

## HALAL TOURISM: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GLOBAL TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Halal tourism (tourism that respects the principles of Muslims) has become the focus of attention worldwide. In recent years, Halal tourism has been widely seen as one of the strongest export markets for this type of tourism. This new tourist style is meant for hotels and resorts that are keen to not offer any programs, meals, food, or activities that are contrary to Islamic law. This study focuses on constructing a framework for best practices in the Halal tourism industry through a qualitative approach by comparing six developed Halal tourism countries, three Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and three non-OIC (Malaysia, UAE, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, and the UK). The study contributes by proposing an index for the best practices in order to access tourism Halal market by countries that are not developed yet in this industry.

**Key words: Halal tourism; Halal; Muslims; Shariah; Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and non-OIC countries**

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### Introduction

Tourism has always been a very important sector of the economy, especially in countries that have certain characteristics (beauty of the landscape, monuments, gastronomic products, highly characteristic customs and culture, etc.). All the countries with a strong tourist vocation have created ad hoc campaigns to attract visitors; tour operators always try to anticipate the market by identifying new destinations and new objectives (Sirakaya, Sheppard, & McLellan, 1997; Uysal, Schwartz, &

Sirakaya-Turk, 2016). Starting from the economic point of view, tourism plays an important role in contributing to economic growth, creating jobs, and increasing productivity and income. Tourism is an important added value to the economy of the whole country (Durbarry, 2004). It also promotes intercultural understanding and well-being among the countries (Yu & Lee, 2014).

International tourist flows have increased significantly in recent decades and are expected to increase further in the near future (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2017).

In the aggregate of tourist flows all over the world, it is observed that Halal tourism is developing a lot in recent years. This trend is also growing in correlation with the phenomenon in which, in many countries, operators in the sector are increasingly attentive to the satisfaction of the standards demanded by Islamic tourists, to offer them adequate solutions, and, finally, to attract them in every respect (El-Gohary, 2016).

At this point, it is necessary to clarify the terms of the particular position of users of this type of tourism, and it is necessary to know the ethical/religious/cultural characteristics of the tourists interested in this type of tourism. Halal tourism is all pervaded by the ethical sphere because the tourist necessarily contemplates the provisions of Shariah and undertakes to respect and observe even in time and on the occasion of the trip all the behavioral rules dictated by the religion of belonging (Biancone, Secinaro, Radwan, & Presti, 2018). For this reason, it is stressed that all that is allowed according to the dictates of Shariah, or Islamic law, is called Halal (Jaelani, 2017). For Halal it is not only the connotation of food and clothes, or cosmetics, but also with reference to every aspect of tourism and holidays (Thomson Reuters & Dinar Standard, 2016).

The journey in Islam is mainly linked to the ritual of pilgrimage to Mecca (Jafari & Scott, 2014), but Islam stimulates the journey also for business, for learning, and for the knowledge of other civilizations. The limit imposed on all journeys is that they are Halal so that they fall into one of these types of objectives and therefore comply with all the requirements defined by the ethics of a Muslim. We immediately think of the limits in terms of food, with the prohibition of pork, as well as all non-Halal meat. We think of the needs of families and of women in particular of being able to remain without a veil in familiar environments or with only women, or to be able to access swimming pools, massage centers, where there are exclusively women and vice versa for men. We think of the activities contrary to Shariah, on the front line of alcohol, gambling halls, and nightclubs (Battour, Ismail, & Battor, 2010; SESRIC, 2017).

Halal travelers constitute a population that offers huge opportunities (COMCEC, 2016); they are groups of families or individuals who have specific

requirements regarding Halal tourism, easily satisfying requirements and without the need for large investments in the hospitality and tourism sector.

There are many academic researchers that have addressed the idea of Halal tourism, but there is a lack of clarification of the best practices and factors affecting the Halal tourism sector. This article aims to answer the question of what are the best practices for accessing the Halal tourism market by countries that are not yet developed in this sector. To identify this we will focus on the relationship between Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and non-OIC countries regarding the Halal Tourism sector—in particular, the best Halal destinations, by analyzing the most developed countries in the Halal tourism sector to achieve an index of the best practices through developing a proposal for destinations or countries that need to access such a market.

