
Halal industry activates Japanese tourism market

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Introduction

Halal has become an important concept in today's business world. Japanese corporations have an eye on also Halal industry. They are especially moving forward to grab opportunities for enriching Halal tourism and attracting Muslim travelers. Halal tourism is getting bigger and recognized as huge industry that has possibilities, which will be an influx of huge amount of money flowing into. However, this sector in Japan is still very low and kicked off her journey facing difficulties, as such Islamic food, religious manner, and cultural differences.

This paper will in particular explore situation of Muslims and Halal economical influence, new discovery of the possibilities that Halal tourism has and the importance of enrichment with “food” and “hospitality” sectors, and discuss suggestions and marketing strategies that Japanese should address for achieving Halal tourism, referring to various examples that other non-Islamic countries' challenge toward Halal tourism.

Concept of Halal

Halal represents Islamic law based on the teaching of The Holy Quran and Sunnah and regulates every aspect of every Muslim's life. More specifically, Halal, literally meaning lawful or licit in Arabic, functions as a constitutive element of Islamic law, (Mukherjee, S. R., 2014) which is permitted, with respect to which no restriction exists, and the doing of which Allah has allowed (Islam, T., & Chandrasekaran, U., 2013).

Halal Industry superiority

Halal industry, which is rapidly expanding all over the world, offers opportunities to other Muslim countries

here and there. According to I.K. Masoud (2010), there are nearly 1.57 billion Muslims, in over 100 countries, making up over 23% of the total global population. The estimates published by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (2011), reports that the world's Muslim population is expected to increase by about 35 percent in the next two decades, rising 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030. Furthermore, the report (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public life, 2011) reveals new discovery that as of 2010, people less than age 30 make up about 60 percent of the total population of Muslim-majority countries.

In Halal industry, the largest market is food industry. It is reported that Halal food is consumed by 1.8 billion people in 112 countries (“Operator urged to adopt Halal” , 2007). Moreover, the latest World Halal Forum report (2010) says that the global halal food market is worth an estimated US \$635 billion. However, it is pretty challenging to prepare Halal food in non-Islam countries. Muslims permit all foods pure and clean for consumption except the following categories including any product derived from them or contaminated with them. Wahab (2004) state all land animals are permitted to be eaten except animals not slaughtered according to Islamic laws, pigs and dogs, moreover, carnivorous animals like eagles and other birds similar. Therefore, slaughter must be performed manually according to Muslim of sound mind, mature and he fully understands the fundamentals and conditions related to slaughtering (Chookaew, S., Chanin, O., Charatarawat, J., Sriprasert, P., & Nimpaya, S., 2014).

The rule has caused major concerns for Muslim consumers regarding meat and meat products includes pork substitution, undeclared blood plasma, use of prohibited ingredients, pork intestine casing and non-

Halal method of slaughter have created the idea of Halal certification which involves examining the conformance of whole food supply chain to the Islam dietary rules that do not tolerate Haram materials (Nakyinsige, Che Man, Sazili, 2012).

Halal tourism

Halal tourism is a market segments that is fast growing not only in Muslim countries but globally. According to the newspaper article, “Islamic tourism is very promising because spending by Muslim tourists is growing faster than the global rate, and is forecast to reach US \$192 billion globally per year by 2020. Therefore, Muslim tourists globally represented a major niche market worth \$126.1 billion throughout 2011. There are 1.7 Muslims worldwide who are becoming more affluent and traveling with their families and friends (Sureerat, Oraphan, Jirapa, Pingpis, and Sudrat, 2014). The demand is expected to grow by 4.8 percent annually through 2020, compared to the global average of 3.8 percent” (“Indonesia Expands Halal Tourism” , 2013, p.1). Halal tourism is relatively new concept in the tourist industry, which means offering tour packages and destinations that are particularly designed to cater for Muslim needs. Halal tourism can be divided into three points as the following;

- Hotel implementation
- Restaurants offering Halal food
- Daily prayer time

Islamic hotel is a relatively new concept of hotel that providing services in accordance with the Shariah principles. Shariah is an Arabic word that means the path that should be followed by Muslims. The hotels do not serve alcohol and have separate swimming pools and spa facilities for male and female (Sureerat, Oraphan, Jirapa, Pingpis, and Sudrat, 2014). These hotels also offer prayers room, certificates for Halal food, the room that have a Qibla sign (direction to Makkah) as it is indispensable for tourists from Muslim countries and, in general, Muslim friendly atmosphere (“Tourism ‘dipping out on Muslim market” , 2014). Furthermore, enough preparation for choices of restaurants is also important for

achieving Halal tourism. Food and beverage products served in a restaurant have to be Halal. Animals such as chicken and cow must be slaughtered according to Shariah principles all food must be Halal and go through Halal compliant process (Henderson, 2010). Finally, it is necessary to have prayer time during the tour. Muslims are ordered to pray five times daily (Early morning, Noon, Mid-afternoon, Sunset, and Evening) in the masjid (a Muslim house of worship). Therefore, the five times daily prayers are organized in specific time frames. A Muslim is not permitted delay their prayer outside of the designed time frame without due cause. This reason makes it necessary for the tourism and hospitality to provide sufficient facilities for Muslims to perform their religious obligation (Mohamed, Mohd, and Moustafa, 2010).

