

Understanding Muslim Woman Travel Behaviour: A Theoretical Perspective

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Abstract: There is dearth in research about woman and tourism from an Islamic perspective. Previous research explored Islam and tourism and shed light on different types of tourism such as Islamic and Halal tourism (Kamali 2012; Akyol and Kilinc 2014; Aziz et al., 2016; Harahsheh et al., 2019). Meanwhile, debate about the position of Islam regarding tourism is popular (Jaafari and Scott 2014). Some scholars stated that Islam and tourism are contradictory, and tourism was described as a religious spiritual process only that aims at visiting the holy places in Makkah and Madinah and Al Aqsa Mosque. However, other scholars clarified that Islam is expansive in its meanings and interpretations. Accordingly, these scholars provided a different proof that tourism and Islam are not opposing, on the contrary Islam promoted tourism and travel (Saghayy and Abdar Esfahani 2016). They proofed their position by the saying of God: “*Travel through the land and observe how He began creation. Then Allah will produce the final creation. Indeed Allah, over all things, is competent*” (Holy Qora: Surat Al Ankabut 20). Nevertheless, research regarding Muslim women and tourism in Islam or how these women are perceived and viewed by Islam is almost scarce. Thus, the aim of this research is to clarify how woman and tourism are perceived from an Islamic point of view. The study adopted a conceptual research design to build better understanding of a Muslim woman travel behaviour. The paper answers the question why a Muslim woman cannot perform tourism independently? There is huge chunk of data and debate from different point of views. Accordingly, this paper explores how sociocultural and religious factors may or may not influence Muslim women and decision to travel. Thus, the focus is on religion and particularly Islam and its influence on shaping Muslim woman’s ability to travel and visiting tourism destinations. In addition, the paper will contribute potential Halal destinations in organising Halal package tours for Muslim women. Other issues in Islam is woman’s work in general and particularly in the tourism sector and how Islam deal with this issue.

Keywords: Religion; Islam; tourism; women travel and employment; Halal tourism

JEL Classification: Z32

Introduction

Islam does not give females the permission to travel alone; it stresses that women should be accompanied by a male partner or *Mahram* (a husband or a man who is

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forbidden to marry her, e.g. father, brother, grandfather, uncle, father in-law, son, grandson, nephew, foster brother (Pohl, 2010; Shakona et al., 2014). Such prohibition is clear in the following *Hadith*¹. “*The Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ‘No woman should travel except with a mahram, and no man should enter upon her unless a mahram of hers is present’*”. Reasons behind this ban will be illustrated comprehensively in this paper and how Islam may influence Muslim woman ability to visit tourism destinations.

Previous research regarding Islam and tourism has been reviewed and expanded on, to clarify and correct the view of tourism from an Islamic perspective (Jafari and Scott, 2014). Meanwhile, the position of Muslim woman and tourism is not a popular research topic, thus the aim of this paper is to illuminate how Islam shaped and influenced the Muslim women ability to travel and perform tourism.

Muslim’s life is based on Islamic law, i.e. Sharia, which highlighted and explained every detail and aspect of Muslims’ life from birth to death and in simple words from A to Z. Accordingly, Islam elucidated its sight about the topic of tourism. However, the debate between scholars was pro and contra. As stated previously, some moderate Muslim scholars had the proof that Islam did not forbid tourism, additionally it did not limit travel to religious purposes only (Saghayy and Abdar Esfahani, 2016). Whereas, other scholars present a more extremist point, which views that tourism should be devoted for spiritual and religious purposes no more no less. In addition, these scholars added that any type of tourism is completely refused and unaccepted in Islam.

Islam did not really limit the role of women, on the contrary woman in the beginning of Islam played a significant social, economic and political role. For example, Khadijah the wife of prophet Mohamed was business efficacious woman, while Aisha was perceived as a specialist in relating Hadith. In politics women in Islam were also engaged in politics and the proof is that a group from Al- Madinah of sixty-two men and two women was sent to Bani Khazraj to ask their political commitment and fidelity. Such action illustrates how woman’s role was significant and essential in Islam. The question that is still need an elaboration, it is what about woman and tourism in Islam? What is the position of Islam towards Muslim women’s right to travel and move freely?

¹ Hadith is a narrative record of the sayings or customs of Prophet Muhammad (Armstrong 2000).

Literature Review

Islam and Tourism

Understanding Islam and tourism relationship and their mutual influence is mainly based on understanding the holy Quran and its meaningful interpretation. So, the start will be by exploring two main concepts Islam and tourism.