This article is organized as follows. Section two is concerned with the literature review to explain the global tourism sector and Halal tourism. Section three is the methodology where the qualitative approach to compare between two cases (OIC and non-OIC countries) is described. Section four is and analysis and a discussion of the findings. Section five is the implications of the study, and section six concludes.

## Literature Review

### *Global Tourism Sector & Halal Tourism*

In the Grand Tour period, from the 17th century, tourism was an elite phenomenon, destined for a few. During the Tour, young people learned about the politics, culture, art, and antiquities of European countries (Haynes, 2010). Around the 1950s–1960s, the tourism sector saw a remarkable development, with the birth of mass tourism that involved all walks of life (Buhalis & Costa, 2006). Since the early 1980s, globalization has profoundly changed tourism, which has moved on to global tourism. The notable increase in air traffic and Internet development have led to an increase in unprecedented tourist activities and the discovery of previously unattainable destinations (Bianchi, 2002). The recent European colonization of some of the Islamic countries led to the development

of many areas, most notably the tourism sector. Thomas Cook and his son contributed to the development of tourism in the Middle East in the 19th century. After World War II, and with the introduction of modern transportation such as aircrafts and the need for economic development led to the development of tourism across the Islamic world (Jafari & Scott, 2014).

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), "Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited." In contemporary life, around 1 billion people travel annually in the world for tourism (Duman, 2012). On a global scale, it is estimated that tourism represents today 10% of the gross domestic product. In 1950 there were 25 million international tourists, in 2015 there were 1,186 million, and in 2030 it is expected to be 1.8 billion. The number of domestic tourists worldwide is estimated between 5 and 6 billion (UNWTO, 2016). Within the tourism sector, the Halal travel market is one of the most profitable and growing market segments (Razalli, Abdullah, & Hassan, 2012).

Halal tourism is a global trend that is growing significantly in many countries of the world, especially among Muslims who live in urban areas. They have a high level of education, they want to travel and visit other places often with the family, and are constantly looking for goods and services that are compatible with their needs as Muslims (Akhtar, 2012). The growth of the middle class and improved social and economic conditions in some OIC member states and the entry of Muslims into the developed labor market in Western Europe and North America had led, of course, to the development of standard of living and increased the income of a large segment of Muslims and the high proportion of their consumption, including in the tourism sector (Khan & Callanan, 2017). Recently, the global interest in Halal tourism has increased. Several studies and academic researchers are interested in this topic, but it is noted the absence of a unified term on the concept and activity of Halal tourism among these countries, which does not provide a clear understanding and explanation of Halal

tourism due to the frequent use of many terms to identify this tourism activity (Jafari & Scott, 2014; Khan & Callanan, 2017). Perhaps the most prominent studies that have spoken on this subject is Mastercard-CrescentRating, which is a major player and decisive in this market by publishing its annual global Muslim travel index, which includes the basic criteria in the tourist destinations of Muslims for both OIC and non-OIC countries, which are classified by these criteria (Khan & Callanan, 2017).

In 2015, the number of Muslims in international tourism was around 117 million, and this number is expected to rise to 168 million in 2020 (Mastercard & CrescentRating, 2016). Countries with an Islamic majority dominate the majority of Muslim tourists for several reasons: these countries have a clear advantage for Muslim-friendly facilities and services (SESRIC, 2017); the spread of Islamophobia in some countries of the world, especially in the West after September 11, forces more Muslim tourists to seek alternative destinations, where they can rest without harassment (Ali & Stephenson, 2010).

