friendly amenities in the hotel. Majority of them (Table 9) showed their eagerness to stay in a place for longer time if those friendly amenities are provided during their time of stay. However, a small minority of respondents expressed just the opposite view. In their opinion, normal facilities in the hotel take precedence over those Muslim friendly amenities and showed a very little interest in them

Table 10. Categorization of responses: The task of entrepreneurs to fulfill Muslim tourists needs.

Table 10

Categories	Participant responses
Promotion of unexploited market	Tourism board website, newspaper advertisement, billboard, television
Diversification	Paying attention to diverse group needs

Two groups of people were identified (Table 10) in their response in answering to this question. One group of participants emphasized the importance of combining different aspects of marketing such as Tourism board website, newspaper advertisement, billboard, and telemarketing through which entrepreneurs could reach out to Muslims and recognize the potential of their needs while the other group highly appreciated multicultural aspect of Finnish Lapland in which the interest of particular community is looked after

Table 11. Categorization of responses: Possible Islamic tourism contribution to mainstream Tourism in Lapland

Categories	Participant responses
Co-operation	More collaboration between local tourism industry and Muslim countries and communities worldwide
Multicultural belonging based on Mutual respect, love and common humanity	Conversation between local culture and Muslim culture

The majority of respondents supported the idea of greater co-operation between local tourism industry and Muslim communities which in their opinion will grant the local tourism service provider a great leverage over the Muslim tourists and seek substantial benefit from that particular type of tourists as a result of the co-operation. In addition, many participants expressed their desire to be part of Multicultural environment in which both Muslim tourists and local people have a greater understanding of each other. They also stated that multicultural environment would create a win-win

situation in which both local people and Muslim tourists benefit each other and foster a great relationship based on mutual respect, love and common humanity.

5.2 FINDINGS OF THEME INTERVIEW

The interviewed company representatives were from different tourism companies in Rovaniemi. Accommodation, destination Management Company and restaurant enterprise working in the management level of tourism were represented. In order to secure the anonymity of the interviewees, more in depth description of the research participants cannot be provided in this context.

The aim of the research was to uncover interviewee's attitudes and actual resources to meet with the demands and needs of Muslim tourists. Two themes were chosen to address the phenomena's. Interviews were analyzed using content analysis and categorized under the two themes: resources, attitudes and future implications.

The research question was formed in accordance with the themes in the following way:1) What are the existing resources and attitudes destination management, lodging and catering company practitioners have towards Islamic Tourism in Rovaniemi?

In order to provide answers to the chosen research question presented, interpretation of the analyses data is presented in two thematic sections.

The first section, Muslim tourism as an actual phenomenon, describes the actual forms of cooperation with Muslim tourists. Also, how it is seen in the enterprises and the engagement of future-oriented studies companies

participate in. Moreover, how people from different ethnic backgrounds are taken into account was covered in the theme-interviews.

In the section two, the perceived potential of Muslim tourism and interest towards development/tailoring the existing services companies have, are presented.

1. Muslim tourism as an actual phenomenon

Cooperation

The interviewed tourism practitioners in Rovaniemi express interest and knowledge of Muslim tourism as a phenomenon. The acknowledgement of this specific focus group has not received significant attention despite its potential yet in a research conducted Muslim tourists have been identified.

By the time the interviews were held, all the interviewed companies had catered Muslim tourists. In particular, the destination management company representative stated three Muslim groups that visit Rovaniemi annually. The interviewee of a lodging and restaurant enterprise mentioned individuals among bigger Russian groups in the New years' time. The third interviewee noted the percentage of international tourists forms 75 % of the guests and estimates the number of Muslim guests in Rovaniemi to reach thousands annually.

The interviewed agreed the existing phenomenon of Muslim tourists in Finnish Lapland.

Features of Muslim tourists

The interview representatives expressed interest towards sharing their experiences of Muslim tourists. All interviews had recognized the special diet Muslim tourists follow; in destination management company special arrangements were only related to food stuff. In terms of not celebrating Christmas, Muslim tourists dine in normal bases among other tourists.

Moreover, the times for dining and days of traveling had been identified. Whilst Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, food stuff is preferable hidden during day times. Moreover, The three identified Muslim groups travel during Christmas time. Interest towards New Year season has been recognized but yet without actions due to high pricing.

Special needs and hospitality

All the participants expressed the lack of cooperation with tour operators. One of the interview mentioned particularly Russian tour-operators and the little amount of information provided on behalf of the tour leaders. Instead of studying the needs, one company follows the know-how based to previous experiences in the field.