Islam is a monotheistic peaceful religion (Gillum 2010). Islam in Arabic ‘*Al Islam*’ is described as submitting and surrendering to God almighty. However, it is important to differentiate between Islam and Salam in Arabic. “*Islam*” mean surrender and “*Salaam*” means peace and the two words are totally different. The cornerstone of Islam is the Holy Quran, which include the recitation of God’s words through Gabriel to Prophet Mohammad (PUH). Prophet Mohammad is considered as one of the most significant individuals in history (Hart 1989). Prophet Mohammad played a political, social and religious-spiritual role in the history of Islam, that influenced Muslims lifestyle up to date. Based on Quran, Muslim built their life’s rules, social relations, political life, financial principles, and permitted and rejected issues on the teachings of Islam (Quran), which is known also as the Islamic Sharia (Adil 2002).

Muslims form nowadays 2.18 billion of the world population and according to the Guardian (2017), the Muslim population will exceed other religions since third of new-born babies between 2010-2015 were Muslims. Such figure rings an alarm to all sectors to look for potential services that will serve this large segment, because Muslims have special requirements and needs that should adhere to Islamic Sharia.

Simply tourism is defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 1991) as “*the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes*” (Tourism Satellite 2001). However, this is a general definition and is not specific forms of tourism since there are different types such as inbound, outbound and domestic tourism. Meanwhile, there are many purposes to perform tourism and these can be summarised as, leisure, visiting friends and relatives, adventure, religious, medical, cultural, event, meetings and conferences, eco and nature, sport, social, shopping, space, mediation, beach, special needs, religious and finally Halal tourism, which is an emerging form of tourism (Marvell, 2006; Harahsheh et al., 2019).

Tourism in Islam is not a new concept, regardless that the definition of tourism was different, but simply tourism is moving from one place to another. However, the main motivations behind tourism in the early era of Islam were trade and religious motives. The two holy cities Mecca and Al Madinah were located on the main trade routes and the journey of Summer and winter were acknowledged and recited in the holy Quran, God said: ‘For the covenants (of security and safeguard enjoyed) by the

Quraish, their covenants (covering) journeys by winter and summer, let them adore the Lord of this House, who provides them with food against hunger, and with security against fear (of danger)' (Surat Quraish).

According to Muslim scholars, there are two main views of tourism; extreme and moderate. The first is extreme and illustrates that tourism is forbidden due to different reasons related to culture, ethics and environment (Sanad et al. 2010). Those believe that tourism is meant to perform the rituals of Hajj and Umrah (Islamic Help. 2017) in Saudi Arabic and is attached to religious and spiritual practices only (Sanad 2008; al-Qurashi, 2017). Nevertheless, eventually in the current time this could be described as religious tourism, which was defined by Vukonic (1996) as different types of spiritual sites such as shrines and pilgrimage locations that are visited by tourists for religious or non-religious reasons. In fact, Muslim who performed or still performing Hajj or Umrah, were mainly motivated by religious motives but as well as they traded and had the intention to purchase different types of products. al-Qurashi (2017) described it as commodification of Hajj. This explanation go hand in hand with hybrid tourism which at conducting two types of tourism in the same time (Religious and business tourism (trade)).

The other view is moderate and considers that tourism is accepted in Islam (Sanad et al. 2010). They perceived that God created people to adore him and enjoy life while fulfilling their responsibilities. God said: 'Go about on the earth and see how God originated creation' (Surat al-Ankabout: 20). This is a direct invitation from God, He asks people to move and meditate and admire the creation and this involve nature, and everything created by God. Moreover, God said; 'It is He who made the earth tame for you - so walk among its slopes and eat of His provision - and to Him is the resurrection.'

To conclude, Islam did not forbid tourism, on the contrary it promoted it for different reasons and motivations such as performing Hajj and Umrah, commerce, gain knowledge and admire what God created. Any Muslim a male or a female can perform any type of tourism mentioned in Table 1, in condition that their motivation, aim and behaviour do not contradict with Islamic Sharia and at the end of the day this falls under the concept of Halal tourism. Harahsheh et al. (2019) conducted a research on the implication of marketing Jordan as a Halal tourism destination and examined the motives of Muslim tourists to travel to Halal destinations. They listed that 24 factors that influence Muslim tourists to choose a Halal destination.