The Muslim population globally spent a total of \$151 billion on journeys in 2015 (excluding Hajj and Umrah), 11.2% of global market spending. This is a 4.9% growth compared to the previous year and is more than 3% of the global market. According to the study, it is estimated that in 2015 the revenues from the Muslim-friendly travel services revolve around \$24 billion. By 2021, Muslim travel spending is estimated at \$243 billion, representing an 8.25% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) from 2015. The Muslim tourism market is the second largest in the world, immediately after China (\$168 billion) and before the US (with \$146 billion) (Thomson Reuters & Dinar Standard, 2016).

#### *Halal Tourism: Definition, Characteristics, and Potential*

Islam is an Abrahamic religion centered on the Quran (the Holy book of Islam). The Islamic economic system is essentially regulated by the Shariah is translated as Islamic law. The primary sources of Shariah are the Quran and Sunnah (a set of traditions and rules deriving from the prophet's behavior and words). Alongside the primary sources, there are secondary sources of Shariah

(Biancone & Radwan, 2016): *Ijma* (Consensus of the Muslim scholars) and *Qiyas* (Deductive analogy). Islam is the second most widespread religion in the world after Christianity, made up of 1.6 billion faithful, who make up 23.4% of the world's population. Muslim population in the world should increase by about 35% over the next years, from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030, with an average annual growth rate of 1.5%. The reason for the demographic boom of Islam can be identified as the highest fertility rate at the international level (Biancone, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2011).

Historically, Muslims are avid travelers; in fact, tourism in their society is welcome (El-Gohary & Eid, 2012) even if a recurring question concerns its lawfulness. In the Quran, the journey is considered a welcome action to know the history, society, and other cultures and therefore useful to appreciate the infinite greatness of Allah (God in Islam) (Jafari & Scott, 2014). For example "Say, [Oh Muhammad, PBUH], 'Travel through the land and observe how He began creation'" [Al-Quran (29:20)]. The concept of travel is deeply incarnated in the heritage of the Muslim people. From *Hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage), one of the five pillars of Islam (Abuznaid, 2006; Eid, 2012), to the story of one of the greatest travelers, Ibn Battuta, who traveled to Africa and Asia for almost 30 years, in which he brought back memories and observations of his journey (Battuta, 2004), to the scholar Muhammad al-Bukhari, who since his youth has traveled throughout the Islamic world to seek knowledge and gather the *hadith* (Sahih Al Bukhari, 2012), today the culture of travel is reflected in the tourism sector. Nowadays, the Islamic populations are pushed to travel also for reasons of recreational, leisure, social, cultural, healthcare, scientific, and business (Bogari, Crowther, & Marr, 2003); the most important attractions for Muslim tourists include natural scenery, shopping, restaurants, and modern atmosphere (Battour, Battor, & Ismail, 2012; Duman, 2012).

The tourism of Muslims is linked to religion and rooted in religious and spiritual principles (Din, 1989). Islam has urged tourism, provided that it is controlled by the moral and religious disciplines established by *Shariah*. Tourism is considered the best means of meeting people, helping to spread Islamic values, dissemination of peace, recreation, meditation, spiritual purity, and execution

of religious obligations. Some of the general criteria for Halal tourism are: respect for local social and cultural values, environmental protection, safeguarding the safety and public interest, good treatment with others, and protection of property (Jaelani, 2017). The term Halal refers to all that is allowed according to the teachings of *Shariah*, which governs the behavior and activities of Muslims (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Biancone & Radwan, 2016). The concept of Halal has certain motives such as maintaining religious rules, preserving society, protecting the noble Islamic values, and spreading good morals. *Shariah* is a system of ethical life that is not limited to physical but also moral requirements. It is part of the beliefs and ethical rules integrated into daily life (Jaelani, 2017).