In terms of hospitality, two interviewees experienced flexibility as their competitive advantage. Consequently, the non-conceptualized practices allow products and services to be tailored according to special requests. Moreover, the possibility for praying facilities and respecting the dining times were mentioned. According to one respondent, in general discussion, the importance of religion has yet not been considered. Yet, in one interview it was concluded that the self-catering cabins have a significant potential though it has not been marketed at all.

2. Perceived Potential and steps of Development

Potential of Muslim tourism

Indeed, the interviews revealed that the practitioners saw significant potential as the number of Muslims is growing but yet not seen as powerful as the lately more in depth discovered segments such as India and Asia.

It was commonly stated that in order to develop products and services, increasing demand from the market is crucial.

Future-oriented studies and steps of development

Moreover, one of the tourism practitioners stated that three years ago, in cooperation with Finnpro deeper researches were conducted in terms of finding new markets in Asia and India. As a result, new markets were found and for instance web pages are nowadays available in Chinese and Japan. In respect to various religions such as Islam in Asia and India, one of the interviewee saw need for developing Islamic tourism in the future Lapland.

As stated by one of the tourism representatives, all equipped kitchens in the cabins have more potential yet not been utilized. According to him, this enables significant potential in marketing the lodging possibilities for guests

5.3 INTERPRETING RESULTS

Interview was designed to target the Muslim communities. All of the participant responses followed a systematic pattern which could be classified as 'halal need'. Most of the participants expressed their opinion about their desire they hold most which is predicated on their lifestyle. Some of the pressing needs for instance, halal food, prayer facilities; separated swimming pool and spa facilities for women were the main concern of their needs. What lies in the responses is the desire for that halal need to be explored, fulfilled in the context of Lapland tourism industry. Participants also put emphasis on the greater need for co-cooperation, multicultural society as the basis for operationalizing their needs. What is more important is how tourism enterprises in Lapland could tap into this huge unexploited desire and need of one of the fastest growing niche Islamic tourism in the world.

According to the recorded theme interviews, there is a lack of future foresight studies and as stated by one of the representatives, rather than predicting the future; companies realize their weaknesses when the "damage" is already done. The survey revealed that the practitioners had faced several occasions catering Muslim tourists. Hotel and destination management companies have provided prayer facilities and all of the

participants had received requests concerning nonalcoholic beverages and food stuff.

As stated by the sales director, the mutual respect between the guest and host is the key word to success. When examining the actual awareness of the needs of Muslim travelers, interviewees named the following issues: Ramadan which is the holy month of fasting, special meal times, praying moments held several times a day, ways to prepare the food while on a safari, the cultural aspect not to celebrate the Christmas.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Future implications

The research findings reveal that both tourism entrepreneurs and Muslim tourists share a mutual interest of cooperation. However, the meaning of Muslim tourism has not been addressed at local tourism or national level in order to have a holistic understanding. Therefore, the potential of Muslim tourism remains doubtful in the minds of mainstream Lapland tourism entrepreneurs. The findings also suggest that keeping track record of Muslim tourists statistic and other reliable data for instance from immigration office and Lapland tourism industry can be very useful for tourism practitioners in terms of exercising dynamic tourism in Lapland in the near future.

Since Islamic tourism is already a Multi-billion dollar industry in the Muslim world and a huge trend worldwide and has massive global influence but its implication is felt at a very minimal level in Finnish Lapland. Nevertheless, the findings are the perfect manifestation of the representation of cultural knowledge that could contribute to easier communication and co-operation between Muslim culture and host communities

Furthermore, the dissemination of information collected through research findings among different tourism operators either by marketing or by face-to face interaction would contribute to a greater mutual benefit or further facilitate collaboration between tourism service providers in Lapland and Muslim Tourism organizations worldwide in order to create joint tourism products and packages.

In each interview, the representatives mentioned the importance and lack of cooperation with tour operators. Guests and hosts together with tour operators provide companies with crucial information regarding hospitality, special arrangements and the overall experience. Moreover, interviewees emphasized their flexibility. Catering service provider, hotel and a destination management company can react to special needs with a short reaction time

and instead of serving only vegetarian and fish food, preferred halal-meat options can be ordered through catering channels in order to meet with the demands of all the guests.

