

## UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF HALAL FOR MUSLIMS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

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### Abstract

While tourist operators claim that their products and services are “halal” or “Muslim friendly”, many do not understand the reason behind the need for Muslims to observe to everything that is “halal”. This article seeks to firstly explain the meaning of “halal” from the basic structure of the Muslim belief. From there an explanation will be made as to how a particular product and service is classified as “halal” and how this affects the decisions made by Muslims. Several issues that arise for Muslims when they travel abroad will be raised. The discussion on these issues is divided into those that arise out of travelling to an “Islamic” country as opposed to countries where Muslims are the minority. The article will also address why the tourism industry needs to cater to Muslim tourists and provide basic guidelines on how this is achieved without too much difficulty.

**Keywords:** Halal tourism, Muslim friendly hospitality services, product development, concept of halal.

### Introduction

The development of products and services that cater specifically to Muslim tourists are usually referred to “halal tourism products and services”<sup>1</sup> or “Muslim friendly hospitality products and services”. While tourist operators claim that their products and services are “halal” or “Muslim friendly”, many do not understand the reason behind the need for Muslims to observe to everything that is “halal”. This article seeks to firstly explain the meaning of “halal” from the basic structure of the Muslim belief. From there, an analysis is made of how a particular product and service is classified as “halal” and how this affects the decisions made by Muslims.

This basic understanding is required in order to understand the status of travelling for leisure in Islam. This leads to several issues that arise for Muslims when they travel abroad such as travelling into non-Islamic countries. The article provides basic guidelines for those interested to offer Muslim hospitality products and services without too much difficulty.

In terms of the research methodology adopted, this article relies significantly on the analysis of literature related to the concept of “*halal*”. In doing so a review of the works of classical jurists and modern Muslim jurists on Islamic jurisprudence (*Usul al-Fiqh*) is done. This is necessary because although determining the ruling or *hukm* of a particular act, it is also important to know how that ruling was determined. Aside from

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that, the researcher also relies on secondary authorities for information on tourism in general and “*halal*” tourism in particular.

The discussion is divided into three parts. Part one discusses the general meaning of “*halal*”. From here, part two continues with a detailed explanation of why it is so important for Muslims to ensure that any product or services consumed must be “*halal*”. This will then lead to the third part of the article where an explanation of the relationship with tourism and its status in the Muslim’s life is derived. These explanations will hopefully provide a better understanding of the concept of “*halal*” and thus the products and services are safe for Muslim consumption Muslims whenever and wherever they travel.

### **Understanding the Concept of *Halal***

Before proceeding to understand the meaning of the concept of *halal* in Islam, there is first the need to understand what it means to be a Muslim. For Muslims, the primary purpose of human creation is to worship Allah as mentioned in Surah 51 (*Az-Dzariyat*), verse 56, which means, “*And We have not created men and jinn except for the worship of Allah.*” Hence, the first pillar of Islam is the *shahadah*, which means a declaration in the belief of the Oneness of Allah s.w.t. (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 2002) This declaration also manifests the first deep faith (*iman*) of a Muslim to the existence of Allah as the only creator of the universe. (J. Jafari & Scot, 2014)<sup>ii</sup>

Once this declaration is made, then it follows that in dedicating his whole life to the worship of Allah, the Muslim must obey all of Allah’s commandments. These commandments come from two main sources i.e. the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet s.a.w, which has been inspired by Allah. This relates to the second pillar of faith, which is the belief in the books of Allah for guidance. The question then comes, why is there a need to follow all of God’s commandments? This is because Allah has ordained that the life in this world is a mere passing phase.(Al-Bukhari, no date) At this phase of life, the Muslim is expected to follow Allah’s commandments and do good deeds towards each other as well as towards other beings, whereby He has promised that every good deed will be duly rewarded. Similarly, every bad deed will also be noted and given recompense in the Hereafter. The ultimate reward is the attainment of Jannah or paradise. Meanwhile, the ultimate recompense and punishment in the Hereafter is Hell.

