

Prospects of Development of Halal Tourism in Uzbekistan

Kholikov Nodirjon Abduxalil ugli

Department of educational-practice “Silk Road” International
University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Turdibekov Khasan Ibragimovich

Dean of the Samarkand branch of Tashkent State University of Economics

Abstract: *In this article, the meaning of the term “Halal tourism” is described, as well as the indications of halal tourism, the number of world Muslims and forecasts of participating Muslims after 20-30 years of offering Halal Tourism. In addition to Halal tourism, changes in this sector, Uzbekistan’s “Crescent Rating” and the development of Halal tourism are described.*

Keywords: *Halal tourism, Halal tourism in Uzbekistan, Halal rating, “Crescent Rating”, HalalTrip, Master Card*

Introduction

Before explaining the term, halal tourism, the origin of the word “Halal” must be understood. **Halal** (Arabic: *حلال* *ḥalāl*, also spelled **hallaal**, **halaal** or even **hallaal**) is an Arabic word meaning lawful or permitted in English. Halal designates any object permitted to use or activity allowed under Islamic law. The term can apply to food, to appearance, to photography to lodging and beyond, and everything Halal is prescribed by the Quran (the Muslim scripture).

“Halal tourism” was coined in reference to the specific travelling habits and expectations of Muslim tourists. Essentially, Halal tourists are looking for services in accordance with their religious principles, such as restaurants that serve halal meat and hotels that have dedicated prayer areas. **Halal tourism** is, indeed, a subcategory of general **tourism** geared towards **Muslim** families who strictly follow the rules of Islam. Many international hotels do serve **halal** food that is slaughtered in accordance with the teachings of **Islamic** Sharia and is free of any substances forbidden by Islam such as pork and alcohol. However, this is the extent that the tourism industry generally caters to Muslim tourists, when it could do so much more to appeal to them and improve the bottom line for many operators.

Argument

There are 1.9 billion Muslims across the world, making up 24.4 percent of the world’s population. Approximately 150 million Muslims travel every year.ⁱⁱ

About two-thirds of Muslims live in Asia, making up 20 percent of the continent’s population. Muslims currently live in 120 countries, of which 40 countries have a population of Muslims greater than 50 percent. If current trends continue, by the year 2050 the number of Muslims will nearly equal the number of Christians around the world, even though Islam is currently the largest religion in Asia. According to the Pew Research Center, nearly three-in-ten people living in the Asia-Pacific region in 2030 (27.3percent) will be Muslim, up from about a quarter in 2010 (24.8percent). The projected Muslim population will equal the Christian population by 2070ⁱⁱⁱ. While both religions will grow, the Muslim population will eventually surpass the Christian population and by 2100, Muslims will equal 35 percent of the global population – a one-percent gain over the Christians at 34 percent.^{iv} An estimate 94 percent of the population is Muslim in Uzbekistan, according to its Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Kresna Social Science and Humanities Research

Proceedings of the International Conference on Sustainable Development: Problems, Analysis And Prospects

Halal tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the tourism industry. Many countries are trying to attract Muslims from all over the world by offering facilities and activities in accordance with their religion. According to Mastercard-CrescentRating (2019). “The Muslim travel market will reach \$300 billion by 2026”(p. 3).

Tapping into the growing trend of Halal travel, CrescentRating has become the world’s leading authority for Muslims. The company’s vision is to lead, innovate and drive this segment through practical and deliverable solutions. The company uses insight, industry intelligence, life style behaviour and other research into the needs of the Muslim traveler to deliver authoritative guidance on all aspects of Halal travel to organisations across the globe. CrescentRating’s primary aim is to enable Muslim travelers to explore the world with peace of mind. But it also benefits travel service providers, investors and the broad Islamic community by integrating Muslim tourists who might otherwise stay in their own country.

On the CrescentRating website, which ranks nations in Halal tourism, Uzbekistan was designated the No. 28 in 2017 with 2.69 million Muslim tourists.^v In 2018, Uzbekistan doubled the number of tourists with 5.3 million foreigners, of which 4.6 million were citizens of Central Asian countries, 406,000 travelers from other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and about 326 thousand tourists from Western countries.^{vi} In 2019, Uzbekistan ranked No. 22 in the World Index of Muslim Travel and also entered in the top 10 countries among the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIS) countries in CrescentRating’s index of Halal tourism.

Halal tourism will only increase in demand, according to the data of the “Rezidor Hotel Group”, one of the biggest hotel chains in the world. It has estimated that Halal tourism will grow 20 percent per year in the next 10 years. MasterCard – the international payment system – has forecasted that by 2025, young Muslim travelers will have spent more than 100 billion dollars per year^{vii} on Halal trips. Today, young people travel two to five times more than their elders and holiday for at least four to six days per year.

Conclusion

Many famous Islamic scholars from Mawarounnahr, such as Imam Al-Bukhari, Imam At-Termezi, Imam Al-Maturidi, Baha-ud-din Naqshband Bukhari and Al-Zamakhshari served to develop Islam. Book al-Jome as-Sahih, written by Al-Bukhari, is the second book – after the Quran – most venerated by Sahih Muslims.

