



Book Review: Islamic Tourism; Management of Travel Destinations

Hilmi Abdullah Azzam¹

¹*Sakarya University, Turkiye*

Islamic tourism is a rapidly growing sector in line with the increasing number of global Muslim tourists. The book *Islamic Tourism: Management of Travel Destinations* (Jamal, Raj & Griffin, 2019) presents a conceptual foundation, managerial approaches, and global case studies that illustrate the complexity of contemporary Islamic tourism practices. This article aims to summarize and analyze the contents of the book in a scholarly format, highlighting aspects of religiosity, culture, marketing, and destination management. The review indicates that Islamic tourism is not only oriented towards Shariah compliance but also towards creating spiritual, social, and ethical values that strengthen cross-cultural harmony. Key findings suggest the need for synergy between theology, technology, and destination governance in the development of sustainable Islamic tourism.

Keywords: Islamic Tourism; Halal Tourism; Destination Management; Religiosity; Culture; Islamic Business Ethics

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*Correspondence:
Hilmi Abdullah Azzam
hilmiazzam@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic tourism is a global phenomenon that combines spiritual, social, and economic aspects. With the Muslim population reaching 1.8 billion (Pew Research Center, 2017), the Muslim tourist segment has become one of the most potential markets. The book *Islamic Tourism: Management of Travel Destinations* makes a significant contribution to the literature on religious tourism through a multidisciplinary approach—integrating Islamic theology, management, marketing, and cultural studies. Editors Ahmad Jamal, Razaq Raj, and Kevin Griffin have compiled contributions from various international academics to explore the concepts, practices, and challenges of Islamic tourist destinations in various regions such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Oman, Spain, and Syria. The book emphasizes that Islamic tourism is not just an economic activity, but also a means of ibadah (worship), da'wah (preaching), and strengthening global Muslim identity.

This article uses a qualitative approach through document-based analysis, which involves examining the content and structure of the book to identify recurring key themes: (1) the theoretical framework of Islam as a basis for tourism, (2) destination management and marketing, (3) cross-country case studies, and (4) global issues and challenges. Theoretically, Islamic tourism is rooted in the concepts of tawhid (the oneness of God) and ibadah, which view all human activities, including travel, as a form of servitude. This approach demands the management of tourist destinations that are not only economically attractive but also in line with Islamic spiritual and ethical values (Shariah compliance).

The opening chapter of the book explains that Islamic tourism was born from the awareness to carry out travel activities in accordance with Shariah. Travel (safar) is seen as a means of spiritual reflection as taught in the Qur'an (QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]:20; QS. Ar-Rum [30]:9). Jamal and El-Bassiouny emphasize the importance of understanding religiosity and culture as two main variables that influence the behavior of Muslim tourists. The diversity in levels of faith and cultural backgrounds requires a contextual marketing and managerial approach.

The following chapters discuss various managerial approaches. Utomo, Scott, and Jin (Chapter 5) propose a theoretical model linking Hajj satisfaction with an increase in religious commitment. Rashid and Adwik (Chapter 6) highlight the role of social media in shaping the perceptions of global Muslim tourists.

Kawsar and Rashid (Chapter 7) introduce the concept of Islamic Customer Relationship Marketing (ICRM), which places honesty, justice, and brotherhood (ukhuwah) at the core of customer relations. An empirical study by Alsini, Ekiz, and Hussain (Chapter 8) shows that Umrah quality attributes and Shariah compliance significantly influence tourist loyalty. Tariq Elhadary (Chapter 9) introduces the dimension of Sufi tourism, which utilizes the spiritual heritage of Rumi and Ibn Arabi to enhance the appeal of Islamic tourism. Sufism is seen as capable of building a spiritual bridge among humanity through the universal values of love and beauty.

The third part of the book presents the application of Islamic tourism concepts in various contexts:

- a. Oman (Kessler & Raj): the development of mosque tourism as a means of interfaith education.
- b. Saudi Arabia (Acar): optimizing the Hajj experience through crowd and infrastructure management.
- c. Spain (Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral): the opportunity to revive the Andalusian heritage as a European halal destination.
- d. Turkey (Yilmaz et al.): the exploration of Konya's sacred cuisine and Mevlevi gastronomy as a spiritual attraction.
- e. Syria and Iraq (Yasuda; Mujtaba): a study on Shia tourism and the Arbreen pilgrimage.
- f. The Tablighi Jamaat Movement (Abbasi): an analysis of missionary mobility as a form of global religious tourism.

