



Journal of Tourismology

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Prospects and Potentials of Halal Tourism Development in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Bangladesh, a host of natural beauties is emphasizing to develop sustainable tourism strategies for its economic development. As the fourth largest Muslim populated country and becoming the host of second largest annual Muslim gathering “Biswa Ijtema”, this country holds a bright prospect for a halal tourism destination. Halal tourism promotes the needs of Muslim tourists through facilities, infrastructure, and tourism products and services. The present study is an attempt to investigate the prospect of developing halal tourism in Bangladesh. A brief discussion on halal tourism attractions has been elaborated and their opportunity scope is critically discussed. The result shows that the tourism industry is expanding in recent years and its contribution to the total economy is growing. The government of Bangladesh should take a strategic plan for using this high opportunity to boost up the contribution of halal tourism to its growing economy. A public-private partnership in a stable political condition and sustainable communal harmony is essential for further development of halal tourism in Bangladesh.

Keywords

Bangladesh • Halal tourism • Halal attractions • Strategic plan

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To cite this article: Bhuiyan, A. H. & Darda, A. (2018). Prospects and potentials of halal tourism development in Bangladesh. *Journal of Tourismology*, 4(2), 93–106. <https://doi.org/10.26650/jot.2018.4.2.0007>

Introduction

Halal tourism is a fast growing tourism segment in the world today. Many Muslim countries, even some non-Muslim countries like Australia, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and New Zealand are also specifically catering this tourism segment due to dynamic and emerging market of halal tourism products and services (Law, 2013). Giving emphasize on the multidisciplinary approaches, some scholars (Din, 1989; Bywater, 1994; Russell, 1999; Jubayr, 2002; Henderson, 2003) have explained this tourism segment as 'Islamic tourism'. Both the 'Islamic tourism' and 'halal tourism' concepts are giving priority on the practicing of Shariah compliance in all aspects of tourism activities. Halal tourism is offering facilities to cater for Muslim religious considerations and address Muslim needs. This tourism includes the Shariah based components in accommodations, transportation, food premises, finance, tour packages and other activities (Chandra, 2014).

Halal tourism is one of the new tourism segments to capture Muslim tourists in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. This tourism segment caters to fulfill the needs of Muslim tourists through facilities, infrastructure, and tourism products and services. The development of halal tourism is possible both in Muslim and non-Muslim countries with proper utilization of opportunities and potentials (Samori et al., 2016). Carbomi and Janati (2016) addressed halal tourism as the visit to a place with Islamic instructions. The tour operators are selling their products with halal components in this tourism. El-Gohary (2016) mentioned halal tourism rooted within the Shari'ah based. The travelers should follow Islamic Shariah while they travel for any purposes such as education, medical treatment, sightseeing and recreation. Mohsin et al. (2016) emphasized increasing awareness regarding halal tourism market and identified the basic needs of tourists from this tourism segment. Yousaf and Xiucheng (2018) identified the potentials of halal culinary tourism in the non-Muslim countries through on-line promotional activities. Their study addressed that non-Muslim countries in Asia like China, Japan, South Korea and Thailand attempted to utilize their potentials to highlight as halal tourism destinations for Muslim tourists. In this case the non-Muslim countries are promoting halal food culture, halal cuisines, halal restaurants and halal services for the Muslim tourists. The study emphasized an essential framework for halal culinary and services development with accompanies the stakeholders.

Studies reveal that the global market size of halal food products is approximately USD 547 billion a year while for non-food products such as hotel and catering services, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals are estimated to be worth approximately USD 2.1 trillion annually. The outbound tourism expenditure by Muslims around the globe has reached USD 151 billion (excluding Hajj and Umrah) in 2014. This vast amount represents 11.6% of the global expenditure and implies a potential universe of 'Halal' lifestyle sensitive tourism market needs (Dinar Standard, 2016). Dinar

Standard study also reveals that among the Muslim traveler journey in OIC member countries, 62% of tourists are travel for the purpose of leisure activities and 32% travel for religious purposes. Within leisure activities, 86% of tourists are travelling for sight-seeing. Most of the tourists got information from travel websites for the destination (72%) and accommodation (55%). The Muslim travel market is expected to reach USD 200 billion by 2020 and account for 13% of global tourism which will create 1.8 million jobs (Chandra, 2014). According to Crescent Rating (2015) prediction, Muslim tourist arrivals and expenditure will reach 180 million and USD 212 billion respectively in 2020. Among the tourist arrivals, OIC countries will get 98 million in 2020.