As such, in order to ensure the security of *Jannah*, Muslims must care for their relationship with Allah s.w.t (*hablu min Allah*) through the performance of the five pillars of Islam which include the saying of the *shahadah*, performing the 5 times compulsory prayers, fasting in the month of *Ramadhan*, paying *zakat* and performing *Hajj* for those who are able. (Al-Qardhawi, 2013)<sup>iii</sup> In caring for this relationship, Muslims must also follow all of Allah’s commandments and avoid from all that He has forbidden. This signifies the personal relationship that each Muslim has with Allah s.w.t.

Nevertheless, it is not enough that a Muslim concentrates only on his relationship with Allah but are also enjoined to care for their relationship with other human beings as well as other beings (*Hablu min al-nas*). Those who are able to maintain a good relationship with Allah as well as having a healthy relationship with

other beings will be deemed to have followed all of Allah’s commandments. (Rasjid, 1984)

**Table 1 - Types of Relationship in Islam**

<b>HABLU MIN ALLAH</b>	<b>HABLU MIN AL-NAS</b>
<b>IBADAH KHUSUSIAH</b>	
Five Pillars Of Islam	1. Akhlaq – Ethical Norms
1. Saying of the <i>Shahadah</i> .	2. <i>Muamalat</i> – Economic Relations
2. 5 times daily prayers	3. <i>Faraidh</i> - Succession
3. Fasting in the month of <i>Ramadhan</i>	4. <i>Jinayat</i> – Criminal Law
4. Paying of <i>Zakat</i> (alms)	5. <i>Munakahat</i> – Marriage Relations
5. Performing <i>Hajj</i> for those who are able.	6. <i>Khilafat</i> - Politics
	7. <i>As-Siyar</i> - International Relations
	8. Education
	9.
<b>IBADAH ‘AM (GENERAL ACTS OF WORSHIP)</b>	<b>IBADAH ‘AM (GENERAL ACTS OF WORSHIP)</b>
All good deeds are considered as an <i>ibadah</i> and will be recorded as such	All these acts too are considered as “ <i>ibadah</i> ” if it is done according to what has been ordained by Allah in the sources of the shari’ah.
<b>EFFECT OF NON-COMPLIANCE</b>	<b>EFFECT OF NON-COMPLIANCE</b>
Acts will be recorded and the punishment will be in the hereafter.	Consequences in this world = Punishments in terms of criminal sanctions or monetary compensation.

Meanwhile, the concept of halal is based on a larger scheme of Islamic jurisprudence whereby the value of the acts of a *mukallaf* (a person of full legal capacity) is determined by Allah s.w.t. (Kamali, 2000) This relates closely to the need of the Muslim to care for their relationship with their Creator (Allah s.w.t.), which is *hablu min Allah* as mentioned above. This is the most essential relationship as it determines the fate of the Muslim not only in this world but more importantly in the Hereafter. The basis of this relationship is the fulfillment of a demand (*talab* or *iqtida*) which comes in the form of a command or a prohibition. (M.Hashim Kamali, 2000)<sup>iv</sup> The nature of these commands or prohibitions may be binding to the *mukallaf* whereby it is compulsory for the Muslims to follow. However, there are also certain circumstances when these commandments are not compulsory.

The *Hukum Shara'* is divided into two main varieties, *al-hukm al-taklifi* (defining law) and *al-hukm al-wad'i* (declaratory). Firstly, the *al-hukm al-taklifi* (defining law) which is further divided into 5 types i.e. obligatory (*wajib*), recommended (*mandub*), forbidden (*haram*), abominable (*makruh*) and permissible (*halal/mubah*). (Nyazee, 2003) Meanwhile, the second type of law which is declaratory law is further divided into another 5 categories of cause – *sabab* (cause), condition (*shart*), hindrance (*mani*), strict law (*azimah*) as opposed to concessionary law (*rukhsah*) and valid (*sahih*) or null and void (*batil*). (Kamali, 2000)

