Development of Mosque Tourism Framework as a Tool to Reduce Islamophobia

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The geopolitical situation since September 11th has witnessed the development of terrorist acts and the over mediatized notion of radicalisation and religious extremism. Terrorism prones the suppression of liberty, gender equality, critical thinking and tolerance while adhering to strict principles referencing the Sharia Law which are associated to Islam. Consequently terrorism and Islam have often been linked with significant ramifications for the Muslim communities. Terrorism has always existed, however the "new wave of extremism" is unique under the self-proclaimed Islamic State because it does not require well-planned actions with commendatory groups and it rather encourages isolated and individual command and ownership of terrorist attacks worldwide.

Therefore, implying that everywhere, everyone could be a potential victim. However, Scott and Jafari (2010), Raj and Sarwar (2016) and Raj and Raja (2017) argues that the Muslim community is the most at risk as they have become the victims of a dual system: Victims of terrorist attacks which are carried as well as victims of the misconception that by sharing the same religion with the perpetrators of those attacks, they somehow are responsible and at fault. Therefore, Muslims communities have to suffer terrorism, extremism and islamophobia in their home countries and abroad while travelling.

Tourism in this context has developed to accommodate with the geopolitical situation with the emergence of Islamic and Halal Tourism allowing Muslim tourists to travel in a safe and religious conscious environment while allowing non-Muslims to understand and experience Muslim destinations and Halal concepts. Mosque Tourism has been identified as the central element of Islamic Tourism. In this context, this paper offers to present Islamophobia and its components as well as to explain how it impacts tourism. Tourism has often been identified as a suitable activity to diffuse socio-cultural conflicts and tension as it allows hosts and tourists to engage and benefit from each other. Similarly, Mosque Tourism could become the redeemer of Muslim communities. The purpose of this paper is to consider the Mosque Tourism Framework as a suitable tool to reduce Islamophobia.

Key Words : Religious Tourism, Islamic Tourism, Islam, Mosque Tourism, Islamophobia.

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