Another research subjects emerging from the execution of this thesis project relates to already existing phenomenon. One of the participants in the theme interview shared an example of a Saudi-Arabian prince visiting one of the chains' luxurious villas with a group of people. In order to meet with the needs and demands of the guests, for instance a private cook preparing halal-food was involved. This example encourages lodging enterprises to put emphasis on extending the offer beyond average product development and meanwhile enhancing a future oriented customer service.

6.2 Limitations

Validity means the truth: Interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately portrays the social phenomena to which it refers (Hammersley 1990, 57). On the other hand 'reliability' refers to the degree of consistency with detail are assigned to the same group by different observers or by same observer on different occasions. (Hammersley 1992, 67)

In addition, ultimately all methods of data collection are analyzed qualitatively as the act of analysis is an interpretation, therefore, of necessity a selective judgment. Whether the data collected are qualitative or quantifiable, the issue of credential for their assumptions must be confronted. (Silverman 2005, 211)

Also, there is a tendency towards an unscientific approach to the use of data in relation to the conclusion or explanation in qualitative research. Brief conversations, fragment from unstructured interviews are used to provide the evidence of particular argument. There are grounds for concern in that the representative or generality of these fragments are rarely addressed. (Bryman 1988, 77)

Moreover, one solution to the problem of unreliability is simply for qualitative researchers to seek to refute their initial assumptions about their data in

order to achieve objectivity. Also, the assumptions underlying the search for subjectivity are simple. There is a world of empirical reality out there. The perception and understanding of the world is largely up to the people, but the world does not tolerate all understanding of it equally. (Kirk-Miller 1986, 11)

In terms of deviant case analysis, the method begins with a small amount of data. Conditional analytic scheme is generated. The scheme is compared to other data, and modification is made if necessary. The conditional analytic scheme is constantly confronted by negative or discrepancy until researcher has arrived a small set of repeated rules that incorporate all the data in the analysis. (Mehan, 1979, 21)

Considering certain theories regarding the validity and reliability of any research method, certain limitations regarding how the interview was conducted should be clarified. Firstly, research interview was conducted with Muslim community living in Lapland. As the nature of research was qualitative, so the interpretation was purely subjective. Most of the participants being students; the overall responses may not reflect the views of all Muslim tourists even though Muslim lifestyle is almost the same everywhere in the world. In addition, lack of information about how many Muslim tourists visit Lapland pushed the authors to consider the Muslim community as sample tourist population for research findings which did not provide adequate credibility for the overall findings though. For this reason, the overall result cannot be generalized to represent the views of wider Muslim population. So the benefit of doubt to the application of the results in Finnish tourism context remains uncertain.

Secondly, the pre-conceived notion of one author regarding the interpretation of the conducted analysis especially the findings of the needs of Muslim community must be acknowledged. Having the predetermined idea of what the responses would be raises the question of the unstructured interview being conducted to find the similar data. In some instances, predetermined notions proved to be wrong.

Finally, author's continuous involvement with Muslim community formed the inherent perception and constitutes a potential for bias attitude towards how the interpretation would be. This possibility should, however, be acknowledged and taken into consideration in an attempt to reduce the influence of any bias attitude and its impact on end result.

Furthermore, further limitation regarding the theme interview should be articulated. Firstly, the research was conducted with tourism practitioners operating in Rovaniemi, in the province of Lapland. In terms of gaining knowledge from the rest of Finland is still unknown as the authors focused on a limited area. Secondly, the number of tourism practitioners participating in the research was limited as several tourism enterprises were not willing to participate the interview. However, the empirical results cannot be inadequate as similar viewpoints arose in each interview. Thus, the phenomenon in Lapland is still not strong yet recognized. Lastly, the attitudes of the tourism practitioners were satisfying and provided credibility for the findings. The applicability of the results is limited as the number of the interviews was less than expected.

6.3 Suggestions for future oriented studies

Further research topics arose during the whole process of compiling literature review and composition of theoretical background of the thesis. Marketing of Islamic Tourism in the development of mainstream tourism in Lappish context, a market research on prospective Muslim consumers are some of those research subjects that emerged from the execution of the thesis project. The contribution of this project could lead to the formation of cultural knowledge portfolio that could help in determining potential demands and need of Muslim tourists in Finnish Lapland.

In addition, the methods we have used through out the whole thesis process are familiar enough for tourism practitioners to see the current development regarding the direction of Islamic tourism and its impacts on a global level. Moreover, studying the implication of this phenomenon on the part of tourism

practitioners will not only increase the probability of Islamic tourism becoming a reality in the heart of Lapland but also help Tourism organizations to enhance the production of innovative products and redefine the business model.

