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Editor

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# Modeling Islamic Tourism with Particular Reference to the Most Populated Islamic Country

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# Abstract

The literature on spiritual tourism and destination marketing is growing with the research interest to explain why people travel and choose any specific spiritual destination. However, research on Islamic religious tourism is observed to be scarce even though Muslims engaging in Islamic religious tourism are highest in numbers. More significantly, Indonesia has the largest Muslim population and the most Muslim religious tourists in the world, but no research has been reported to study their travel behavior. The literature on Muslims, mainly Indonesians, traveling for spiritual journeys within their country or overseas was reviewed in this research. Hence, this conceptual paper presents a research model which aims to understand the factors that motivate Indonesians who travel for Islamic spiritual tourism. The model comprises of the personal and external factors. There are three personal factors, namely religious belief, learning and inspiration to visit the holy site. The three external factors are identified as social status, the role of family and financial costs. Relationships between these factors are discussed, together with the research propositions. Research implications of the conceptual model are also highlighted in this paper. In the future, these factors will be empirically tested.

Keywords: Islam, tourism, spiritual journey, Indonesia.

#### Introduction

The new consumer movement that is rapidly emerging is the significant growth of global Muslim consumerism and buying power. The rise of the Muslim consumer can be credited to the modernization of oil-rich Arabian states, rising affluent Muslims in Western countries, democratization in various Muslim countries and above all the rise of Islamic spirit and spirituality. The term 'Islamic' for a long time has been used to express religious, autocratic, rigid, political, and violent aspects is now being associated with business and marketing practices (Alserhan, 2010; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010; Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004; Shakry, 2001). Shakry (2001) explained 'Islamic' in marketing context as based upon the revival of Islamic values, financially beneficial for Muslims, and enhancing the confidence and identity of Muslims worldwide.

Pew Global Organisation (2005) found that most Muslims were proud to be Muslims rather than citizens of their own countries. The terrorist attacks of 9-11 and the subsequent wars are frequently discussed as the driving forces behind these changes in the Islamic world (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004; Scott & Jafari, 2010). This re-awareness of the Islamic values and spirituality is reflected in the Muslim consumerism around the world (Alserhan, 2010; Haq & Wong, 2011; Battour, Ismail, & Battor, 2010). Several corporations and their businesses are adopting the Islamic label as a critical feature of their operations and business cultures (Temporal, 2011). The Islamic Banking and Finance is a glaring example of the stretch strategy embraced by various banks around the world. The tourism

industry has also recognized the Islamic and Muslim consumerism and recently accepted it as a new tourism segment.

Today all facts and figures indicate the high growth rate as well as the economic and social development of Indonesia in responding the current trend (Rajiani & Kot, 2018). All market signs signify the importance of Indonesia as a future global leader in economics, politics, education, and trade. To achieve the goals of global success for Indonesia, it has to be recognized that the influence of Islam in the daily lives of Indonesians is reflected in every field including tourism. In the areas of global business and trade, the Indonesian tourism industry stands out. The tourism in Indonesia has always offered an economic and financial lifeline to the country at all times. Indonesia enjoys the largest Muslim population in the world, and a high majority of Muslims adopt Islamic standards in their daily lives. Indonesia enjoys a diversity of geographic, cultural, historical and topographic resources that provides many Muslim spiritual tourists with different tastes and preferences. This paper highlights the factors that motivate Indonesians for Islamic spiritual tourism.

#### **Islamic Spiritual Tourism**

The recent emergence of Islamic tourism, supported by the rise in Islamic Banking and Finance and the economic growth presented by many Muslim countries, points towards a need to study tourism behavior of Islamic spiritual tourists. Islamic tourism has recently being recognized in the research and business sectors as tourism related to Muslims and non-Muslims traveling to learn Islam, its spirituality, history, culture, and heritage. The term Islamic spiritual tourism may sound new, but the practice is as old as the religion. The meaning of spiritual tourism is vital to conceptualize Islamic spiritual tourism. Spiritual tourism has recently been recognized as a type of special interest tourism though people have been practicing it long before tourism was recognized as a separate activity. Although spiritual tourism is in an evolving stage, the current literature provides a definition of a spiritual tourist that can be adopted in this research project; 'someone who visits a specific place out of his/her usual environment, with the intention of spiritual meaning and/or growth, without overt religious compulsion, which could be religious, non-religious, sacred or experiential in nature, but within a Divine context, regardless of the main reason for travelling' (Haq & Jackson, 2009: p. 145). This definition covers tourists who visit sacred places and events seeking the Divine presence, even without classifying themselves as followers of a religion.

The above-given definition of a spiritual tourist could be used to identify a Muslim spiritual tourist as someone who travels for his or her spiritual development by seeking closeness with Allah. For example, Hajj is compulsory for a Muslim who is capable of traveling, but many Muslims who experienced Hajj or Umrah indicated that their intention was not to fulfill a religious obligation but to seek proximity to Allah, thereby identifying them as Muslim spiritual tourists. This definition lays a foundation for this study to explore the factors affecting buying behavior of Muslim spiritual tourists in Indonesia. Muslims are recognized as the most rapidly growing religious group in the world, and Indonesia enjoys the position of the country with the most number of Muslims.