Several activities and services of halal tourism are becoming famous and popular in the tourism industry due to tourists demand and satisfaction. Some Muslim countries highlight their tourism destinations as ‘Muslim friendly destinations’ to attract Muslim tourists (Battour and Ismail, 2015). These countries are offering Shariah compliant’ hotels to the tourists with Qibla direction, halal food and beverages (Carboni et al., 2014). The food suppliers are using halal chicken and halal meat for Muslim tourists to fulfill their needs. Muslim friendly applications such as accommodations, products, services, packages and restaurants are providing in a smart phone to help the tourists (Stephenson, 2014). Muslim friendly airports and halal holidays (Battour and Ismail, 2015) are the best practices to satisfy Muslim tourists. Separate recreation facilities for women such as swimming pools, beach activities, bathing suits, prayer rooms, spa with halal cosmetics are attracting the Muslim women tourists. Malaysia and Turkey have launched another halal tourism activity namely Muslims friendly cruise is to attract the tourists (Salama, 2016).

Bangladesh is the fourth largest Muslim populated country in the world (World Atlas, 2018). About 89% of the total population of this country is Muslim. Dhaka, the capital of this country is known as the ‘city of the mosque’. There are mentionable numbers of mosques, monuments, Islamic archeological sites and shrines scattered across the whole country. About 5 million Muslims from around the globe gathered each year in this country during the ‘Ijtema’ period. Therefore, halal tourism is the potential segments for Bangladesh to attract tourists from Muslim countries and as well as non-Muslim countries (Bhuiyan, 2016).

Bangladesh has a host of natural treasures such as beaches, lakes, rivers, hills, forests, wildlife, tribal life, archaeological remains, historical monuments, religious and cultural heritages, handicrafts that offer great value for tourist attractions. Tourism at Sundarbans, hill forests (Sylhet, Chittagong, CHTs and Cox’s Bazar), wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, game reserves, safari parks, eco-parks, water bodies (different haors, baors, lakes and rivers), islands (e.g. Saint Martin’s, Kutubdia, Sonadia, Nijum Deep etc.) are

the potential tourism destinations in Bangladesh. These facts and features can make Bangladesh a popular tourists' destination in the world (Bhuiyan, 2015). The country can become a lucrative tourism destination to the Muslim tourists of the world.

The tourism industry in Bangladesh is promising but still in a glooming condition. With proper nurturing and sustainable strategic plan for this industry can create a large contribution to the country's economy and ensure a sustainable development. The socio-economic, cultural and ethnic activities of Bangladeshi peoples are much influenced by the practice of Muslim culture (Roy and Mallika, 2015). This land is the host of the second largest Muslim gathering each year. Peoples from Almost all countries of the world visit Bangladesh to join "Biswa Ijtema" that usually held during January each year (World Bulletin, 2015). Prominent Muslim leaders in the contemporary world participate in the gathering and give their valuable speeches'. Three days intensive discussion carries on regarding the activities already done in the interim periods and consider a list of task for the upcoming year. The ceremony ends with "Akheri Munajah" where millions of Muslims together beg and pray to Allah, The Almighty for His blessings through peace and prosperity of the Muslim nation, peoples and humanity. "Biswa Ijtema" brings millions of Muslims under a shed for enhancing their spiritual and moral relationships.

From the view of tourism perspectives, this could be a great opportunity for halal tourism development in this country that urges a long term sustainable strategic plan and development. Unfortunately, as far as the knowledge goes there is not a single literature available that studied and discussed the huge prospects and potentials of halal tourism development in Bangladesh. The purpose of this study is to explore the Halal tourism opportunities in Bangladesh, critically discuss the strategic policy for the development of Halal tourism and its future prospect. Some recommendations for a sustainable Halal tourism development aspect is also given at the end.

Halal Tourism and Islamic Tourism

Several researchers (Din, 1989; Bywater, 1994; Russell, 1999; Sahib, 2001; Jubayr, 2002; Henderson, 2003; Bhuiyan et al., 2011) have attained to explain Islamic tourism and Halal tourism from their scholarly research findings and understandings. Din (1989) highlights the influences of religion policies for tourist movements in Islamic countries. Henderson (2003) revealed that some Islamic countries are seeking more acceptable for tourists in their destinations through meet their demands. Religious buildings, rituals, festivals and religious events are important tourist attractions for the followers of the particular belief represented. Scholars (Bywater, 1994; Russell, 1999) have been describing Islamic tourism as religious tourism. This tourism fulfills two needs- performed religious duty through tourism activities and recorded and quoted wider dissemination of knowledge. Jubayr (2002) mentioned that Islam has encouraged tourism for the faithful

in the practice of life's affairs and obtained experiences and maturity. According to Bhuiyan et al. (2011), the tourists are visiting a place for the satisfaction of Allah and their recreation in light of Islam. In this way tourism is meaningful with the fundamental theme of Islam. COMCEC (2016) describes halal tourism as Muslim friendly tourism. Because, Muslims do not compromise with their basic faith during travel. It is also claimed that Islamic Tourism, Halal Tourism and Shariah compliant tourism and services have same meanings considering their values and principles.

