

# Availability of Friendly Islamic Tourism Facilities in Jordan

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## Abstract

Halal tourism, also known as Islamic tourism, is a new pattern of tourism that emerged after 9/11 made travel to the United States and Europe more dangerous for Muslims. Hotels and other tourism businesses are adapting their practices to suit these travelers, providing them with Halal products and programming. This study aims to gauge the degree to which these features can be found in hotels in Jordan, as well as Jordanian businesses' awareness of Halal tourism. Based on the results of a survey provided to 29 hotels across Jordan, Jordanian hotels share many features of 'Halal hotels', though this may be due to Jordan's large Muslim population. Jordanian awareness of Halal tourism is growing, and many of the hotels surveyed plan to incorporate more aspects of Halal tourism into their own programming..

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## 1. Introduction

Religion is widely regarded for its far-reaching influence in our world, affecting people's lifestyles, relationships, and values, shaping societies at their core El-Gohary, (2016). While the connections between Islam and tourism go back to the origins of the religion, what we call 'Halal tourism' is a new concept that is growing rapidly. Halal tourism, described by others as Islamic tourism, Muslim-friendly tourism, or as a wealth of other names, may not have a clear definition at this point, but its influence and growth is undeniable. A rise in the number of tourists coming from wealthier Islamic communities in countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has created new patterns of tourism aimed at taking into account the needs of Muslim communities while abroad.

These Muslim travelers are projected to spend \$238 billion by 2020 Chon, Oktadiana, & Pearce, (2016), and the needs of these travelers differ largely from those from Europe, who have previously been the main focus of the tourism industry in most countries Carboni, Perelli, & Sistu, (2014). This shift in demographic has led businesses, both in countries with larger Muslim populations such as Malaysia and Singapore, as well as in other countries such as Australia, Japan and Korea, to cater more to the needs of this population. More and more hotels, airports and other tourism-adjacent businesses have made an effort to address the needs of Muslim tourists, adding prayer rooms, Halal food and beverages, and Shari'ah-compliant tourism packages Samori, Salleh, & Khalid, (2016).

Jordan is already known for tourism, with travel and tourism making up 18.7% of Jordan's GDP in 2017 Knoema, (2017). Jordan is one of the few countries in the Middle East region with sustainable tourism options, due to its stability and wealth of heritage and cultural sites, a number of which that are significant to Islamic history. With many Muslims deterred by the Islamophobia heightened by the 9/11 attacks, Jordan and other closer travel destinations stand to benefit from adaptation to this new market. After 2001, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities already began to shift its focus to tourists from other Muslim communities Neveu, (2010). As a Muslim-majority country, it is possible that some hotels within Jordan may already be compliant with the rules of Shari'ah, making adaptation to the standards of Islam tourism much easier.

This study aims to gauge the readiness of the tourism and hospitality industries in Jordan in dealing with Halal tourism as well as the degree to which current policies address the needs of those seeking out Halal tourism. In addition, it seeks to provide researchers with a firm foundation of knowledge about this sector in Jordan, providing those who wish to do further research on the topic the background to do so. In order to do this, we prepared a questionnaire and surveyed hotels across Jordan, asking them how they are engaging with the different aspects of Halal tourism and how they plan to change their practices in the future.

## 2. Literature Review:

Broadly, Halal tourism is used to describe the development of objects, businesses, travel packages, and activities that cater to the needs of Muslim travelers looking to maintain the rules of their faith while abroad. Nine out of ten Muslims say that their faith affects their purchases Attaalia, Hussein, & Qaddahat, (2016). In a 2015 study of value perceived by Muslim tourists, El-Gohary and Eid found that Muslim consumers view products not just in

the enjoyment provided by it, but also through the attributes that make them ju-compliant Eid & El-Gohary, (2015). Religiosity can play a major role in the economic habits of Muslims, especially abroad.

In Muslim-majority countries, people under the age of 30 make up around 60% of the population, indicating a growing market and the need to develop new products to suit them Mastercard & HalalTrip, (2017). Halal tourism, while based off of religious principles, is much more than just religious tourism, bleeding into social customs and values Battour & Ismail, (2016). It is differentiated from mass tourism, which for Muslims is characterized as hedonistic Jafari & Scott, (2014). According to El-Gohary, this development must take place in all aspects of the industry in order to be considered Halal, as the rules are broad and apply to many different aspects of one's life. The degree to which hotels properly apply these rules tends to vary wildly, with many 'Halal hotels' still selling alcohol or serving pork El-Gohary,(2016).