Among other religious observations, Muslims constitute the most massive global spiritual tourism market, which includes the pilgrimage to Makkah known as Hajj and Umrah. Muslim spiritual tourists from Indonesia again have the largest number of visitors for Hajj and Umrah every year. Spiritual journeys and tourism in Islam could be divided into three types that are the Hajj/Umrah, Rihla or Ziyara (Haq &Wong, 2010; Bhardwaj, 1998; Kessler, 1992). Hajj is essential, if viable, visit for all Muslims to the holy city of Makkah, while a Muslim can go for a spiritual trip of Umrah anytime during the year, but he/she can perform Hajj only during the specified days of the month of Hajj, Zul-Hajj (Haq & Jackson, 2009; Clingingsmith, Kwaja, & Kremer, 2008). A Muslim's spiritual journey in search of knowledge, commerce, health or research has been defined as the Rihla (Kessler, 1992). The spiritual journeys of Muslims visiting the mausoleums, mosques or monasteries belonging to spiritual Muslims of the past are called Ziyara (Timothy & Iverson, 2006; Bhardwaj, 1998; Kessler, 1992). The Ziyara further branches out into two categories of spiritual travels. First are the journeys to meet Islamic religious and spiritual scholars, to attend Islamic festivals, events, seminars

or gatherings, or to follow in the footsteps of the prophets, Sufis and spiritual celebrities (Bhardwaj, 1998). Second are journeys to holy places in search of spirituality to improve their quality of life (Timothy & Iverson, 2006; Bhardwaj, 1998).

In this study, any Muslim from Indonesia, traveling for any of the above three types of Islamic travels will be considered as an Islamic spiritual tourist. This paper attempts to present the factors that will motivate this Muslim from Indonesia for Islamic spiritual tourism.

#### The case of Indonesia for Spiritual Tourism especially for Umrah

Every year Indonesia receives a high quota for Hajj from Saudi government (Priyambodo, 2011). However, Indonesian would be a Hajj pilgrim have to wait on the waiting list for more than ten years before going to Mecca for Hajj. This situation is the main factor for Muslims in Indonesia to perform Umrah (Yaqub, 2012). As such, the demand for Umrah is increasing because it can be undertaken at any time of the year. Moreover, this is also a lucrative source of revenue for tour operators (Fealey, 2008).

Other reasons to perform Umrah are to use Mecca as a place to get married, a place for a honeymoon, to seek a place for peacefulness, and as a shopping place (Kusumastuti, 2008).

#### The motivation for spiritual tourism

Since the 1980s, tourism researchers have examined tourists' motivation in destination choice, mode of travel, expectations, information source and the effect of socio-demographic characteristics on motivation. Pilgrimage and religious tourism have religious dogma motivation, though people also travel to religious destinations for other motives, such as education, knowledge, and awareness (Haq & Jackson, 2009). Destinations linked to Islamic spiritual tourism are not only religious places, but they include Islamic events and gathering where people feel more spiritually fulfilled (Haq & Wong, 2010). The review of the literature on Muslim spiritual tourism categorizes religious tourism as a pilgrimage and a religious practice depending upon the intention of the tourist.

Several factors have been found to indicate the motivation of tourists to select a place or an event with different motives and intentions. In his landmark and original study, Moutinho (1987) offered a workable model to study consumer behavior of tourists and concluded with external and personal factors that influence tourism behavior. The external factors included culture, social class, reference groups and family roles (Moutinho, 1987, p.6). The personal factors included personality, learning, motivation, perception, and attitudes (Moutinho, 1987, p.6). Moutinho (1987) examined different aspects of tourists' behavior and attitudes; his findings were used by many other tourism researchers. Haq and Jackson (2006) used Moutinho's model to study the external factors that could be used in spiritual tourism segmentation. Based on an exploratory study conducted on spiritual tourists in Australia, Pakistan and the UK, Haq and Jackson (2006) presented three external factors that were significant in segmenting spiritual tourism; they were: culture, social class and reference groups including families. These factors mentioned above regarding the motivation of tourists for destination selection are considered in this research study on Indonesian Muslim spiritual tourists.

The current tourism literature stresses the buying decisions of tourists and pilgrims, but limited studies have specifically explored the Islamic spiritual tourists' buying decisions. Pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of Islam and consists of Hajj and Umrah, as discussed earlier. A quick study of the Holy Quran would indicate several instructions to the believers to travel around God's earth to see His Blessings and adversities that will help to strengthen the faith. The Prophet of Islam also gave explicit instructions regarding leisure and travels; for example, 'most of the people do not know how to use two of the bounties: their health and their spare time' (Vukonic' 1996, p.3), seek knowledge even if you have to travel to China, 'travel, thus you will be healthy and enabled for everyday experience' (Vukonic' 1996, p.41). Recently, many scholars have expressed their understanding of the philosophy of Hajj and Umrah, their connection to the original message of the Islamic faith, their political and social dimensions and personal expectations and observations from spiritual tourism to Makkah. After investigating the external factors influencing spiritual tourism segmentation, Haq and Jackson (2009) studied the behavioral aspect of Muslim spiritual tourists going for Hajj on a sample

focussed on Australian and Pakistani Muslims. Based on the study Haq and Jackson (2009) delivered the themes of the philosophy of Hajj linked with the core belief, the inspiration associated with local culture and links to Islam, and the social status and the financial costs involved in travel decisions.