According to Dr. Yusuf al-Qardawi, the term 'halal' refers to something 'that which is permitted, with respect to which no restriction exists, and the doing of which the Law-Giver, Allah, has allowed.' (Al-Qardhawi, 1994, 10) Normally translated as lawful, it simply means 'something that is permissible or allowed by the Islamic law.' (Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs Kuwait, 1997, 74) The opposite term for *halal* is *haram*. It is used to describe things or practices 'that which the Law-Giver has absolutely prohibited.' (Al-Qardhawi, 1994, 10) The scope of *halal* and *haram* encompasses not only food and drink but also all matters of daily life including cleaning agents, cosmetics, pharmaceutical, and finance.

From the above, the discussion will now proceed to discuss how the value of human action is determined. As a general rule, all acts are permitted (*halal/mubah*) in the absence of a clear indication in the Qur'an or *Sunnah* that it has been prohibited (*haram*) or obligatory (*wajib*). When a demand to do or not to do something is established in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* these acts will have legal value. The root of this rule is the saying of Allah's Messenger s.a.w:

"What Allah has made lawful in His Book is halal and what He has forbidden is haram, and that concerning which He is silent is allowed as His favour. So accept from Allah His favour, for Allah is not forgetful of anything."

He then recited:

"And thy Lord is not forgetful." (*Surah Maryam* (19):64).

(Narrated by Al-Hakim)

In the same way, Salman al-Farsi narrated that when Allah's Messenger s.a.w was asked about fat, cheese, and fur, he said:

"The halal is that which Allah has made lawful in His Book and the haram is that which Allah has forbidden in His Book, and what He was silent about; then it is among that for which He has pardoned."

(Reported by al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah)

This rule however does not apply to purely religious acts of worship that can only be legislated by the command of Allah.' (Al-Qardhawi, 1994, 16) In this regard, the Messenger of Allah s.a.w was reported to have said:

“Whoever innovates something in our matter (worship) that is not part of it will have it rejected. (Reported by al-Bukhari’ Muslim)

Accordingly, if the divine revelation is silent concerning something, it will be regarded as pure and permissible so long as it does not involve the act of worship. Whilst the sphere of permissible things is immensely vast, there is a rather small number of Quranic verses and acceptable hadiths pertaining to the prohibitions in Islam. (Al-Qardhawi, 1994, 14) These include the status of food and beverages that could be consumed by Muslims. For instance, the prohibition of eating carrion, flowing or liquid blood, pork and animal which is slaughtered with the invocation of a name other than the name of Allah are deemed as forbidden acts (*haram*) primarily because of the existence of the following verses in Qur’an.

“Indeed, what He has forbidden to you is the flesh of dead animals and blood and the pork, and that which has been sacrificed to anyone other than Allah.”  
(*Surah al-Baqarah* (2):173)

“Say: I do not find in what is revealed to me anything prohibited to an eater in his food unless it be (the flesh of) that which is dead, or flowing blood, or the flesh of swine, for that is indeed foul, or the abomination which has been dedicated to anyone other than Allah.” (Surah al-An’am (6):145)

“Forbidden unto you is the eating of carrion, blood, pork and the flesh of animals which was slaughtered other than the name of Allah.”  
(*Surah al-Maidah* (5):3)

These verses indicate that since Allah has ordered that Muslims are forbidden to consume the above foods, therefore, it is mandatory (*wajib*) for Muslims to follow this order. The status of the food is thus classified as being “forbidden” or “*haram*”. The effect of committing a forbidden act is the commission of a sin. Each sin will be recorded and this will be counted on the Day of Judgment or the Hereafter.