The aims of Islamic tourism are to achieve social, physical and spiritual satisfaction along with Allah's blessings. Sahib (2001) revealed that tourism has main three blocks in terms of Islamic perspectives. Firstly, the spread of Islamic values and the revival of Islamic culture; secondly, economic benefits for the communities; thirdly, strengthening of Islamic identity and beliefs in comparison to other cultures and lifestyles. Jafari and Scott (2014) emphasized Shariah requirements to meet tourist needs in Islamic tourism. Carboni et al. (2014) mentioned that Islamic tourism involves with the Muslim faith, Islamic principles and habits in their travelling. Zamani-Farahani and Henderson (2010) considered that Islamic tourism and halal tourism are same in concept and principles. Battour and Ismail (2015) explained halal tourism as tourism object which involves Muslims in tourism activities according to the teaching of Islam. Sriprasert et al. (2014) addressed that halal tourism combined religious motivations, Islamic life-styles in tourism practices to dominate in modern tourism activities. Cetin and Dincer (2016) addressed Muslim friendly tourism (MFT) consists of three types of tourism namely Islamic tourism, Shariah compliant' tourism and halal tourism. In fact, Halal tourism and Islamic tourism have a synonymous meaning, they are not complementary or contradictory.

Tourists' Arrival and Halal Tourism in Bangladesh

Travelers come to visit Bangladesh for multiple purposes. This includes diplomats, consultants, doctors, researchers, teachers, students and various professional categories. Some visitors come to Bangladesh for celebrating their holidays in close to nature, sea and hilly places. Some also like to visit remote areas to observe closely the lifestyle of tribal/remote area peoples. There are some other visitors who visit only for religious purposes. This category includes a huge number of Muslims for Biswa Ijtema, some Budhists for the annual gathering at Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), some traditional Hindues during Durga Puja, etc. But the number of Muslim tourists is larger in the group. Even as a member of OIC state, this country also visited by the tourists from OIC member states frequently (BBS, 2015). Other religious travelers are not that much mentionable in number.

Since the country specific or religion specific tourist arrivals data not yet available for Bangladesh, in this study, data has been extracted from the Bangladesh Bureau of

Statistics (BBS) to visualize the arrivals from the OIC states. Obviously, the extracted figures do not relate to all the foreign Muslims travelled Bangladesh from other regions of the world. Therefore, Muslim tourists other than OIC states who came to visit during ‘Biswa Ijtema’ cannot perfectly be identified.

Table 1 represents the distribution of annual foreign tourists’ arrival in Bangladesh from 2006 to 2014. Results indicate that Muslim visitors from the OIC states are not negligible in proportion. Almost 13% of total arrivals are observed from OIC states during the period. Maximum arrivals from OIC states (33%) observed during 2013 when there was a stable political environment. A smaller proportion of arrivals from OIC states observed from 2008 to 2010 (4%, 7% and 7% respectively) when the non-democratic caretaker government was in power. A mentionable foreign arrival observed form other than OIC states during this period. But the proportion of Muslim tourists may not be neglected. If a complete data available, it would not be surprising to see a larger proportion of Muslims among them. Therefore, it can be concluded that Bangladesh is getting traveled by Muslim tourists in a greater proportion with an upward trend that is significant in developing Halal tourism and its prospects.

Table 1
Total Tourists and Arrival from OIC Countries in Bangladesh

Year	Tourists Arrival	Arrivals from OIC Countries	Percentage
2006	200,311	46024	23%
2007	289,110	50291	17%
2008	467,332	19713	4%
2009	267,107	18618	7%
2010	303,000	19915	7%
2011	155,000	22220	14%
2012	125,000	26518	21%
2013	148,000	49238	33%
2014	125,000	17720	14%
Total	2,079,860	270257	13%

Source: Adapted from BBS, 2015

Till now, no data is available for the local tourists and their tourism behavior in Bangladesh. Local tourists, especially Muslims, are traveling a lot within the territory of Bangladesh for religious purpose. A significant number of Muslim peoples move around during ‘Biswa Ijtema’. Some others also travel in the congregation to different holy places like different shrines, mosques and Waaj Mahfeel. Although those visits are only for spiritual development purpose a well-organized tourism mechanism can be set behind that will encourage peoples to move more and/ or encourage for staying more days in the respective tourist attraction.