In the literature, academics use more the terms "Halal tourism" and "Islamic tourism" in reference to products and tourism services that address the needs of Muslim travelers. Initially, the academic concept of Muslim-friendly tourism was defined by analyzing all the elements that comprise tourism and in particular its impact on society. Chookaew, Chanin, Charatarawat, Sriprasert, and Nimpaya, 2015 defined Halal tourism as offering tourist packages and destinations particularly designed to meet Muslim needs. To be considered Halal or *Shariah* compliant, tourism products and services must possess numerous attributes. Theoretically, a *Shariah*-compliant hotel should be free of alcohol and any form of entertainment that is incompatible with Islamic principles, as well as being equipped with separate facilities for men and women. In addition, some scholars argue that the aspects related to financial and human resources, responsible for the management of hotel facilities, should also respect Islamic principles (Razalli et al., 2012). The Muslim-friendly measures that can be adopted in a hotel can be summarized in the following main points: availability of food and Halal kitchens; prayer mat with a copy of the Quran in the room with the directorate of the Qibla; TV programs suitable for the family; no alcoholic beverages in the minibar; toilet adapted to the needs of Muslims; presence of both male and female personnel to assist Muslim clients belonging to their sex, respectively; Muslim-friendly dress code for the staff; plans for women only or for families only; different times of access to the pool or gym for women;

room for prayers (Akyol & Kilinç, 2014; Battour et al., 2010; Salleh, Hamid, Hashim, & Omain, 2014). According to Mastercard & CrescentRating (2017), most of the Muslim faithful adhere to some of these needs, even if the level of importance attributed varies from faithful to faithful. In fact, the segmentation of Muslim travelers is not homogeneous. These needs can be divided into: need to have, good to have, nice to have.

### Research Methodology

This study bears the imprint of Almeida Garcia (2014) regarding the analyses and comparisons of the way in which tourism policy has evolved in Spain and Portugal. The study covers an extensive period of time, enabling the similarities and differences between the two processes and the effects of the main factors involved to be highlighted phase by phase. The focus was on the role of tourism in economic development through the achievement of revenues as much as possible, and work on restructuring the tourism sector commensurate with developments and needs, where the Latin model of tourism development was used. The main objective of this work is to focus on the relationship between OIC and non-OIC countries regarding the Halal tourism sector. In particular, the best Halal destinations, using the qualitative approach to compare between two cases (OIC and non-OIC countries) through the identification of similarities and differences according to the basic standards in recent years. Therefore, the study examined the practices and the processes performed in the two cases, linking them to the highest visited countries in the world. In addition to these, there were additional score and performance parameters that contributed to the evaluation, even in an important way. According to our perspective, this study conducts a comparison between OIC and non-OIC countries regarding their impact on the Halal tourism sector through three variables: top 10 OIC and non-OIC Halal tourism destinations; top Halal tourism expenditure source countries; Halal tourism rank for the world's top tourism destinations.

According to Mastercard & CrescentRating (2017), the analysis of "Top 10 OIC and non-OIC Halal tourism destinations" is conducted considering in particular four key strategic areas that are

able to highlight the aspects that tourist destinations must improve in order to become even more "Muslim friendly." The key areas are: access (air connections and visa requirements are taken into consideration); communication (awareness of the Halal travel market and its requirements); environment (family destinations and level of safety in general); services (catering and Halal insurance, access to places of prayer, accommodation and airport facilities).

Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2017 is made up of several factors that constitute the Muslim tourists experience at a destination. The index looks at 11 criteria in 4 areas for a destination. Overall, 130 countries were studied and ranked in the GMTI 2017, which covers 48 OIC destinations and 82 non-OIC destinations (Mastercard & CrescentRating, 2017).

According to the Global Islamic Economy Report 2016/2017, Muslim spending on the Halal travel market between countries is distributed as follows: \$108.8 billion Muslim spending from the OIC market, \$42.3 billion of Muslim spending from the non-OIC market, which is 28% of total expenditure (Thomson Reuters & Dinar Standard, 2016).

According to UNWTO (2017), France leads the list of the most visited destinations in general, followed by the US, Spain, China, and Italy. Among the OIC Member States, Turkey is among the best tourist countries in the world.