It is the responsibility for all Muslim adults to ensure that all their acts are within the confines of those which are “*halal*” or lawful. This applies to all aspects of life. As the Prophet s.a.w mentioned in a hadith narrated by Anas Ibn Malik:

“It is obligatory on every Muslim to seek what is Halal.” (Narrated by Tabarani)

Similarly, the Prophet s.a.w also said:

“Allah has prescribed certain obligations for you, so do not neglect them; He has defined certain limits, so do not transgress them; He has prohibited certain things, so do not do them; and He has kept silent concerning other things out of mercy for you and not because of forgetfulness, so do not ask questions concerning them.”

(Reported by al-Darqutni and classified as hasan (good) by al-Nawawi.)

It follows that, in the event that a matter falls within a grey area as to whether it is permissible or forbidden, one should stay away from it in order to safeguard his religion and stay clear of doing something unlawful and prohibited. (Al-Qardhawi, 1994, 33) This principle is based on the saying of Allah's Messenger s.a.w:

“The *halal* is clear and the *haram* is clear. Between the two there are doubtful matters concerning which people do not know whether they are *halal* or *haram*. One who avoids them in order to safeguard his religion and his honor is safe, while if someone engages in a part of them he may be doing something *haram*, like one who grazes his animals near the *hima* (the grounds reserved for animals belonging to the King which are out of bounds for others' animals); it is thus quite likely that some of his animals will stray into it. Truly, every king has a *hima*, and the *hima* of Allah is what He has prohibited.”  
(Reported by al-Bukhari' Muslim, and others)

Here, it is worth noting that indeed, Allah has neither created anything in vain nor has He in any way acted arbitrarily in what He commands. He is wise in ruling things, actions or practices as *halal* or *haram*. In fact, Allah is the All-Knowing and Merciful for He has only forbidden whatever that is detrimental, harmful or impure and permitted that which is beneficial for human beings. (Al-Qardhawi, 1994, 24) This is evident in the case of pork, i.e. the flesh of swine. No particular explanation is given in the Quran for the prohibition of eating pork except that it is foul or impure (*Surah al-An'am* (6):145). It was discovered centuries later via scientific research that pork carries deadly parasites, bacteria and diseases in its flesh. Anyone who consumes pork thus would most likely be infected by them. (O. Djurković-Djakovića, B. Bobića, A. Nikolića, I. Kluna, J. Dupouy-Cametb, 2013) Hence, with the rapid advancement of technology today and the increase of knowledge, it came as no surprise that the wisdom behind the Islamic rulings on halal and haram become apparent to us.

### **The Status of Travelling in Islam**

The need to care for this relationship with Allah spills into all areas of Muslim life. The general ruling of travelling is *mandub* or recommended. This means that whoever performs it will be given extra rewards. This is due to the nature of the Qur'anic verses that involve travelling. In *Surah al-Mulk*, for instance, Allah says:

“It is He Who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse ye through its tracts and enjoy of the Sustenance which He furnishes: but unto Him is the Resurrection.”  
(*Surah al-Mulk* (67): 15)

Nevertheless, only one type of travel is declared as mandatory or *wajib* to be performed at least once in a lifetime on every Muslim. This would be the travel for purposes of doing the Pilgrimage or *Hajj*. The demand to perform such a religious act is derived from the undermentioned Quranic verses:

“Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah, those who can afford the journey; but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of His creatures.”  
(Surah Ali-Imran (3): 97)

“And perform properly the Hajj and 'Umrah (i.e. the pilgrimage to Makkah) for Allah.”  
(Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 196)

Even then, this order has been made compulsory only to Muslims are able to do so. Able here covers both physical and financial aspects of a Muslim's life. If for example, a person is sick, he is allowed to postpone his travel date to a more suitable time after he has recovered. If the Muslim does not have enough money to cover the expenses then he must endeavour to collect the required amount that would one day allow him to do his *Hajj*. This ruling or *hukm* is also applicable to the lesser *Hajj* which is better known as '*Umrah*'. While Imam Abu Haneefah and Imam Maalik claimed that it is a recommended act (i.e. *mandub* - if done will be given extra rewards but if not done there is no legal consequences), the majority of the Muslim jurists were of the view that it is obligatory once in a life time. (Wahbah Al Zuhaili 1985, 9)

Muslim travellers must ensure that their intention to travel is based on the need to discover the Greatness of Allah s.w.t. Allah says in the Qur'an,

“Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation; so will Allah produce a later creation: for Allah has power over all things”  
(Surah Al-Ankabut (29): 20).