Halal tourism is a contemporary concept in tourism that is directed towards Muslim tourists who want to comply with Islamic Sharia and seeking services accordingly (Harahsheh et al., 2019). Battour and Ismail, 2015, p.2) defined Halal tourism as 'any tourism object or action which is permissible according to Islamic teachings to use or engage by Muslims in tourism Industry' (Battour and Ismail 2015, p. 2). Table 1 below summarises what Muslim scholars' view about tourism typology opposed

to the contemporary conceptualisation. *These can be summarised in Table 1 below as follows according to the new definitions employed in tourism research:*

Table 1. Islamic Conceptualisation vs Contemporary Conceptualisation of Tourism (Developed By The Author)

Islamic conceptualisation	Contemporary conceptualisation
<i>Hajj and Umrah (worship)</i>	<i>Religious tourism</i>
<i>Science and knowledge</i>	<i>Educational tourism</i>
<i>Admiring God's creation</i>	<i>Leisure tourism</i>
<i>Commerce</i>	<i>Business tourism</i>
<i>Calling for God's way</i>	<i>Missionary tourism</i>
<i>Mindfulness and meditation</i>	<i>Spiritual tourism</i>

Source: Developed by the author.

Woman and Islam

Misinterpretation of Islam and its perception and position towards woman is largely debated (Shadid and Van Koningsveld 2002; Khimish 2014). However, before moving on, it is noteworthy highlighting the following statement from the holy Quran: God said *"The believers, men and women, are protecting friends (Awliya) of one another; they join the ma'ruf (that which Allah commands) and forbid people from munkar (that which Allah prohibits); they perform salat, and give the zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah will have mercy on them. Surely Allah is All mighty, All wise"* [TMQ At Taubah: 71]. This verse provides a clear identification of Muslim males and females rights in Islam. It is interesting highlighting that they do not have equal rights, but their rights are equalled. For example, on some occasions Islam privileged males when God said: *"Men oversee women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other...."* [Surat al-Nissa (4:34)]. And on other occasions females were privileged in the Hadith: *"Paradise lies under the feet of your mother"*. Ultimately, this means that males and females in Islam complement each other's (Islamic FAQ 2017).

The following section provides a brief discussion about the influence of Islam on Muslim women's life. Muslim women were given the right to study, to work, to choose their future spouse and finally ability to move freely and perform tourism. It is hard to separate any Muslim's life from the Islamic Sharia since it draws the borders for his/her life from different perspectives such as faith, work, marriage, inheritance and freedom of movement. Islam treated Muslims regardless of gender similarly in terms of many rights and duties; Prophet Mohammad (peace upon him (PUH)) said: *"Women are the twin halves of men"*.

Some scholars stated that Muslim women do not have the right to education and their place is in their houses as responsible of children and bearer of household responsibility (McDonnell 2017). Those scholars either misinterpreted Islam or fall

into the trap of norms and traditions that damaged the real image of Islam. To clarify, Islam urged education, called for it and considered it as a duty. It was narrated that Prophet Mohammad (PUH) said: *“Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim”* (Sahih Al Jami Al Albani 3914). This is a clear message and was not limited only to males, so it is also compulsory for women to be educated. Likewise, Muslim women were not deprived of the right to be active economically or to earn income. Islamic teachings were very clear regarding the work of woman, God said: *“Say, work, God will see your work and His Messenger and believers”* (Surat Al Tawba 105). God did not ask only men to work, on the contrary God addressed all Muslims regardless of their gender. Another proof is that Prophet Mohammad’s (PUH) wife was a businesswoman and Rifaida Al-Aslamia was the first female nurse who treated injured soldiers and accompanied them during battles, established the first nursing school and the first code of ethics (Jan 1996; Rassool 2014). Given the above facts about women right to study and work, Islam put forward some obligatory conditions and teachings that women should obey and adhere to. Women are expected to wear the head cover and the Islamic modest cloth style that does not show any features of her body. In addition, women mingling with males is restricted and no woman is expected to be alone with a non-family¹ male member. Prophet Mohammad (PUH) said: *“No man is privately alone with a woman; but their third is Satan”* [Reported by At-Tirmidhi and authenticated by Al-Albani].

In fact, inheritance is a major issue for Muslim women, since some Muslim male family members deprive females from this right regardless the fact that it is compulsory in Islam. Their perception is built on the fact that the woman is married, and she should not get the money of the family and enjoy it with a stranger, and these were pre-Islamic thoughts that are still dominant in many Muslim societies. God said: *“For men there is share in what their parents and relatives have left behind, and for women there is share in what their parents and relatives have left behind, be the bequest little or be it much, it is a share estimated, determined”* (Surat al-Nisaa 7).