There is a certain lack of knowledge of travelers of different ethnic backgrounds. Concerning the different backgrounds it is crucial to discover and ponder new focus groups as future guests. The specific needs of Muslim travelers create challenges for tourism entrepreneurs yet the representatives were eager to discuss about offering products and services that are convenient for Muslim travelers as well. Tailoring services according to personal needs and different focus groups is future tourism that requires effort and risk taking. Consequently, gaining knowledge of different ethnic groups is worthwhile. Emphasizing the importance of hospitality among the working places is worthwhile.

The authors perceived a special acknowledgment in focusing on one specific ethnic group allowing both companies and authors to gain valuable information in order to enhance the actual and future hospitality as a whole. In addition, our project will serve as a basis for not just predicting the arrival of future tourists in Lapland but also provides meaningful insights for tourism service providers, national tourism organizations, practitioners, academics, government to use it as future research model to make strategic decision. The final outcome of this project may transform the mental landscape of most of the tourism service providers considering the vastness of this dynamic industry. Finally, our suggestions as authors would be for tourism entrepreneurs to make the best use of this project to exercise more competitive and prosperous tourism in Finnish Lapland.

7 CONCLUSION

The main aim of the thesis project was to provide an insight into the potential of Islamic tourism by identifying the needs and demands of Muslim tourists and exploring the existing resources available and entrepreneur's attitudes towards Islamic tourism in general. The conducted research was successful in discovering the needs and demands of Muslim tourists. Findings also indicated that even though Muslim tourists have positive Muslim friendly experience but their halal needs especially halal food in the market, separate swimming pool and spa facilities for women in the accommodation facilities, availability of prayer rooms are yet to be discovered, explored and fulfilled in Lapland tourism context.

In addition, findings suggested that tourism entrepreneurs could actualize the needs and demand of Muslim tourists by considering more foresight studies in order to have more holistic understating of their needs, thus tapping into exploiting this dynamic industry. Two out of three representatives mentioned India as a new destination for marketing and stated the significant number of Muslims as future travelers.

Likewise, finding reveals that the interviewed representatives saw Muslim tourism as an interesting phenomenon. According to sales manager of a destination management company, approximately 90 Muslim tourists in three separated groups participated annually in specific focus group related activities where the specific requirements of food were familiar. As stated by the representative of a destination management company, in terms of religion, there is a wide range of commitment and not all Muslims require special arrangements. The Tour operators provide the destination management company with crucial information relating the food and beverage demands. In addition to special regimens, few Muslim tourists have expressed their need for a private facility for praying.

Each interviewed companies had experiences of Muslim Tourists with the existing resources available and saw the potential of allowing specific focus group having their needs fulfilled in for instance all equipped cottages according to their lifestyle, in this case Muslim tourists. Moreover, the representatives highlighted the need for co-operation with tour operators in order to create awareness and crucial information of hospitality about special arrangements and overall experiences of particular group. Tour leaders position in the phenomenon is vital and authors suggest closer co-operation between the Tour operators and service providers in order to perceive a full insight about the groups. Also, the concept of creating catering channel through catering service providers, hotel and DMC to fulfill Muslims halal meat options emerged from the interview.

Due to lack of resources, most of the companies did not execute enough future oriented studies. According to Destination Management Company, the information is mainly gathered from Tour Operators and visit Finland web site. Moreover, the sales manager stated one of the most significant challenge in marketing are the high prices during the peak season.

Conducting the interviews among Tourism providers was successful in terms of mutual understanding of Tourism as the most significant phenomena in Lapland and the necessity of continuously developing the products and services to meet with the needs of guests that are becoming more demanding. As concluded by one of the interviewees, Finland is not a destination where religion set certain policies. This enhances the openness Lapland has for all its visitors.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

The questions of unstructured interview about the needs and demands of Muslim travelers

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age

15-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-80

3. Status

Student, Immigrant, I'm in the working life, other, what_____

4. Which of the religious factors do you take into consideration while traveling?

- Seeking halal food, looking for availability of prayer facilities, avoidance of alcohol, other, what_____
- Opinion_____

5. Which of the challenges do you face while traveling in Lapland?

Comments_____

➤ No community, lack of halal food, scarcity of prayer facilities, service providers unawareness of Muslim travelers needs