### Findings and Discussion

The first finding in our research shows that the Islamic spending from the OIC market accounted for 78% of total spending. It is logical that the OIC countries are the main source of the Islamic tourism sector in the world, especially that most of the world's Muslims live in these countries. Muslim tourists and tourism expenditures are distributed unevenly among the OIC countries. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries located in the Middle East rich in natural resources account for 36% of the total in terms of spending, despite representing only 3% of the global Muslim population (Thomson Reuters & Dinar Standard, 2016).

According to the results of Mastercard & CrescentRating (2017), 9 out of 10 countries are from OIC countries. Malaysia ranked first with a

score of 82.5, followed by the United Arab Emirates in second place with a score of 76.9 and then Indonesia is in third place with a score of 72.6 (see Table 1). Actually, 9 out of the global top 10 countries in Halal tourism are members of the OIC. On the other side, Singapore, Thailand, the UK, South Africa, and Hong Kong got the top 5 non-OIC Halal tourism destinations globally (Table 1). With a score of 67.3, Singapore has overtaken Iran, which is one of the leading countries of Halal tourism among OIC member countries.

Based on our intensive readings for the literature review regarding factors affecting Halal tourism, we have selected 19 variables that construct a model for best practices for Halal tourism (COMCEC, 2016; Halaltrip, 2015; Mastercard & CrescentRating, 2017; SESRIC, 2017; Thomson Reuters & Dinar Standard, 2016; US Department of State, 2006) and scientific research (Akyol & Kiliç, 2014; Duman, 2012; Radwan & Shakatreh, 2015; Razalli et al., 2012; Salleh et al., 2014). We selected the top 3 OIC Halal tourism destinations (Malaysia, UAE, and Indonesia) and 3 countries from top 10 non-OIC Halal tourism destinations (Singapore, Thailand, and the UK) and compared them by showing similarities/differences and highlighting the best practices they have done to promote and develop the Halal tourism sector to give some proposal for destinations or countries that need to access the market. Table 2 shows our proposed index for the best practices with a comparison of their level in the 6 chosen countries. These factors were determined according to three criteria:

low level from 0 to 50, medium level from 50 to 75, high level from 75 to 100.

After analyzing the table, it was found that OIC countries (Malaysia, UAE, and Indonesia) have exceeded non-OIC countries (Singapore, Thailand, and the UK) in 16 out of 19 factors affecting in Halal tourism and it was equal in 3 factors.

Thanks to the numerous Muslim-friendly services and a more developed ecosystem for Halal tourism, OIC destinations (Malaysia, UAE, and Indonesia) have an advantage over non-OIC countries (Singapore, Thailand, and the UK). However, there is a need to develop strategic policies and plans in the OIC countries of this sector and to take advantage of the overall atmosphere and fertile ground that supports such a kind of tourism and turn it into a competitive sector. In fact, the majority of the OIC countries need more basic requirements and standards to better attract Muslim tourists. On the other side, non-OIC countries (Singapore, Thailand, and the UK) have made significant progress in providing a favorable environment for Muslim tourists by providing the important needs of Halal. These countries have a developed tourism sector characterized by integrated infrastructure and the quality and diversity of tourism services. Therefore, sometimes they need simple changes to provide suitable services for Muslim tourists to attract them. In addition to the 19 factors, there is another influential factor in Halal tourism; the phenomenon of Islamophobia in some non-OIC countries, especially in Western countries, adversely affected the development of Halal tourism in these countries.

Table 1  
Top 10 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Non-OIC Halal Tourism Destinations

Rank	GMTI 2017 Rank	OIC Destination	Score	Rank	GMTI 2017 Rank	Non-OIC Destination	Score
1	1	Malaysia	82.5	1	10	Singapore	67.3
2	2	UAE	76.9	2	18	Thailand	61.8
3	3	Indonesia	72.6	3	20	UK	60.8
4	4	Turkey	72.6	4	30	South Africa	53.6
5	5	Saudi Arabia	71.4	5	31	Hong Kong	53.2
6	6	Qatar	70.5	6	32	Japan	52.8
7	7	Morocco	68.1	7	33	Taiwan	52.4
8	8	Oman	67.9	8	34	France	52.1
9	9	Bahrain	67.9	9	36	Spain	48.8
10	11	Iran	66.8	10	37	USA	48.6

Source: Mastercard & CrescentRating (2017).