Like many other rights, Islam gave the Muslim woman the right to choose her future husband. No woman should be compelled someone that she does not want to. This was obvious when Prophet Mohammad (PUH) said: *“A non-virgin woman may not be married without her command, and a virgin may not be married without her permission; and it is permission enough for her to remain silent (because of her natural shyness)”* (Al-Bukhari, Muslim & Others:6455).

Thus, Muslim women choices are wide and broad, however, it is the mixture between norms and traditions with Islamic teachings that created a negative image of Muslim

¹ Muslim women can be with a Mahram, which is an Arabic word that means a male family member that she cannot get married to. These are described as father, father in law, brother, spouse, son, stepfather, half son, uncle and nephew and foster brother.

woman's life. From the above examples, it can be said that the position of woman in Islam is not as negative as seen by many scholars (Armstrong 2002). However, the misinterpretation of Islam's teaching by some scholars' lead to a blurred image of Muslim woman and provided an unclear and fake understanding of Muslim women around the world. In addition, the power of patriarchal communities over women minimised their rights and underestimated their real role in life.

Woman and Tourism in Islam

Islam perceives that individuals have the right to move freely from one place to another without restrictions, but when it comes to Muslim women teachings and Sharia instructions differ. Accordingly, what applies on Muslim males applies on Muslim females with some condition. In fact, according to the discussion in the previous section about Islam and tourism, it was obvious that Muslims can perform different types of tourism that does not contradict with the Islamic Sharia. These were identified as religious tourism, business tourism, educational tourism, leisure tourism and Halal tourism.

Woman in Islam as explained previously have many rights, but in the same time they have many duties and should adhere to Islamic Sharia instructions. The Islamic Sharia is based on Halal (permissible) and Haram(prohibited). So Muslim woman's life is attached to these two-concepts Halal and Haram. Accordingly, the Hanbalii and Hanafii¹ scholars agreed that women do not have the right to travel or move alone even if for religious purposes. On the other hand, the Shafii and Maliki scholars believe that movement of Muslim woman, is not totally restricted (Al Sharif 2003). In some cases, it is permissible for a woman to travel without a mahram, on condition that she is safe in her travel, staying and returning, and she is sure she will not be harassed in her person or religion.

Thus, what is expected from Muslim women when they travel either with or without a mahram to perform any type of tourism is linked to woman's cloth, appearance and behaviour. Muslim women should adhere to Islamic Sharia's when they travel and to Halal procedures that stems from the Sharia and provide a protection to Muslim woman from any external harassment.

Muslim women should wear the head cover known as 'Hijab' and modest cloth. Kulenovi (2006) clarified that the head cover is a symbol and a message to show the Muslim identity. Boulanouar (2006) sated that Muslim woman modesty implies covering all her body expect her face and hands. Women should wear long and loose dress that covers the whole body from neck to ankle. Additionally, Islam forbids any type of prettification, such as wearing perfumes or using accessories. It is considered

¹ There are four Sunni Islamic schools of *Fiqh* (thoughts) (*Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali*)

as '*Haram*' to do any of these actions in public. Modesty covers other aspect such as the way of speaking and communicating with others (Al-Qaradawi, 1992).

It is noteworthy that socio-cultural values such as norms, traditions and the power of male authority play also a significant role in shaping Muslim woman's life. Shadid and van Koningsveld (2002) argue that is not only Islam women are restricted by authority given to males over them and to the load of local society norms and traditions. Thus, women are fighting more the burden of socio-cultural factors rather than Islamic teachings. Wilson and Little (2005) found that not only Muslim women face problems travelling alone but also European women travelling alone to Muslim countries were not really welcomes. This reflects how the social and cultural structure influence not only Muslim female residents but as well as female non-Muslim tourists. Accordingly, Islamic feminist theory could be a real indicator that there is a clear blend between Islamic teachings and tribal thoughts, or at least tribal thought influenced sharply the explanation of the Qur'anic texts.

