HALAL TOURISM IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Religious pluralism is a unique feature of Indian culture which strengthens its social and religious dynamics. India is known for its ancient and religious heritage with the symbols of cultural modernization which made India a country that offers various categories of tourism even religious tourism. Several tourist organizations offer tour packages to visit religious spots in India which is related to Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jain, but domestic tourism in Muslim sites are highly unorganized and lacking tourist infrastructure. Tourism is one of the most important sectors in the global economy and halal tourism is a new product in the tourism industry. Malaysia, Turkey and many more countries are trying to attract Muslim tourists from all over the world offering facilities in accordance with the religious beliefs of Muslim tourists. India can establish itself further as a solid travel destination and increase its foreign revenue, by firmly positioning India in the minds of tourists across large number of muslim dominant nations. This paper provides an insight in to halal tourism and its potential in Kerala. This also tries to give suggestions to improve halal tourism in Kerala.

Key words: Religious Pluralism, Social Dynamics, Religious Tourism, Medical Tourism, Halal Tourism, Customisation.


1. INTRODUCTION

India is known for its ancient and religious heritage with the symbols of cultural modernization and varied cultural trends. India is probably the rare country that offers various categories of tourism. These include religious tourism, history tourism, adventure tourism, medical tourism (ayurveda and other forms of Indian medications),
spiritual tourism, beach tourism (India has the longest coastline in the east) etc. All this make India a major attraction for tourists. Several tourist organization offer tour packages to visit religious spots in India which related to Hinduisim, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jain, but domestic tourism in Muslim sites are highly unorganized and lacking tourist infrastructure.

Halal tourism is a new customised product in the tourism industry it is a subcategory of religious tourism which is inclined to Muslim families who abide by Sharia rules. The word “halal” means permitted - created or operated in compliance with Islamic laws. The concept of halal in Arabic means permission, it is not just food it includes anything which is sharia compliant, and halal tourism means offering tour packages and destinations that are purposely designed to support Muslim tourists. These days, more and more Muslim travelers are looking for the “halal” label on hotels, restaurants and even airlines when they travel. According to halal tourism the hotels in such destinations do not serve alcohol and pork, prayer timings are announced, the hotel rooms should have a Qibla pointing signage stuck on the ceiling or in drawers, and a prayer mat to allow the Muslim travelers to perform their religious obligations. It also includes other facilities separate for men and women such as in hotels and resorts etc. The halal tourism industry also provides flights in which no alcohol or pork products are served. And religious programs are broadcast as part of entertainment offered on board. Some hotels have employed people from the Muslim world to provide translation services and other assistance that may be needed by tourists from Muslim countries to exploit the growing market from the Middle East. Malaysia, Turkey and many more countries are trying to attract Muslim tourists from all over the world offering facilities in accordance with the religious beliefs of Muslim tourists.

2. SIGNIFICANCE

Although Muslims make up one of the largest tourist markets in the world, perceived value of tourism offerings for this market has not been clearly defined. There are more than 150 million Muslims in India, the third largest community. Besides the domestic population, India hosted foreign tourists from Muslim countries that point out the potentialities of halal tourism to attract overseas market.

2.1. Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To understand the concept halal tourism
2. To understand the major challenges faced by Indian halal tourism industry.
3. To study the opportunity of halal tourism in Kerala.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is descriptive method mainly based on secondary data, which is collected from tourism official sites, books on tourism, different journals and articles, papers presented on tourism, annual reports from the ministry of tourism and other important channels of information.
4. HALAL TOURISM; ITS POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGES IN INDIA

In today’s globalised world, tourism has become an important source of revenue for many countries including India. Tourism is motivated by society, business and religious purposes. India is custodian of many dominant religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jain. Islam doesn’t have the status of religious roots like others but the third largest Muslim population in the World after Indonesia and Pakistan reside here.

The Religious tourism has appeared as a booming market in India. A study by the Delhi based National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) shows that of the 230 million tourist trips undertaken in India; the largest rate is made up of religious pilgrimages. Gainful opportunities are waiting keeping due consideration to Muslim needs in the form of Halal tourism. The world Muslim population has been growing rapidly across the world as the years passed by, with this growing population, halal tourism has the potential to develop into one of the most resilient forms of tourism. India should start tapping into the unexploited halal tourism market by ensuring that Muslim travellers are provided with maximum convenience during their trip and are able to fulfill religious obligations whilst on holiday. India has enough attractions for a Halal loving tourist and offers a huge potential.