Paolo Biancone and Silvana Secinaro (Chapter 15) connect Islamic business ethics with the development of halal tourism. They emphasize the need for global halal certification and ethical financial practices to support sustainable tourism.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Although Islamic tourism shows significant growth and has gained global attention, Jamal, Raj, and Griffin (2019) and the book's contributors highlight various fundamental challenges facing this sector. These challenges are not only technical or economic but also ideological, cultural, and structural. Some of the main issues can be elaborated as follows:

Heterogeneity of the Muslim Ummah and Differences in Shariah Interpretation

Muslims are spread across more than 100 countries with diverse cultural, ethnic, and sectarian

backgrounds. This condition leads to variations in the interpretation of Shariah principles applied to the tourism sector. For example, the concept of "halal tourism" in Malaysia is oriented towards integrating Islamic values with modern hospitality, while in Saudi Arabia, the approach is more conservative with strict gender boundaries and dress codes. These differences create difficulties in establishing universal standards for Islamic tourism services such as halal certification, destination governance, and permissible forms of entertainment. As a result, the industry's development is often fragmented and lacks a solid global governance framework (Rusyadiana et al., 2021).

Negative Image and Islamophobia in International Media

One of the biggest obstacles highlighted in the book is the negative stereotype of Islam in Western media. The image of Islam, often associated with conflict and radicalism, makes many destinations in the Muslim world less attractive to non-Muslim tourists. Raj and Griffin note that media representation plays a major role in shaping public perception. Countries like Turkey, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates have implemented counter-narrative marketing strategies to portray Islam as a religion of peace and hospitality. However, these efforts still require more systematic cross-cultural communication and tourism diplomacy.

Limitations in Infrastructure, Policy, and Managerial Capacity

Many Muslim countries, especially in South Asia and North Africa, face problems with inadequate tourism infrastructure: transportation access, sanitation, Shariah-compliant accommodation, as well as public facilities such as prayer rooms or halal restaurants. In addition, public policies on Islamic tourism are still sectoral and poorly coordinated between the ministries of religion, tourism, and economy. Jamal et al. emphasize the importance of establishing an Islamic Tourism Policy Framework that integrates spiritual, social, and economic dimensions. The lack of professionals who understand Shariah-compliant management principles also becomes an obstacle in maintaining service quality and destination credibility.

Non-Uniform Halal Standardization and Certification

Biancone and Secinaro (2019) underscore that the absence of an international halal certification system

is a major barrier to expanding the global market. Various national halal bodies—such as JAKIM (Malaysia), MUI (Indonesia), and ESMA (UAE)—have differences in procedures, product categories, and assessment authorities. This lack of standard uniformity creates confusion for international Muslim tourists and weakens competitiveness among destinations. Therefore, the book recommends the establishment of a Global Halal Standardization Council involving major certification bodies (Hakim et al., 2022) in the Islamic world under the coordination of the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation).

Challenges of Digitalization and Social Media Ethics

Rashid and Adwik (2019) highlight the role of social media as a double-edged sword. On one hand, digital platforms open up opportunities for the widespread promotion of halal destinations; on the other hand, issues of digital ethics arise in the context of Islam. Issues such as the use of personal photos and videos, the representation of awrah (parts of the body to be covered), and the misuse of religious content are major concerns. Therefore, ethical guidelines for influencers and halal tourism content providers are needed to maintain Islamic etiquette (adab) in visual narratives and online interactions. Additionally, weak digital literacy among tourism service providers in some developing countries also hinders the effective marketing of Islamic destinations on global platforms.

Commercialization and the Risk of Secularizing Spiritual Values

Several chapters in the book highlight the dilemma between spirituality and commercialization. When religious destinations like Makkah, Karbala, or Konya are packaged in a mass tourism format, there is a risk of sacral dilution—that is, the diminishing of sacredness due to commercial pressures. Elhadary (Chapter 9) and Mujtaba (Chapter 17) warn that Islamic tourism practices must avoid reducing religious values to mere economic attractions. What is needed is spiritual management based on maqasid al-shariah, where the primary goal of tourism remains oriented towards strengthening faith, brotherhood (ukhuwah), and public welfare (maslahah).

Limitations of Data and Empirical Research

Although the literature on Islamic tourism has increased since the 2010s, Jamal and Raj assess that

cross-country empirical research is still minimal. Most studies focus on cases in Malaysia or Turkey, while Africa, Central Asia, and Europe are still underrepresented. As a result, developing evidence-based policy is difficult. A collaborative research network among universities in the Islamic world is needed to produce quantitative and qualitative data on the behavior, motivations, and socio-economic impacts of Muslim tourists.

The challenges above show that Islamic tourism requires not only business innovation but also a new epistemological approach that integrates religion, culture, technology, and governance. Overall, the sector needs an "Islamic tourism governance" paradigm—a governance system that emphasizes:

- a. Sustainability and spiritual ethics;
- b. Social justice and empowerment of local communities;
- c. Increasing halal literacy and global awareness of universal Islamic values.

CONCLUSION

Islamic Tourism: Management of Travel Destinations provides significant theoretical and practical contributions to the development of modern Islamic tourism. The book asserts that the success of Islamic destination management requires a holistic approach that integrates spiritual values, professionalism, and technological innovation.

There are several key recommendations: (a) Strengthening cross-cultural empirical research on the behavior of Muslim tourists; (b) Creating an integrated halal tourism policy framework by governments and international institutions; (c) Increasing digital literacy and promoting destinations through positive narratives about Islam; and (d) Cross-sector collaboration (academia–government–industry) to build a sustainable tourism ecosystem.

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