Travelling for this purpose could include travelling for education, or observing the natural wonders that each country has to offer. (Ahmad, 2012) According to Ahmad, this verse shows the importance of travelling in order to increase one's knowledge of the powers of Allah s.w.t. (Ahmad, 2012) The knowledge obtained through travelling could help mankind learn about past civilizations and how even great civilizations could come to an end due to various reasons. (Ahmad, 2012) It also allows mankind to learn about the wonders of the world and the need to do research and learn about the workings of science and its interaction with the ecosystem. (Ahmad, 2012) This verse could also be taken as a reminder that when travelling, Muslims are expected to care for the way they carry themselves (*aurah*) as well as the way they interact with others on such a journey (*akhlaq*). This could be considered as an indirect method of *da'wah* which is the responsibility of every Muslim. There are Muslims who consider travelling for *da'wah* to include an active role played by the group by inviting non-Muslims to the call of Islam. This group is usually known as the *Tabligh* group.

Likewise, other reasons for travelling could include the study of history so as to increase the faith of Muslims. For example, *Surah Al-An'am* (6): 11 provides,

“Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth”

The same thing was stressed in *Surah Mohammed* (47):10 and *Surah Fatir* (35): 44:

“Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them?”

Travelling for purposes of learning from history is what has made countries such as Jordan, Turkey, Iran and Egypt popular among Muslim tourists. The intention of visiting ancient sites such as the pyramids of Giza and Petra in Jordan is to witness the power of Allah s.w.t. Where men are reminded not to be proud of their worldly achievements and development. Verily, it is Allah that is all powerful.

Therefore, what can be taken from the above verses is the encouragement for Muslims to travel is for religious, historical, social and cultural purposes. Aside from that Muslims could also travel in order to search for knowledge, to do *da'wah* (spreading the teaching of Islam), and to enjoy and appreciate God's creation. (Timothy & Iverson, 2006)

### **Areas of Concern for Muslims When Travelling**

Traditionally, Muslim travel would be to primarily fulfill the 5<sup>th</sup> pillar of Islam in order to perform *Hajj* in Makkah, Saudi Arabia. As explained above, this type of travel would be classified as “*wajib*” or mandatory for Muslims who are able to do so. However, not all types of travel would have the same status. This brings the discussion to the areas that would be of concern to Muslims when travelling, regardless of the reasons.

Matters that would be of concern to Muslims when travelling would be determined by the hierarchy of the 5 essential values to human life, which includes the protection and preservation of religion, life, intellect, dignity/progeny and property. (Nyazee, 2003). This could relate to the following matters:

- a. The major concern for Muslim travellers touches upon the first essential need for Muslims. The need to fulfil their 5 daily prayers – this is a very crucial element when they are travelling because it also relates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar of Islam. It is the top priority in the Muslim's travel list because Muslims are ordained to pray, even when they are sick. Nevertheless, concessions are given to travellers and sick people. This comes in the form of the combining between two prayer times. It was reported by Ibn 'Abbas that:

“Allah's Messenger s.a.w used to offer the Zuhr and 'Asr (prayers) together on journeys, and also used to offer the Maghrib and 'Isha' together.”  
(Reported by Bukhari & Muslim)

This would then allow the noon (*zuhr*) and afternoon (*'asr*) prayers to be combined as well as the dusk (*maghrib*) with the night (*'isya'*) prayers. Aside from that, prayers that have 4 *rakaat* could be shorten to 2 *rakaat*. This concession is allowed based on the following Quranic verse:



“When ye travel through the earth, there is no blame on you if ye shorten your prayers...”  
(*Surah An-Nisa'* (4):101)

This would mean that when travelling, Muslims are only required to pray 3 times daily instead of the normal 5 times. Not only that, the *rakaat* in the prayers are also shortened.

