

New Step from Islamic Countries for Tourism: OIC, the Concept of Capital City of Islamic Tourism

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Biographies

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Abstract

At the end of 2013, in Gambia, all members countries of OIC (the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) agreed to hold a conference to explore and develop Islamic tourism potential in member countries. After this meeting, in Indonesia 4th member countries' Tourism Ministries' Coordination meeting was organized in June 2014. Main discussions of the conference were on understanding the growing demand of Islamic values in global economy and tourism industry. Bases on these goals, OIC announced the concept of "Tourism Capital City of Islamic Countries" firstly and for 2015 Jerusalem, 2016 Konya / Turkey, 2017 Madinah / Saudi Arabia, 2018 Tabriz / Iran were selected as Islamic tourism capital cities. The concepts of Halal, halal food, halal tourism and as a new step capital city of Islamic tourism mean that Muslim world wants to take place in the market because of advantages of economic gains and marketing images of tourism. The study tries to show the last attacks of Muslim world to tourism. The study will provide some example activities from last two capital cities' (Jerusalem, Konya) and will examine the results or effects of these tourism activities.

Introduction

According to MasterCard & Crescent-Rating Global Tourism Market Index (GMTI) (2016), Muslim Travel Market is one of the fast growing segment in global travel industry in 2015 and it was estimated, 117 million Muslim tourists traveled around the world. This is projected to grow to 160-180 million by 2020, where the travel expenditure by Muslim travelers is expected to exceed USD 200 billion. And State of the Global Islamic Economy Report (SGIER) (2015) says whole the Muslim consumer expenditure globally on food and lifestyle sectors, include travel, clothing, pharma – personal care, media – recreation, was estimated 1.62 trillion dollars 2013 and it is expected to reach 2.47 trillion dollars by 2018. These indicators say that basis on the

Halal market concept, Muslim consumers' expenditure is nearly % 13 of global market and share % 10 global tourism market (Namin, 2013; Chandra, 2014; GMTI, 2016). The facts are not surprise on these developments, because Muslim based market has a growing trend and by 2020 the Muslim population will be around % 26 of the world's population and has meant that Muslim travelers are becoming a significant segment within the global tourism sector (COMCEC, 2016).

Based on these developments, at the end of 2013, in Gambia, all member countries of OIC (the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) agreed to hold a conference to explore and develop Islamic tourism potential in member countries. After this meeting, in Indonesia 1st International Conference on Islamic Tourism was held and at the same time 4th member countries' Tourism Ministries' Coordination meeting was organized in June 2014. Main discussions of the conference were on understanding the growing demand of Islamic values in global economy and tourism industry, developing a successful Islamic tourism destination, growing halal business, building an effective communication to promote Islamic tourism. Then, OIC announced the concept of "Tourism Capital City of Islamic Countries" firstly and for 2015 Jerusalem, 2016 Konya / Turkey, 2017 Madinah / Saudi Arabia, 2018 Tabriz / Iran were selected as Islamic tourism capital cities. The year 2010, it was the first time mentioned about "OIC City of Tourism" concept in the 7th Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers (ICTM) (OIC, 2013). OIC (2013) states that "City of Tourism" concept is an award and is a tourism development initiative capable of playing a major role for sustainable and long term development of the economies in OIC Member States as well as improving welfare and livelihood of their peoples. General objectives of the concept encapsulate economic developments of Islamic tourism cities, promoting tourism knowledge, enhancing the tourism infrastructure in the cities, establishing competition among the member states to promote tourism, enhancing Islamic solidarity through tourism development, etc.

What is the reason all for acting towards to tourism by OIC as a Islamic authority? Are these acts working well? What are gains of these cities? Is the concept sustainable? The study tries to answer these questions. The concept of OIC "Tourism Capital City of Islamic Countries" is a new step from the Islamic world. The study examines the tourism developments and the role of OIC in Islamic World, principally. Then, with the concept of Tourism Capital City, the activities and organizations have been analyzed. Final discussion is on the effects of Tourism Capital City

Concept. Study shows some examples by examining the role of local government and authorities approaches on capital city concept. Based on the study aims, as 2016 tourism capital city of Islamic World, Konya has been evaluated.

Literature Review

Tourism has been defined as one of the ten priority areas of cooperation in the OIC Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic and Commercial Cooperation among the Member Countries which was adopted in 1994 (Majid and Mitra, 2016; 15). The 57 Members of the OIC are the major source market for the global Islamic tourism industry. Estimated tourism expenditures of over \$100 billion, these countries account for around 82 per cent of the total tourism expenditures made by the Muslim tourists in last years. Malaysia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are the top Islamic tourist destinations (Majid and Mitra, 2016; 15). Because of this market potential, last decades OIC has focused on tourism industry. And also according to the 8th Session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers (ICTM) (2013; 2) explications, tourism is central in promoting economic, social and cultural interactions among nations, contributing to international peace and security as well as international understanding and re-iterating the relevance of sustainable tourism to the actualisation of OIC poverty eradication strategies and policies and as a potential contributor to sustainable development.