Connections between Islam and tourism go back to the founding of the religion. Religion serves as a major motivating force in Islam, with sites of religious significance drawing visitors from Muslim communities around the world Henderson, (2010). Built into the religion is the need for any Muslim who is physically and financially able to go on Hajj and visit the holy cities of Mecca and Medina El-Gohary, (2016). While historically, there has been debate as to whether or not tourism is lawful, modern-day Muslims are avid tourists Jafari & Scott, (2014). According to the Qur'an, an essential part of Islam is seeing firsthand the beauty and bounty of God's creation, and Muslims who travel find themselves healthier and more able to serve God Henderson & Zamani-Farahani, (2010). Passages from the Qur'an encourage Muslims to travel and see the world in order to gain knowledge Jafari & Scott, (2014). Islam also compels Muslims to be hospitable to guests and those travelling Rahman, (2014).

While the amount of research on the topic of Halal tourism is much more substantial now than it was a few years ago, there is still no clear consensus on the actual definition of the term, nor is there a clear definition between the many terms used to describe the phenomenon. This can lead to difficulty in clarifying the concepts behind Halal tourism Battour & Ismail, (2016). In some cases, Islamic tourism is used to mean tourism to Muslim countries Henderson & Zamani-Farahani, (2010), while in others it refers to the Muslim travellers, regardless of the majority religion of the destination Carboni, Perelli, & Sistu, (2014).

Battour and Ismail emphasize the need for standardization of terminology, stating that the terms 'Halal' tourism and 'Islamic' tourism are often used interchangeably, but that this simply leads to confusion. This lack of standardization applies not only to the tourism industry, but also to Halal food on a global level, with the Halal Food Authority and Halal Monitory Committee, two major groups involved in Halal certification, often in disagreement Henderson, (2016). Crescentrating suggests the use of 'Muslim travel' to mean Muslims travelling for any purpose, and 'Halal travel' to mean Muslim travelers who do not want to compromise their faith-based needs while abroad(Crescentrating, n.d.).

Battour and Ismail ultimately decide on the term 'Halal tourism', meaning "any tourism object or action which is permissible according to Islamic teachings to use or engage by Muslims in the tourism industry" Battour & Ismail, (2016). Other researchers interested in the topic have used this definition on occasion as well Chon, Oktadiana, & Pearce, (2016). However, others have their doubts about the current use of the term 'Halal tourism', as many hotels and institutions that are "Halal-certified" break with Halal in one way or another, instead advocating for these hotels to simply be referred to as "Muslim-friendly" El-Gohary, (2016).

This paper will be using the term 'Halal tourism', as used by Battour and Ismail, to discuss this phenomenon. This definition was chosen due to its broadness, encompassing all aspects of the tourism industry that may need to be changed in order to fit within Islamic teachings. Islamic tourism seems to have largely fallen out of favor, due to the lack of clarity in its meaning, with some defining it as tourism to Muslim countries or Islamic sites Henderson & Zamani-Farahani, (2010). While these can be important aspects of Halal tourism, they do not encompass the broad scope of it. The term 'Halal tourism' also doesn't exclude non-Muslims who may participate in various aspects of Halal tourism, such as people from conservative religious groups, those trying to keep kosher, and others to which it may appeal El-Gohary, (2016).

Most definitions of Halal tourism have a few basic requirements in common. The most significant aspect of travelling for Muslims is the availability of Halal food and beverages Yousaf & Xiucheng, (2018), although it is far from the only one. Hotels must provide Muslim travelers entirely with products that are allowed by Shari'ah. Hotels must ensure that staff are dressed conservatively, work in rooms of the same gender, and have separate gym and leisure times for men and women El-Gohary, (2016). The presence of prayer rooms on site, as well as Qiblah indicators in rooms are also important. All bathrooms must have ablution facilities. In areas that have more fully adopted these guidelines, these requirements may also be met at common tourist destinations, such as museums, shopping centers, parks, and restaurants Khalid, Salleh & Samori, (2016).

The presence of Halal-certified options at tourist sites can appeal to a broader group than just Muslims. While they may not know the details of what makes a product Halal, non-Muslims still view Halal products as of a higher quality Khalid, Salleh, and Samori, (2016). Halal food may be sought out by those seeking healthier dining options El-Gohary, (2016). It's also likely that some of the aspects of a Halal hotel, such as

conservatively-dressed staff and segregated leisure time may appeal to conservative religious groups El-Gohary, (2016).