Taj Mahal among the Seven Wonders of the World, built at Agra by Mughal king Shajahan in memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz, is inscribed with verses from the Koran in Arabic and other important monuments having the Islamic backgrounds are the beautiful places for tourists. India also can attract tourists by medical tourism, Medical, Healthcare, business, education and other purposes. In 2013, 6967601 tourists from across the globe visited India for different purposes. It should be noted that in year of 2013, around 1672063 tourists who arrived in the country were from developing nations, chiefly, Afghanistan (111370), Iran (30527), Maldives (45270), Pakistan (111794), Bangladesh (524923), Sri Lanka (262345), Indonesia (33747), Malaysia (242649), Bahrain (10531), Iraq (41218), Oman (62252), Saudi Arabia (42892), Turkey (25022), United Arab Emirates (51513) And Yemen (25019). With a global Muslim population of some 1.6 billion, the Halal hotel market is relatively untapped. This is made necessary to improve the halal tourism in India. Shariah compliant hotels and restaurants needs to be developed around all tourist spots within India. Muslim dominated and linked areas to Muslim built monuments result in flourishing of India’s tourism.

Trends to be set in majority-Muslim countries in the Middle East and South-East Asia. Along with halal tourism another fast growing market in Islamic travel is halal food. Muslim travellers want halal-certified food. This means the meat and chicken served must be slaughtered in a certain way, and no pork products are included. Halal certification is regulated by state authorities in Malaysia and Brunei; in other countries, where states are wary of wading into religious matters, defining authenticity is left to the companies themselves, to trade bodies, or to private certifiers. But consumers may not trust their designations. Standards vary between countries. Among so many logos it can be hard to spot fraudulent ones.

4.1. Benefits of Halal Certification

- Opportunities to tap a global Halal food market of about 2 billion people (Middle east, Asia Pacfic, Europian Union, USA, Latin America, Central Asia)
Halal logo is an authoritative, independent and reliable testimony to support Halal food claims
- 200% profit of greater market share: No loss of non-Muslim markets/clients
- Enhance marketability of products in Muslim countries/markets
- Small cost investment relative to multiple growth in revenues
- Image boosts in meeting varied customer needs.
- Improve the food preparation hygienic system
- Improve the food quality into global standards

4.2. Types of Halal Certifications
- Eating Establishment Scheme Issued to restaurants, hawkers, school canteen stalls, snack bars, Halal corners, confectioneries, bakeries and temporary stalls in bazaars, flea market, trade fairs, etc.
- Product Scheme Issued to India-made products
- Whole Plant Scheme Issued to manufacturers for the entire plant
- Food Catering Scheme Issued to catering establishments and central kitchen facilities
- Poultry Abattoir Scheme Issued to poultry abattoirs for their freshly-slaughtered poultry
- Storage Facility Scheme Issued to stationary/mobile storage facilities and warehouses
- Endorsement Scheme Issued to manufacturers, importers and exporters who intend to import/export their Halal-certified products

5. POTENTIAL OF HALAL TOURISM IN KERALA
Kerala has a unique record in India for the harmonious coexistence of diverse religions. The major religious communities of the state include Hindus, Christians and Muslims, although a small population of Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jews and some others are also present. The most famous city of Kerala, Cochin or Kochi is a world-famous port and also a thriving business center. The city features a prominent influence of Arabs, British, Dutch, Portuguese and Chinese since historic times. It is a seaside city located in southern India and is bordered by the Western Ghats on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west. The Salafi Masjid is the oldest Masjid in the city. Another Masjid is the Juma Masjid Padamugal. The Jummah Salaath is held between 1:00PM and 2:00PM. The sermon is delivered in Malayalam, Hindi or Urdu. Most of the Muslim population in the city lives around Mattancherry. Cochin has a number of Halal restaurants where travelers can dine and relish local food as well as dishes from North India, Chinese and fast food. The tourism industry has taken the state of Kerala to global map with its branding. The branding name of Kerala, God’s Own Country has become popular around the world. Kerala has an active tourism industry which has been accepted as one of the most suited industries for Kerala.

6. FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVALS IN KERALA
Foreign tourist visits in Kerala during 2013 were 858143 as compared to 793696 in the previous year and thus registered an increase of about 8.12 percent. Foreign tourist arrivals in Kerala since 2007 are given in Table 1.
Table 1 The Number of Foreign Tourists Arrived in Kerala during 2007-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Foreign tourist arrivals to Kerala</th>
<th>% of increase compared to previous year</th>
<th>Foreign exchange earnings Rs.crore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>515808</td>
<td>20.37</td>
<td>2640.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>598929</td>
<td>16.11</td>
<td>3066.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>557258</td>
<td>-6.96</td>
<td>2853.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>659265</td>
<td>18.31</td>
<td>3797.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>732985</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>4221.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>793696</td>
<td>8.28</td>
<td>4571.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>858143</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>5560.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala (2013)

Among the foreign tourists arrived in Kerala, Table 2 gives nationality of tourists from gulf countries, who contribute as Muslim tourists.