Table 2  
The Comparison Between the Top 3 OIC and Non-OIC Halal Tourism Destinations

Factors Affecting Halal Tourism	OIC			Non-OIC		
	Malaysia	UAE	Indonesia	Singapore	Thailand	UK
1. Halal food and kitchen	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
2. Prayer facilities & places	High	High	High	Low	Medium	Medium
3. Services in Ramadan <sup>a</sup>	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
4. Toilets consistent with Muslims' needs	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
5. Halal certification	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
6. Halal activities	High	Medium	High	Low	Low	Low
7. Family-friendly services & shopping	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	High
8. Touristic monuments, nature, & culture	Medium	Low	High	High	Medium	High
9. Halal-friendly accommodation	High	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low
10. Separate areas between men & women	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
11. Flight connection	Low	High	Low	Medium	High	High
12. Airport facilities	High	High	High	Medium	High	Medium
13. Visa requirements	High	Medium	High	High	High	Medium
14. Media activities & conferences	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
15. Ease of communication	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	High
16. Public safety	High	High	High	High	Medium	High
17. Presence of Islamic banking	High	High	High	Low	Low	Medium
18. The role of government in supporting Halal tourism	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
19. Human capital	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low

Source: Authors' elaboration. <sup>a</sup>The month in which fasting is practiced.

As for the most visited countries in the world, despite occupying the top 10 positions in traditional tourism, their positions were somewhat late in Halal tourism. Turkey is the only country that has achieved a leading position in Halal tourism followed by Thailand. For the Western countries, France, Spain, the US, and Germany have occupied middle and close positions among them, and China has moved away somewhat. Moreover, countries like Italy and Mexico raked very deteriorating positions in the Halal tourism sector. Table 3 shows the GMTI 2017 rank for the world's top tourism destinations and the score for each country, at the level of Halal tourism sector for top tourism destinations.

It is very surprising that these countries, which have a very developed tourism sector and have ranked as first destinations in the world with regard to traditional tourism, have obtained delayed positions for Halal tourism,, although some countries have recently tried to exploit this phenomenon by introducing Halal-friendly services in the sector such as the UK, France, and Spain. Their ranking in the Halal tourism sector is still inconsistent with their classifications in traditional tourism and do not fit into their natural positions. For example, a country like Italy, that is the world's fifth most

visited country, ranks 62nd in the world in Halal tourism. This indicates that there is a large Italian absence compared to other tourist countries such as the UK, France, and Spain, which hold much better positions at the same time they are similar with the Bel Paese (the classical poetical appellative for Italy, meaning the "beautiful country") in the tourism infrastructure to a large extent.

Table 3  
Halal Tourism Rank for the World's Top Tourism Destinations

Traditional Tourism Rank	International Tourist Arrivals 2016 (Million)	Destination	Halal Tourism Rank	Score GMTI 2017
1	82.6	France	34	52.1
2	75.6	United State	37	48.6
3	75.6	Spain	36	48.8
4	59.4	China	45	45.9
5	52.4	Italy	62	42.2
6	35.8	United Kingdom	20	60.0
7	35.6	Germany	39	48.2
8	32.1	Mexico	117	30.8
9	32.6	Thailand	18	61.8
10	-	Turkey	4	72.4

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Focusing on Italy's factors affecting Halal tourism, it was observed that there is a general weakness in Muslim-friendly services, especially in the availability of Halal food and places to pray. There is also a lack of conferences and seminars on Halal tourism and the low awareness regarding Muslim tourists' needs, which naturally helps the tourist infrastructure in Italy to understand this modern type of tourism with the exception of the city of Turin, which has held several conferences on the importance of Halal tourism sector, such as Turin Islamic Economic Forum (TIEF). It is possible for Italy to benefit from this sector, similar to other European countries such as the UK, by focusing on the main requirements of Halal tourism. For example, working on providing traditional Italian Halal food, which is considered an important kitchen for many Muslims; raise the awareness to understand this phenomenon through governmental institutions and universities, which have the largest role to explain the importance of Halal tourism and its ability to increase the income of any touristic institution (Biancone & Radwan, 2014).