The concept of Halal tourism arose due to the restructuring of the flows of tourism in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks Carboni, Perelli, & Sistu, (2014). Some non-Muslim countries made it more difficult for residents of some Arab countries to visit through the implementation of new regulations against travel Jafari & Scott, (2014). Islamophobia rose greatly after 9/11, and Muslim tourists were faced with new challenges in the United States and Europe, leading them to seek out other destinations where they may feel safer. Many Muslim and Arab tourists are avoiding travel to Europe and North America, switching to other, often Muslim, countries Attaalia, Hussein, & Qaddahat, (2016). While the Halal tourism industry is growing rapidly, it lacks the institutionalization of other, more eurocentric, tourisms Neveu, (2010). AAAA (1111) suggests that rather than viewing these new touristic currents in the same way as we do those from Europe or as something entirely alien, that we view all currents through a new paradigm, seeking to create new patterns out of the differences between them Cohen & Cohen, (2015).

Many countries, regardless of the size of their Muslim populations, are adapting to suit the needs of the growing number of Muslim tourists. A study was conducted by Premium Europe in 2016 to gauge what Muslim tourists' most-wanted hotel features were. Countries such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, and China have all developed Halal options for Muslim tourists, developing websites and guides to serve them Chon, Oktadiana, & Pearce, 2016, Xiucheng & Yousaf, (2018). Hotels in Thailand are offering apps to help locate shopping centers and other destinations with prayer rooms Battor & Ismail, (2016). Crescentrating developed a guide to the basic terminology of Halal tourism, designed for use by hotels in non-Muslim-majority countries (Crescentrating, n.d.)

Turkey is considered to be a moderate Muslim country, with a large Muslim population and a secular government. Tourism was already a major market for Turkey, before 9/11, and they have made major moves to accommodate Muslim tourists since then. Turkey has its own organization for Halal certification, known as GIMDES, which many countries lack Chon, Oktadiana, & Pearce, (2016). Crescent Tours and Islamic Travels in Turkey have developed 'Halal Holiday' packages Battour & Ismail, (2016). In some cases, individual companies are investing in Halal tourism outside the boundaries of any individual country. In collaboration with the Islamic company Financial Guidance Group, Kempinski Hotels are expanding outside of Turkey, constructing 30 Halal hotels across Africa, the Persian Gulf, and Europe Namin, (2013). The Fusion Tour Company, also based out of Turkey, is currently working on creating Halal cruises Battour & Ismail, (2016).

Maybe the greatest change can be seen in Malaysia, a Muslim-majority country. Malaysia is also considered a moderate Muslim country, like Turkey. Under a government-promoted program, Malaysia has made many adaptations in order to appeal to Muslim tourists from the Gulf, adding Arabic to menus, brochures and signs, recruiting Arabic-speaking staff, providing more Halal food, and requiring malls and other destinations to have prayer rooms and ablution facilities Khalid, Salleh & Samori, (2016).

Jordan, as a Muslim-majority country in the Middle East, may be a step ahead of other countries in adapting its' hotels to suit the needs of Muslim travelers. Many of the requirements of Halal tourism, such as ablution facilities, prayer rooms on site, and Halal food may already be in place at hotels and tourist destinations due to the needs of many Jordanians. It has already been stated that many Muslim tourists prefer going to other Muslim-majority countries, as they feel safer Carboni, Perelli, & Sistu, (2014).

Jordan is not new to the concept of religious tourism, and has been promoting Christian tourism to the region since the 1940's Neveu, (2010). Since 2001, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has focused on the reconstruction and promotion of mausoleums of the Companions of Prophet Muhammad. Travel agencies within Jordan have developed Islamic tours, which focus on Islamic sites and cater to the needs of Muslims, providing them with Halal products and services Jordan Tours, (2018). However, difficulties can arise in the differences between Muslim communities in different countries. While Islam has spread to a global scale, it is not monolithic, with local Muslim communities holding a variety of different beliefs Jafari & Scott, (2014). The way that Jordan has gone about encouraging religious tourism highlights these differences within the global Muslim community. The promotion of these historical pre-Islamic mausoleums, while it may seem to promote religious tourism to the region, may stand in the way of potential tourists from more conservative areas such as Saudi Arabia that may reject these figures.

A previous study from 2016 by Qaddahat and Attaalia aimed to determine the major prospects and challenges of halal tourism in Jordan and Egypt. They found that generally, awareness of Halal tourism was low, but that in some regards, hotels and airlines were in line with its principles. Ultimately, they determined that the main deterrents for the incorporation of Halal tourism were its high costs, and the political climate Attaalia & Qaddahat, (2016). This study is attempting to build off of their findings and gauge hotel's willingness to adopt new practices as the number of Muslim tourists worldwide has increased.