# Findings

All critical factors that help a tourist, a spiritual tourist, or a Muslim spiritual tourist have been identified in the literature survey given earlier. The findings of this study based on the literature review and both authors' understanding of Islamic spiritual tourism in Indonesia, identify the personal and external motivating factors for Indonesian Islamic spiritual tourists. The primary personal factor recognized in this study is the strength of the individual's belief. Indonesian Muslims are similar to Muslims from other nations that they have a principal focus on their belief in Islam. Since Islam stresses upon traveling to strengthen the belief; the motivation is intrinsically linked to the belief.

The second personal factor motivating Indonesian Muslims for spiritual tourism is learning and education about Islam as the goal for their travels. Since learning and education have always been central objectives of the Islamic faith, Muslim tourists are eagerly motivated by these objectives. The importance of learning by traveling has been specified by the Prophet Muhammad. In today's world, many Muslims realize that the religious education of Islam about praying and fasting is readily available, but the knowledge of Islamic spirituality that develops the behavior and attitude of a Muslim is hard to find and access. To learn the spiritual message of Islam, there is a need to travel through geographic and cultural boundaries. This quest for spiritual empowerment of Muslims by learning is the second critical motivating factor for Muslim spiritual tourists.

The third personal factor found in this study is the inspiration from the travels. Inspiration is the cornerstone of Islamic faith and Muslims generally believe that they are inherently inspired to be the viceroys of God on earth and they have to present the best role models among humans based on their spiritual characters and personalities. Similarly, Prophet Mohammad is also seen as an inspirational personality for all Muslims till eternity rather than just a holy person with blessings. This inspiration to do good for all as Muslims cannot come by reading books and staying I one location. Many Indonesian spiritual tourists look forward to being inspired to be good Muslims and be good for their families and society at large from their Islamic spiritual tourism experience.

#### **Discussion and Conclusion**

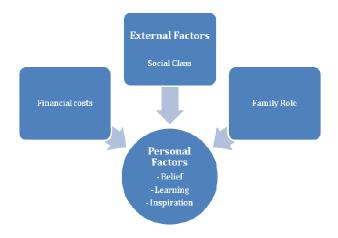
Based on the similar analytical process mentioned above and adopting from Haq and Jackson (2009), this paper further suggests that three external factors will be significant to motivate Indonesian Muslims for Islamic spiritual tourism. The three external factors are social status, the role of family and financial costs. Although it is strictly discouraged in Islam, yet the consciousness about the social status dominates all Muslim societies. Earlier studies have agreed that many Muslims travel for Hajj and other types of Islamic tourism improve their social status (Haq & Jackson 2009; Haq & Jackson 2006). The same spirit of becoming socially accepted, or even famous among their peers, is a key motivating factor for Indonesian Muslims. Here the established variables are appreciated as they are since the Muslim spiritual tourists are assumed to have similar consumer behavior regardless of the national and cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, if we look at into the consumer behavior theory, status consumption is an essential concept in consumer behavior because consumers can be motivated and influenced by the status of the products or services in their purchase decision (Heaney, Goldsmith, & Wan Jusoh, 2005). Eastman et al. (1999) define status consumption as "the motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer or symbolize status for both individuals and surrounding others" (p. 42). In Turkey, for example, consumers use cellular phones as status symbols compared to other motives such as mobility and business (Özcan & Koçak, 2003). In the case of a spiritual visit to Makkah, consumers may use this activity as a mean to improve their social status in the community.

The role of family is very dominant in all Muslim cultures. Even in today's modern and individualistic world, families play a very influencing role in many individuals and professional decisions of Muslim men and women. Earlier research also supports this factor as many Muslims have been observed to be keen to embark on their spiritual tourism but could not go ahead due to family reasons, while some Muslims go on spiritual tourism without any prior planning due to family reasons (Haq & Jackson 2009; Haq & Jackson 2006). Indonesian society is also family oriented, and hence the role of the family will always be recognized as a key motivating factor. The last external factor is the financial cost involved. Many spiritual tourists generally do not accept the financial cost to be a motivating factor, but the influence of money on religious tourism motivation cannot be denied. The fact that most Indonesians wait for 12 years to get their turn for the Hajj and avoid paying for the Premium Hajj is an excellent example to support this notion. Moreover, people with more money can travel more to Islamic spiritual destinations within Indonesia and overseas.

# **Future Research**

Empirical research to test the findings of this paper is an obvious future research direction. The motivating factors for Indonesians to travel for Islamic spiritual tourism could be tested by directly inquiring from the individuals. A mixed method approach could be used where survey questionnaires could be given to individuals for quantitative analysis and interviews could be conducted with the tourism providers for qualitative analysis.



#### Figure 1: Personal and external factors motivating Islamic Spiritual Tourism for Indonesians

Source: Developed for this paper

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