The mausoleums of Islamic scholars are now important potential destinations for tourism development in Uzbekistan. Because Uzbekistan is at the crossroads of Central Asia, and it was a major hub on the Great Silk Road, it possesses rich cultural, historical, and natural heritage. Since 2017, tourism has become a strategic sector of the national economy, not the least because this sphere promotes the growth of Uzbekistan’s international prestige. This has been underscored by a presidential decree pushing for intensified development of Uzbekistan’s tourism industry.

However, Uzbekistan is not yet known around the world as a destination for pilgrimage tourism. Most of the tourism resources in Uzbekistan are concentrated on historical and cultural destinations, and a majority of respondents in the survey cited historical and cultural interests. These resources can be reoriented in support of the vast potential for pilgrimage tourism.

The promotion of ziyarah tourism has featured in several bilateral agreements over the past three years between Uzbekistan and other Muslim countries. For example, agreements on the organization of special pilgrimage tours in Uzbekistan have been made with Pakistan and Turkey. The promotion of specialized tours to important Islamic destinations in Uzbekistan will increase the tourism industry, as Uzbekistan has destinations that appeal to followers of the Hanafi school and Sufism. Pilgrimage tourists could see unique places in Samarkand such as Imam Al-Bukhari’s mausoleum, a Tomb of St. Daniel, the Rukhabad Mausoleum (the tomb of Sheikh Burhanuddin Sagardji, the spiritual mentor of Amir Timur), and the Shah-i-Zinda Necropolis. There are already special tours available that visit these destinations and others, as they appeal to secular tourists as well.

Kresna Social Science and Humanities Research

Proceedings of the International Conference on Sustainable Development: Problems, Analysis And Prospects

Uzbekistan has not been a major global tourist destination, although it does not lack picturesque and important historical and religious sites. The country's long-time lack of a unified tourism policy and strategy are urgent issues that have stymied tourism development. The government of Uzbekistan has made clear its intentions to now focus decisively on the multidirectional development of the country's tourism sector. More than 50 legal norms (bylaws and laws) have been enacted in the tourism sphere under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and more work is underway. Special attention to Halal tourism began just three years ago and further attention to this aspect is necessary to attract more tourists from Muslim countries. Implementation of a Halal certification, training on Halal tourism, and building Halal hotels are necessary steps toward that end.

It is high time for Uzbekistan to take its place among the nations of the world for its rich cultural, historical, and religious heritage. The government understands the importance of tourism to economic growth and national prestige and is moving forward decisively with special focus on the Islamic world, and promoting pilgrimage tourism. Whether one is religious or secular, the Great Silk Road beckons.

Recommendations

- The development of infrastructure of roads near mausoleums.
- The installation of free WiFi points at the every historical sight
- The production of flashmobs or other advertisements about Uzbek tourist destinations
- A national tourism brand that describes Uzbekistan's historical destinations
- The increase of restaurants and hotels that are Halal-friendly

References

1. Mastercard-Crescenting, Halal Travel Frontier Report, #HTF2019 (2019). Available from: https://www.crescentrating.com/download/thankyou.html?file=HHv_kScb_Halal_Travel_Frontier_2019_-_Final_-_28th_January_2019%5B6564%5D.pdf
2. Michael Lipka & Conrad Hackett (6 April, 2017). "Why Muslims are the world's fastest-growing religious group". Pew Research Center. Available from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/06/why-muslims-are-the-worlds-fastest-growing-religious-group/>
3. H.Conrad, G.Brian, S.Marcin, S.Vegard, P.Michaela, A.Guy (1 December 2012). The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010. 10.13140/2.1.4573.8884
4. Nik Fes (8 April, 2019). UZBEKISTAN PLANS TO BECOME 'THE CENTRE OF HALAL TOURISM'. Available from: <https://www.tourism-review.com/uzbekistan-to-develop-halal-tourism-news11012>
5. O'zA. (9 July, 2018). Halol turizm uchun eng qulay mamlakatlar ro'yxatida O'zbekiston 28-o'rinni egalladi. Available from: <https://daryo.uz/2018/07/09/halol-turizm-uchun-eng-qulay-mamlakatlar-royxatida-ozbekiston-28-orinni-egalladi>

ⁱ <https://www.thestar.com.my/travel/malaysia/2014/10/13/halal-tourism-explained>

ⁱⁱ Michael Lipka & Conrad Hackett (6 April 2017). "Why Muslims are the world's fastest-growing religious group". Pew Research Center

ⁱⁱⁱ "The Global Religious Landscape" (PDF). Pew. December 2012

^{iv} "Region: Middle East-North Africa". The Future of the Global Muslim Population. Pew Research Center

^v <https://brussels-express.eu/uzbekistan-doubles-the-number-of-tourists-in-2018/>

^{vi} <https://www.tourism-review.com/uzbekistan-to-develop-halal-tourism-news11012>

^{vii} <https://daryo.uz/2018/07/09/halol-turizm-uchun-eng-qulay-mamlakatlar-royxatida-ozbekiston-28-orinni-egalladi>