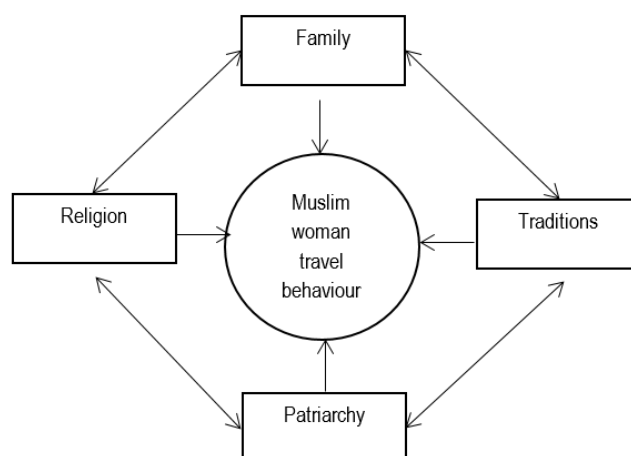


Figure 2. Factors Influencing a Muslim Woman Travel Behaviour

The above figure shows the power of each factor on Muslim women ability to travel and perform tourism is not really restricted by Islamic teaching, since Muslim women who adhere to Sharia instructions, the cloth style, modest behaviour and the accompany of a mahram may perform some types of tourism such as religious, shopping, education and Halal tourism. However, there is a need to conduct an empirical research since there is a need for a new and a broader understanding the real factors behind Muslim woman's ability to travel and perform tourism alone, are these socio-cultural factors or Islamic teachings or both together.

Islamic Feminist Theory

Feminist theories were put forward in the 1970s and are mainly based-on inequality between genders. These theories perceive that women are underestimated by the power and the authority societies gave to men (Mirkin, 1984). Islamic feminism aims at regaining the quality between genders by re-reading the Holy Quran to put things in the right place and separate the interpretation of Quran from tribal and cultural explanations and understanding. Islamic feminism believes that males and females are equal, but the explanation was largely influenced by males since the Quran revelation was in a tribal male society. However, Badran (2002) clarifies that Islam is clear in its teachings and instructions and the problem is to separate the interpretation from the patriarchal thoughts. Thus, any explanation should be based on: The Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah (Armstrong, 2000, p. 378) and ijtihad (Armstrong, 2000, p. 374) to spread real equality in the Muslim world. Islamic feminist theory underpins this paper and clarifies how inequality due to socio-cultural factors influenced and shaped women potentials to perform tourism.

Methodology

The study adopted a conceptual research design to build better understanding of women and tourism in Islam. It is a theoretical significant paper because it focused on understanding different concepts and clarifying any misunderstanding related to the influence of Islam on woman's ability to perform tourism. It elucidated how woman and tourism are perceived from an Islamic point of view?

An extensive review of the literature was conducted to cover all dimensions related to the topic such as extremist thoughts and moderate thoughts of different Islamic schools to highlight the real power of Islam on woman's ability to perform tourism. The author believed and supported her thoughts that Islam did not really prohibits tourism, on the contrary Islam promoted it but withy consideration to specific conditions.

The research adopted Islamic feminist theory to highlight that the interpretation of Islam was really conducted by males and influenced by patriarchal thoughts rather than logical, equal interpretation based on the Quran, Sunna and Ijtihad. Applying Islamic theory is a significant contribution to the literature regarding woman, Islam and tourism. As a result, there is not enough research studies available on Islamic feminism, tourism and Islam. This study is significant, for its desired outcomes that may spread awareness about women rights in Islam not only in Muslim countries but as well as in westernized countries.

Conclusion

To conclude Islam plays an important role in shaping and regulating Muslim woman's life. Muslim countries were excluded from this review since culture differs between countries because culture is shaped by different factors and the surrounding environment. Tourism is simply moving from one place to another. However, women performance of tourism is influenced by many religious and socio-cultural factors.

Literature proved that there is a huge gap between theory and practice, between what is really written and what is explained by scholars and authors. The Holy Quran and its teachings are genuine, and Islam is innocent from many interpretations and charges. For example, Islam did not prohibit woman from travelling or performing tourism, it is mainly the misinterpretation of Sharia and the cultural values that hindered women from many rights in addition to performing tourism.

The foremost concern of this paper is to reveal the vagueness of, and extent to which socio-cultural values influenced Muslim women and their choices when it comes to tourism and how Islam was perceived negatively when it is not. Islamic feminist theory was reviewed and used to explain the ambiguity attached to Islam and how Islamic teachings interpretations should be explained based on Quran, Sunnah and Ijtihad only. Halal tourism is of potential to be marketed and prompted amongst Muslim tourists who want to comply with Islamic Sharia.

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