6. Would you consider fish and vegetarian food as an alternative option for Halal Food?

➤ Tell more about your preferences _____

7. Did you have any Muslim friendly experiences while traveling and staying in Lapland?

➤ Tell about your experiences _____

8. Which of the following factors you consider most while choosing accommodation?

Tell about your expectation _____

➤ Clean room environment, hospitable service, halal food options, swimming/spa facilities, non-alcoholic environment, separated recreation facilities for women, others, what _____

9. Have you come across any restaurant that provides halal food in Lapland?

Comments _____

10. What are the motivating factors for your travel?

➤ Education, business, meeting friends/relatives, pleasure/relaxation, religion/spirituality, seeking happiness, consumption, others _____

11. What values of local culture you consider most while making travel decision?

Opinion _____

➤ Traditional way of life, social customs, tastes and belief

12. What Muslim friendly amenities would you like service providers to provide for you?

➤ Prayer carpet in hotel room, Muslim friendly Arabic language TV channel, Qiblah-direction of Makkah in the hotel room, separate breakfast section with halal items in the hotel, women's spa, separated exercise section at the gym, Arabic language signs/translations, others _____

13. What tourism entrepreneurs could do more to serve your needs?

Comments/opinion _____

14. How Islamic tourism could enhance mainstream tourism in Lapland

Comments/opinion _____

Appendix 2



XX.5.2013

Arvoisa vastaanottaja,

Matkailualan tutkimus- ja koulutusinstituutin (MTI) toteuttamassa *Ennakoinnista kilpailukykyä Lapin matkailulle* -projektissa (EAKR) tuetaan Lapin matkailuelinkeinon käytännön ennakointityötä Lapissa mm. kokoamalla hajallaan olevaa ennakointitietoa sekä sparraamalla alueen matkailutoimijoiden ennakointiosaamista. Projektissa on tuotettu myös Lapin matkailun aluetalousvaikutavuutta kuvaava selvitys.

MTI pyrkii projektin avulla myös luomaan näkemystä tulevaisuuden matkailijoista ja heidän tarpeistaan Lapissa sekä edistämään lappilaisten matkailuyritysten varautumista tulevaisuuden matkailijamuutoksiin. Yhtenä tulevaisuuden matkailijasegmenttinä tarkastellaan eri uskontokuntiin kuuluvien matkailua. Vaikka uskontojen merkitys globaalilla tasolla onkin korvautumassa ns. uudella henkisyydellä, kuuluu matkailu esimerkiksi islaminuskoon voimakkaasti jo uskonnon toteuttamisena. Rovaniemen ammattikorkeakoulussa tehtävän ja projektin toimeksiantaman opinnäytetyön avulla kartoitetaan **rovaniemeläisten matkailutoimijoiden näkemyksiä muslimimatkailijoiden merkityksestä nyt ja tulevaisuudessa sekä yritysten kyvystä kohdata tämän matkailijaryhmän toiveet ja tarpeet.**

Opinnäytetyön tekijöinä toimivat englanninkielisen matkailun opiskelijat Laura Kärkkäinen ja Aminul Islam. Projektintoteutus tapahtuu haastatteluna ja käsiteltäviä teemoja on kolme. Haastattelu toteutetaan teemahaastatteluna ja vie aikaa noin tunnin. Haastattelut toteutetaan haastateltavalle parhaiten sopivana aikana toukokuussa.

Tarkasteltavat teemat

1. Muslimimatkailu ja sen merkitys
2. Muslimimatkailijoiden tarpeet nyt ja tulevaisuudessa

Opinnäytetyöhön kuuluu myös toinen tutkimusosuus jolla kartoitetaan muslimimatkailijoiden tarpeita lomakohdetta valittaessa. Kyselyn tulokset voidaan luovuttaa yrityksen käyttöön mahdollisesti tapahtuvaa tuotekehitystä/räätälöintiä varten.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Laura Kärkkäinen, 044 090 2061
Aminul Islam, 046 614 2083

Framework for the theme interviews

The following questions define the type of framework conducted during the interviews. Depending of the responses, the interviewer expressed special attention to certain points of view.

1 First theme focuses on actual resources and attitudes

- 1 In the first theme of the interview, please define how Muslim tourism as an actual phenomenon in your company.
2. Please describe your knowledge of common features among Muslim tourists.
3. Have you received some special needs on behalf of tourists from different ethnic backgrounds?

2 Second theme concentrates on future oriented attitude and co operation

1. What kind of future oriented studies your company has participated?
2. Define the actual cooperation with Tour operators.
3. Interest towards tailoring existing products/developing new products