Halal tourism in Japan

Japan has started tackling the attraction of Muslims, in particular, from Southeastern Asian countries. According to The Malay Mail Online (2014), with the Islamic world currently observing the holy month of Ramadan, tourism to Japan is being heavily promoted in mainly Muslim Southeastern Asia, where visa requirements were relaxed in 2013 for Malaysia and Thailand. Therefore, Japanese tourist office announced that the number of Indonesians visiting the archipelago in 2013 was up 37 percent on the previous year, while 21 percent more Malaysian come. However, development of environment for accepting Muslims is still far away from enough preparation. The Halal restaurants and hotels are common problem that non-Islamic countries have. As the promotion of Japanese government, Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) has produced a new travel guide for Muslim visitors, which provides general tourism information as well as a list of halal restaurants in Japan (Japan Travel Guide for Muslim Visitors by JNTO, 2013). At this stage, there are 52 Halal restaurants in Japan, not only Malaysian Halal food, Turkey food restaurants but Japanese restaurants offering Halal Japanese food as well for Muslims who keen for classic Japanese food. Minokichi, Kyokaiseiki restaurant has offered Japanese Halal diet that use

alcohol free ingredients. Moreover, customers looking for an authentic, but Halal, Japanese dish already have a choice in Tokyo, including Yakiniiku barbecue restaurant. (“Halal tourism takes off in Japan” , 2014). Therefore, leading Japanese food companies, as such Ajinomoto, Asahi Beverage, Kewpie and Umakane have aggressively been taking action for development of Halal food, and this kind of new trend drives the country to become more Muslim-friendly. (“Japan eyeing Halal market, looking at Malaysia as base” , 2014). In addition to food sectors, Hotels and facilities have begun to produce prayer room, set up Qibla sign in the hotel rooms. Kansai airport has dedicated prayer rooms, holy bathroom for prayers. Until the numbers swell a bit more, business catering to Muslims still have to keep an eye on what they want, Japan has fundamental problems as an island. It is hard to persuade Japanese people because of lack of curiosity to religions. Moreover, many of Japanese do not yet to understand what Halal is. It is needed to understand and respect fully to other culture and their regions. In addition, travel agencies or restaurants should employ Muslims more to gain opportunities for appealing. Guides and staffs have discipline, and respect the principles. The restaurants that hiring Muslims are more credible than others putting Halal certification standard on their entrance. As suggestions to improve the circumstances and lead non-Islamic countries as the best Muslim-friendly countries, an integrated approach from national and private organizations is needed. Public relations to the tourists from Muslim countries should be promoted via the Internet. Apart from that, a good service can make tourists feel impressive, and that can lead to the word of mouth strategy (Chookaew, S., Chanin, O., Charatarawat, J., Sriprasert, P., & Nimpaya, S., 2015).

Halal actions of other non-Islamic countries.

In New Zealand, travel agents offer more “reassurance factors” to Muslim tourists, such as Halal food, placing markers, in hotel room pointing to Mecca, and advertising nearby Mosques at which they could worship or connect with other Muslims. Moreover,

they develop new destinations for Muslims centering on Muslim friendly activities. Muslim tourists tend to avoid beach holidays, and looked for family oriented holidays, such as walking, visiting heritage sites, lookouts, and geothermal or volcanic attractions rated highly on the list of popular activities for Muslims (“Tourism ‘dipping out on Muslim market’, 2014). They encourage travel to visit “friends and family” and Muslims are instructed by Koran to see the beauty of God's world, which NZ offer in plenty.

In Europe, Bosnia has tried to lure Muslims by enriching historical destinations recourses and Halal-friendly hotels. Bosnia is famous for its cultural medieval heritage of a territory, as well as the numerous monuments from the Ottoman Empire and Austro-Hungarian period.

The agency for Halal quality certification signed a partnership agreement with Singapore based Crescent rating, the world leader in providing Halal-friendly rating for the travel services, on the promotion of Halal-friendly travel services and facilities in Southeast Europe (Iskra, n.d., para.12). These hotels are ranked from one to seven grade scales according to the scope of Halal services they provide.

These countries have invested huge amount of money for developing destinations, facilities and improve hospitality services to seize ever-larger slice of a \$600 billion global pie.

Conclusion

In response to the need to understand Halal tourism, this paper has described the concept of Halal, market size of Halal industry in present and future, the importance of enough preparation, such as restaurants providing Halal food, developing the facilities, hotels and package tours including arrangements. Moreover, present challenging that national and private organizations have been addressing, suggestions for marketing strategies, cultural and religious comprehension for being Muslim-friendly country. Finally, the development of tourist destinations and preparation hotels providing Halal-friendly rating for the travel services are necessary.

This market segment is expected to grow fast. On the

hand, these opportunities come with big challenges. Because of the demand from the Muslim market towards Halal services therefore, there is essential for Japan to develop a concept for Halal tourism Business. Despite Japan's slow start, the direction of travel is clear. It is important for individuals and organizations involved in the tourism and hospitalities to be more aware of the implications of the great observance against Halal, thus Halal tourism will become one of niche product for the tourism industry in Japan.

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