### 3. Data and Methods:

The data used in this study was taken through a field survey. This survey took place between November 2018

and March 2019. 29 hotels, located in either Amman, Petra, Madaba, or Aqaba, were sent a questionnaire, created by the researchers. The questionnaire was designed to determine whether or not the hotels were engaged with the principles of Halal tourism, containing 32 questions, classified into three groups. Each question was based on one of the various special services that may be sought out by Muslim tourists. In their response, the hotel could indicate whether or not the service was available or not available, and whether or not they were considering making it available in the future.

The first group of questions addressed the staff working in the hotels and their awareness of the concepts behind Halal tourism. Questions focused on the dress codes in place at the hotel, whether or not the staff knew about Halal tourism, and if Islamic rules were considered in advertising the hotel. The second group of questions addressed which Halal products and services the surveyed hotels provided. These questions focused on the facilities provided to guests and whether or not they were separated by gender, the availability of facilities and items important to Islam, such as prayer rooms, Qur'ans, Kiblah indicators, and ablution facilities, as well as the food served by the hotel. The third group of questions were about the role of government policies in spreading awareness of Halal tourism. These questions asked about the presence of special initiatives to promote Halal tourism, any workshops or seminars given to the company about Halal tourism, and any future plans to in the area of Halal tourism. At the end of the questionnaire, the hotels were asked questions regarding their classification, what services they provided, their area of operation, the number of personnel working on-site, and the hotel's occupancy rate. Table 1

Table 1. The percentages of the answers

Question	Available %	Not Available %	We consider it in the future %	We don't care %	Total %
We Have safeguards of the same gender as the guests needs	65.5	20.7	10.3	3.4	100
We care about Islamic clothing codes for staff	37.9	34.5	6.9	20.7	100
Our staff is aware of the concept of Islamic Tourism	58.6	24.1	6.9	10.3	100
Consider Islamic rules in advertisements featuring	34.5	51.7	3.4	10.3	100
We offer Proper Islamic swimming suit	13.8	55.2	10.3	20.7	100
We provide proper Islamic entertainments/parties	37.9	37.9	20.7	3.4	100
We offer separating leisure places for men and women	34.5	44.8	6.9	13.8	100
We have prayer room	72.4	13.8	10.3	3.4	100
having Quran and prayer devices at rooms	48.3	34.5	13.8	3.4	100
having no bed or toilet in Kiblah direction	55.2	34.5	3.4	6.9	100
Kiblah indicators in rooms	79.3	13.8	6.9	0	100
We have Water-friendly toilets /toilet water spraying	72.4	20.7	6.9	0	100
We presenting praying times in our hotel	31	58.6	3.4	6.9	100
We offer separating gyms time for men and women	24.1	44.8	6.9	24.1	100
we provide temporary prayer rooms for meetings and events held at the hotel	72.4	17.2	6.9	3.4	100
Segregated facilities for preparing food if using pork/ham	48.3	37.9	3.4	10.3	100
All food we offer is Halal food	72.4	17.2	3.4	6.9	100
We present Islamic decoration in our hotel	31	48.3	10.3	10.3	100
Does the government have any special initiatives or strategies to spread Islamic tourism awareness in tourism sector	48.3	34.5	10.3	6.9	100
Have there been workshops/seminars/training conducted on the awareness of Halal/Muslim traveler needs to staff in your company?	31	44.8	17.2	6.9	100
Are there any plans to take specific initiatives by your company in the area of Islamic tourism in the next few years?	17.2	37.9	37.9	6.9	100

#### 4. Results and Discussion:

The data obtained from this survey is simple and descriptive. It can help us understand the ways in which hotels