Maybe the first tourism step of Muslim world has been halal food, than halal tourism concept has been an emerging international market not only for Muslim countries, non-Muslim countries as well. These developments have been an inspiration of tourism (Bilim and Özer, 2017). GMTI (2016) report points out key factors of Muslim travel market growth as; population growth, growing middle class, younger population, increasing access to travel information, increasing availability of Muslim-friendly travel services and facilities. Zamani – Farahani and Henderson (2010) emphasize on the tendencies of Muslim world to tourism as; the revival of Islamic cultures and the spread of Islamic values, the strengthening of self – confidence, identity and beliefs in the face of negative images comparison to other communities. Another important side of the development is related to changing considerations and perceptions of Muslim communities about tourism. Except pilgrimage, relationship between tourism and Islam has been ignored till

recently, because many Muslim communities have been highly concerned about immoral and negative social impacts of tourism like drugs, alcohol consumption, lewd behavior, gambling, immodest dress, forbidden foods, forbidden entertainment activities (disco, bar and others), disturbance in Ramadan facilities (Timothy and Iverson, 2006; Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010; Battour et al., 2014; Jafari and Scott, 2014; Carboni et al., 2014).

Now, another step comes from OIC as the concept of Tourism Capital City of Islamic Countries. After the halal concept, OIC plans to provide a new way and marketing phenomenon to member states (OIC, 2013). Given the inherent strengths to cater to the Muslim travelers, the OIC member states have a unique opportunity to gain a greater share of this growing segment and increase the overall tourist arrivals to their destinations (COMCEC, 2016). According to Majid and Mitra (2016), OIC states have a great potential. So, especially intra – OIC tourism will be a new market for many international Muslim tourists. It means that Muslim destinations will be both host and tourist sender area. then this market development will attract international tour operators and organizations.

Methodology

Study can be defined “descriptive research. So, research data base on archive searches and related report reviews. Also, some data are first hand. First hand data has been grounded on researcher’s observations and interviews. Researcher is living in Konya and has observed “Tourism Capital City” activities and has meet organizers from local government.

Results

The concept of “Tourism Capital City of Islamic Countries” is a new phenomenon for Muslim world. It seems that OIC wants to drive member states to tourism industry because of international economic and marketing power. Eco-tourism, religious tourism, health tourism and heritage tourism are the first areas based on halal consumption. Similar to EU policy, OIC targets to build a zone for Muslim tourists which aim economic gains. Main marketing strategy is to encourage National Authorities of Tourism to prepare promotional material such as brochures, posters, guidebooks, practical multilingual phrase books, TV programs and video cassettes on the nominated cities

The first “Tourism Capital City of Islamic Countries” was announced as Jerusalem for year 2015 and second 2016 Konya (OIC, 2015). But, because of the political and security problems, there was no any act about Islamic tourism city role in Jerusalem. However, OIC doesn't have any formal responsibility, application or facilities in these cities. All responsibilities are imposed to governmental organs and local authorities. Konya was the second city for this organization. Many organizations and events were performed such as International Islamic sport organizations, international conferences, panel and seminars related to Islamic issues, Ramadan programmes and etc. But the event participations and attractiveness was not so high. May be the reasons of this, many Islamic countries are not aware of this concept because it is a new concept. According to local governors' interview from municipality, this award was honorary for a city. But OIC had any budget for support to city, so all activities had to be budgeted by local authorities. This result shows that OIC has not enough theoretical and practical substructures for the activities.

Conclusion and Discussion

The growth of the Muslim travelers is a new emerging segment within the travel sector, which will affect the global tourism industry. In last decades many development and reasons have been caused this trend. Now, OIC, as an International organization, try to promote economic activities among member states. The concept of “Tourism Capital City of Islamic Countries” is one of the output of these considerations. Tourism Capital City concept is an award and vehicle for marketing the Muslim community tourism potentials. Konya was the second tourism capital city. Many organization and event was hold in this concept. But this activities were not resulted desired level, because many member states have not promoted this concept in their geography exactly.

Tourism capital city concept may be a good idea for Islamic countries for sustainable tourism and economic developments. But it is needed to promote actively and had to have an institutional structure such as providing budget, marketing internationally, enhancing the area, formal writings and meetings.

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