Table 2 Nationality Wise Visits of Foreign Tourists during 2007 and 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Bahrain</th>
<th>% to total</th>
<th>Kuwait</th>
<th>% to total</th>
<th>Oman</th>
<th>% to total</th>
<th>Qatar</th>
<th>% to total</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>% to total</th>
<th>U.A.E</th>
<th>% to total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2607</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3480</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3418</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3247</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>8560</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>8174</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3313</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3328</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3621</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2195</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>12137</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>13334</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2454</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3502</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4540</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1669</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>12119</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>14253</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1281</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3816</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4456</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14967</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>15684</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>4690</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>7327</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1427</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>32595</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>15529</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2900</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>4636</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>10847</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>34373</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>16592</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>3478</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>7328</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>16906</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>2266</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>45998</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>16981</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11673</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>18816</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>23362</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>8538</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>80378</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>66974</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1667.57</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>2688.00</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>3337.43</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>1219.71</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>11482.57</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>9567.71</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala (2013)

Table 3 Number of total tourists and share of Gulf tourists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Foreign tourist arrivals to Kerala</th>
<th>Total tourists from gulf country</th>
<th>% of share gulf tourist arrival to Kerala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>515808</td>
<td>29486</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>598929</td>
<td>37928</td>
<td>6.34</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>557258</td>
<td>38537</td>
<td>6.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>659265</td>
<td>40204</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>732985</td>
<td>63953</td>
<td>8.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>794000</td>
<td>71157</td>
<td>8.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>858143</td>
<td>92957</td>
<td>10.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala (2013)
Table 3 shows that the shared of gulf tourist arrival to Kerala goes up during the seven years from 5.71 percent to 10.83 percent. Other Muslim countries such as Maldives, Iran, Bangladesh and Pakistan, contribute as foreign tourists of Kerala.

Kerala had trade relations with many foreign countries, especially those in the middle-east like Assyria and Babylonia, right from the ancient period. Kerala was frequently visited by Arab traders for its spices, Teakwood, Ivory etc. Islam was propagated in Kerala by these traders and it is believed that the religion spread to other parts of India from Kerala. Many of these traders later settled in the coastal areas of Kerala. In 644 A.D., Malikben Dinar reached Kerala, propagated the religion and established mosques at various places. As per census, in 2011 Muslims form the second largest religious community in Kerala constituting 26.7 per cent of the total population. Majority of the Muslim population is in the northern districts of the state. Malappuram has the largest Muslim population followed by Kannur, Kozhikode and Wayanad.

7. CONCLUSION

It has been observed that there is a growing potential for a new tourism concept incorporating halal hospitality. As the numbers of the Muslims in all around world are increased and purchasing powers of them is high, the opportunity to be recognized with halal logo should not be left behind by the food manufacturers and premises. Besides, Islamic principles in food preparation, handling and transportation involving the aspects of hygiene and safety, are agreed to be the demand of every consumer, either Muslim or non-Muslim. This will further contribute to the sustainability of a food manufacturer or premises as satisfied customers will recommend more purchasers. The Kerala government have seriously facilitate the industry by encouraging the participants in the industry in using halal logo. As for the general consumers, the standard guarantees quality in food and beverages while for the specific Muslim consumers, the standard solves their doubt in food purchasing. The department of tourism shall take new steps to grab gulf countries tourists which bring foreign exchange earnings and employment opportunity. According to interim report Kerala; north Kerala, despite its tourism assets, contributes only around 22 percent of total tourism traffic to Kerala, this is due to the absence of a strategic thrust to both marketing and infrastructure development; Kerala is a large repository of herbal drugs and has become a big centre of herbal therapy and beautification. Treatment through the herbs is very popular from the ancient time in Kerala subcontinent and now approaching to new boundaries. Due to its non-alcoholic and vegetarian nature, Ayurvedic is favourite medicine for Indian traditional and Halal conscious consumers. Now along the side of Allopathic, Ayurvedic and Homeopathy, Unani also have gained acceptance across the country especially in Kerala, with ample number of hospitals, dispensaries, practitioners and pharmacies in public and private sector. In line with the policy of government of Kerala to decrease usage alcoholism, halal tourism is a market of tourism without alcoholism.

REFERENCES


WEB SITES