are engaging with the ideas of Halal tourism and how they plan to adapt their practices in the future to better suit the needs of Muslim tourists. The categories that are the most covered make sense considering that Jordan is a Muslim-majority country. Having prayer rooms on site and temporary ones for events make sense to already have in Jordan, even before the new wave of Halal tourists. The same goes for the amenities provided in rooms, such as Qiblah indicators and water-spraying toilets. In the same vein, it makes sense that most of the hotels only offer Halal food and that around half of them have separate facilities for preparing food with pork. All of these features are already the norm in Jordan, so their presence in most of these hotels is no surprise.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Question	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
We Have Safeguards of the same gender as the guests needs	44.00	1.52	0.83
We care about Islamic clothing codes for staffs	61.00	2.10	1.14
Our staff aware of the concept of Islamic Tourism	49.00	1.69	1.00
Consider Islamic rules in advertisements featuring	55.00	1.90	0.90
We offer Proper Islamic swimming suit	69.00	2.38	0.98
We provide proper Islamic entertainments/parties	55.00	1.90	0.86
We offer separating leisure places for men and women	58.00	2.00	1.00
We have prayer room	42.00	1.45	0.83
having Quran and prayer devices at rooms	50.00	1.72	0.84
having no bed or toilet in Kiblah direction	47.00	1.62	0.86
Kiblah indicators in rooms	37.00	1.28	0.59
We have Water-friendly toilets /toilet water spraying	39.00	1.34	0.61
We presenting praying times in our hotel	54.00	1.86	0.79
We offer separating gyms time for men and women	67.00	2.31	1.11
we provide temporary prayer rooms for meetings and events held at the hotel	41.00	1.41	0.78
Segregated facilities for preparing food if using pork/ham	51.00	1.76	0.95
All food we offer is Halal food	42.00	1.45	0.87
We present Islamic decoration in our hotel	58.00	2.00	0.93
Does the government have any special initiatives or strategies to spread Islamic tourism awareness in tourism sector	51.00	1.76	0.91
Have there been workshops/seminars/training conducted on the awareness of Halal/Muslim traveler needs to staff in your company?	58.00	2.00	0.89
Are there any plans to take specific initiatives by your company in the area of Islamic tourism in the next few years?	68.00	2.34	0.86
Date of commencement of operation:	22.00	1.57	0.51
Is your hotel a classified one?	29.00	1.00	0.00
If classified, which class does your hotel belong to	75.00	2.59	0.87
Services provided	265.00	9.14	1.83
Area of operation:	65.00	2.24	1.46
Number of personnel working in your hotel	101.00	3.48	0.99
What is the occupancy rate in the hotel (Tourist season)	141.00	5.42	0.76
What is the occupancy rate in the hotel (Off season)	93.00	3.72	1.21
Have you ever been asked for services of an Islamic nature, like (Halal Food, Separate swimming pool	43.00	1.59	0.50

Those categories that are the least covered might highlight the differences between more conservative and more moderate Muslim cultures. Only 13.8% of the hotels surveyed offer Islamic swimsuits, with 20.7% saying that they wouldn't even consider implementing this service in the future. Similarly, only 37.9% of hotels have implemented an Islamic dress code for staff. The issue of dress code, while it may be significant for some travelers, doesn't seem to be as important for the Jordanians working at and managing these hotels. Only around a third of the hotels offered separate leisure spaces for men and women, and less offered separate gym times. Presentation of praying times also didn't come up much, which may be due to the prevalence of the call to prayer in Jordan

Judging from these results, the tourism industry in Jordan seems to be well-aware of the concept of Halal tourism, and many hotels seem to be incorporating its principles into their services and programming. Over half of the hotels surveyed either currently run or plan to run special initiatives in the area of Halal tourism, and around the same amount intend to run workshops for their staff on the needs of Halal tourists. 48.3% of hotels mentioned the influence of government initiatives designed to spread awareness of Halal tourism. It seems that many of these hotels are eager to adapt to the needs of Halal tourists, even if they haven't already.

## 5. Conclusion:

The impact of the new currents of tourism out of the Middle East on the tourism industry as a whole is undeniable. Hotels and other travel-related businesses in Muslim-majority countries such as Turkey and Malaysia as well as in other destinations like Japan and Australia are adapting to suit the needs of this new market. Jordan has also been seeking to capitalize off of this change, with special government initiatives designed to promote Halal tourism.

Our survey shows that many hotels in Jordan are aware of the concept of Halal tourism, and are seeking to incorporate parts of it into their own programming. These hotels already largely incorporate many of these features, but this may just be due to Jordan's own status as a Muslim-majority country. There are some aspects of Halal tourism, such as separate leisure spaces and gym times for men and women, that have not been put into place, with little sign that they will be in the future. Based on the responses received, it is likely that the degree to which these practices are adopted will increase over time.

The goal of this study was to understand the degree to which hotels in Jordan are aware of Halal tourism and to find out the availability of different features of Halal tourism in the country. The data obtained from this survey is only descriptive and therefore unable to conclusively state the causes behind any our findings. Future studies should focus on the degree to which promotion of Halal tourism as a new, lucrative type of tourism has led to the implantation of these practices.

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