#### Contributions and Implications of the Study

This article has covered the existing gap of providing an index for the best practices and factors affecting Halal tourism sector for any country that wants to develop this kind of tourism. In addition, we have clearly indicated that some social and political factors influence the development of Halal tourism (e.g., the spread of Islamophobia in the West, which negatively influenced the growth of Halal tourism). From a practical point of view, this article presented an index containing more than 19 influential factors in the development and improvement of Halal tourism in any touristic area. These factors explained all the needs and services desired by the Muslim tourist and discussed the policies and plans required by the public and private sector to promote Halal tourism and attract Muslim tourists. We suggest some strategies that tourist destinations and actors in the tourism sector could adopt to increase the influx of Muslim tourists and in general to exploit their potential:

- Provide Muslim-friendly restaurants with Halal certification. The availability of Halal food is one

of the first services that Muslim travelers seek, especially when local cuisine products are revisited in key Halal, as it allows them to have a more pleasant experience and close to the culture of the destination chosen as a destination for travel.

- Develop the tourist accommodations with particular attention to the Muslim-friendly services (Halal food, facilities of prayer, toilet adapted to the needs of Muslims, TV programs suitable for the family, the absence of alcoholic beverages in the minibar, different times of access to the pool and gym for women, etc.) and the provision of large rooms able to accommodate more members of a family.
- It is necessary to carry out marketing actions aimed at promoting the natural and cultural heritage, such as mountains, lakes, parks, museums and monuments for tourist destinations in the countries of origin for Halal tourism.
- Implement a training plan with Arabic and English language courses for personnel operating in the tourism sector. In fact, it is necessary that the Halal rules and the means of communication are known by all those who are part of the tourist industry.
- Provide Halal restaurants, prayer areas and toilet adapted to the needs of Muslims at major airports, and offer Halal meals and alcohol-free drinks on board of a plane.
- Promote direct flights between the airports of the Islamic world and the airports of tourist destinations and facilitate procedures for obtaining tourist visas for Muslims, especially for Western countries.
- Increase the number of conferences, symposia, and workshops to highlight the importance of Halal tourism and its characteristics; in addition, encourage and grant tax exemptions to start-ups wishing to operate in this sector.
- Maintain the political situation and provide maximum security for tourists and finally promote integration policies and religious tolerance so that tourists do not find obstacles or religious problems that can be exposed during their stay.

#### Conclusions

Halal tourism has shown a new business opportunity in the world tourism sector represented by Islamic consumers, so there is a strong demand to



satisfy it. Despite different research confirming that Halal tourism is a growing segment and therefore an important opportunity for the world tourism sector, especially for countries with a non-Muslim majority, in particular the most visited ones, there is still a reluctant attitude on the part of all the actors operating in the tourism sector. Therefore, Halal tourism must be seen as a business opportunity for them, and not as a factor that overshadows non-Muslim tourists. The study applied a comparison between 6 OIC and Non-OIC countries and constructed a framework index composed of 19 factors that we believe are a model for best practices for Halal tourism and it models a proposal for destinations or countries that need to access this market, like Italy. The results showed that OIC countries outperform non-OIC countries in terms of spending and reception of Muslim tourists in this sector, but most member countries need an integrated development policy and lack the basic pillars and consistent plans to attract Muslim tourists better, whereas non-OIC countries have progressed significantly in this sector in terms of the implementation of the standards of Halal. It is worth mentioning that these countries have a developed tourism sector and need simple adjustments to attract more Muslim tourists. The most visited countries in the world do not match their rankings with Halal tourism, where they occupy somewhat remote locations except Turkey. Italy and Mexico are still destinations that are not very frequented and with a weak structure of Muslim-friendly services.

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