This knowledge will be useful to tour operators when they are planning the itinerary for their Muslim clients. This is especially so if they are claiming that they are offering a “Muslim package tour” especially in a country where non-Muslims are a majority. The tour must include the time and place for the Muslim tourists to pray when they are following the package. For Muslim tourists who are travelling without a tour package, the availability of designated rooms that are clean and has signage which points to the kiblah (the Ka’abah in Makkah, Saudi Arabia) would be sufficient. Other than that information on the location of available mosques within the city would be a great help for Muslim travellers. This is because the mosque does not only offer a place to pray but usually has halal eateries nearby.

- b. Next, in protecting and preserving life, the main concern for Muslim tourists would of course be how to find halal food and beverages. As seen above, Muslims must consume only “*halal*” food and beverages. This may seem daunting to those who do not understand the concept of “*halal*” food. The food that are forbidden to Muslims are blood, carrion, pork and any meat that has been slaughtered other than by the prescribed manner. They will usually abstain totally from eating carrion or pork. Actually, the challenge for the Muslim traveller is to find “*halal*” meat and poultry because these have to be slaughtered by a Muslim who says the name of Allah while doing the act of slaughtering. It could perhaps be easier for Muslims to do so in Muslim countries. However, it might be more challenging when Muslims travel to countries where the majority are non-Muslims. This is where the stakeholders in the tourism industry could play a role in outsourcing for halal meat and poultry for Muslim tourists and making the readily available in the market by labeling such products with a certified halal logo.

Should there be no meat, Muslims are free to consume vegetarian food or fresh fish, seafood, eggs as well as all types of fruits and vegetables. Muslims will usually read the labels on packed or canned food. It would therefore be of significant assistance if a certified halal logo is available on the labels.

As for beverages, Muslims may drink all types of drinks except those with alcohol content, even if the content is a very small percentage. This prohibition relates directly with the protection of the intellect and is deduced from Surah al-Maidah (5): 90-91 which state:

“O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), gambling, (sacrificing on) stone alters (to other than Allah), and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful. Satan only wants to cause between you

animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So will you not desist?"

- c. The fulfilment of the 3 remaining *Kulliyah al-Khamsah* leads to the determination of activities for Muslims. This will depend on the reason for their travel. Nevertheless, the underlying intention for the travel must be for the sake of Glorifying Allah or finding ways to be closer to Him. Therefore, travelling which involves any matters, which, have been prohibited in Islam, is not permitted. For example, if the intention for the travel is to commit a crime would make the *hukm* of the travelling to become "*haram*".

### Conclusion

The distinction between *halal* and *haram* is the underlying principle in determining whether a product is suitable for Muslim consumption. Aside from that, the concept also expands to other areas of Muslim life which includes travelling. In such a situation, the Muslim traveller has to consider issues which affect the choices to be made while in the state of travelling. This includes considerations on the types of accommodation, the availability of *halal* food, the choice of tour packages and tourism product selection. Therefore it is useful for countries interested in investing in Muslim friendly hospitality services as well as the tourist providers to increase their understanding of the concept of "*halal*" which affects not only food choices but all of the above mentioned items. Once equipped with this knowledge, this will facilitate the implementation of genuine Muslim friendly hospitality services. This will help increase trust amongst Muslim travellers leading to a positive growth of the tourism industry in that country.

### Endnotes

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- ii The six pillars of *iman* or faith is the belief in Allah, the belief in the existence of the Hereafter, the belief in the messengers, the belief in *malaikah* (angels), the belief in the four books sent by Allah to mankind and the belief in the *qada'* and *qadar* (destiny which is the prerogative of Allah).
- iii This is also known as *ibadah al-khususiah* which means acts of worship which has been ordained by Allah and must be done according to specific instructions as contained in the Holy Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet s.a.w.

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