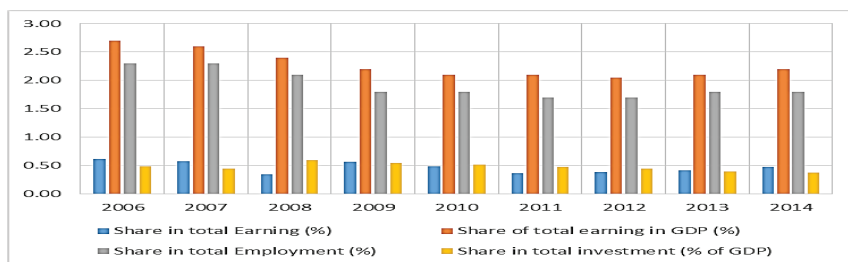


Figure 1. Contribution of tourism industry in the national economy of Bangladesh at different years (Data Source: BBS, 2015).

The tourism industry of Bangladesh is rising but still there is a lack of a strategic plan for developing a sustainable tourism mechanism. Figure 1 represents a comparative study of the contribution of tourism to the national economy of Bangladesh. Results indicate a cyclic change in tourism earnings share, share in GDP, total employment and share in total investment. An overall good situation is observed in 2006. If we compare both Table 1 and Figure 1, it is revealed that the largest proportion (23%) of tourist arrival from OIC countries occurred in 2006. A maximum number of tourist arrival occurred in 2008 and consecutively, the maximum of investment share has been observed for that year. It is interesting to note that the employment share in the tourism industry is in the increasing trend from 2011 with an increasing trend in earnings share. Although, the investment share of GDP is not increasing for the same period. Thus the tourism industry is expanding in recent years and its contribution to the total economy is growing. Therefore, this is the high time to develop a strategic plan for the future development of tourism. At the same time, Halal tourism aspects would be observed in an increasing way due to the existing Islamic culture and heritage available in this land as well as in the peoples’ behavior.

There are hundreds of tourist attractions in Bangladesh that are representing the culture and heritage related to the Muslim religion. Even there exist some places that have an alias named with Muslim saints or religious motives. Dhaka, the capital known as ‘the city of mosques’; Chittagong, the second largest city known as ‘the city of twelve Awlias (saints)’; Sylhet, the northern divisional city named as ‘the city of Shahjalal’ etc. Those names are not only significant for Muslim peoples but also uttered with great respect from other religious peoples for their historic contribution.

Table 2 represents the mentionable tourism attractions in Bangladesh. It is revealed that there are more than a thousand nice tourist attractions and one-fifth (20%) of them are related to Islamic heritage and can be considered as Halal attractions. Some of these attractions are owned and operated by the government and others by local peoples/trusty boards. Being a country populated by more than 80% Muslims, almost all attractions are restricted to follow the local Muslim culture. For example, few places

(only government registered and licentiate places) are permitted for selling alcohol or foods/ beverages and activities that are beyond the Shariah bindings. Majority of tourism attractions belong to Dhaka division, where the maximum number of Halal tourism attractions are also observed. Even the other divisional cities- Rajshahi, Khulna, Chittagong or Sylhet are not much lagging behind. Tourism attractions are scattered around the country and respective Halal attractions as well. Since all halal attractions are also possessed the opportunities for being visited by all sort of tourists from home and abroad, a sustainable and well planned tourism development and encouragements for halal tourism is essential to increase the tourism trend among the local tourists as well as attract foreign tourists.

Table 2
Number of Mentionable and Halal attractions in Bangladesh

Division	Mentionable tourist attractions	Halal attractions	Percentage
Dhaka	300	54	18%
Chittagong	133	24	18%
Rajshahi	128	34	27%
Khulna	160	38	24%
Barisal	74	16	22%
Sylhet	64	7	11%
Rangpur	106	20	19%
Mymensing	50	12	24%
Total	1015	205	20%

(Source: Calculated by authors)

Table 3 represents the potential Halal tourism attractions in different divisions of Bangladesh. The list is not limited to the mentioned names but important only for the symbolic presentation of potential places around the country. A number of mosques and shrines are included in the list. Those are important not only the attached name of the saints but also a regardful acknowledgement of their contribution for raising spiritual development of local peoples. The buildings and monuments in the attraction places have architectural importance for their structural designs and representing the symbols of the heritage of the rulers of contemporary periods. Most of the attractions are being visited by local and international visitors. Unfortunately some of them are still known by the local peoples only and not able to attract the foreign tourists’.

Table 3
Potential Halal Tourism Attractions in Bangladesh

Division	Halal Attractions
Dhaka	Baitul Mukaram Mosque, Shrine of Shah Ali, Shahi Mosque, Binot Bibir Mosque, Ijtema field, Chak Mosque, Seven Dome Mosque, Tara Mosque, Garda Mosque, Patrail Mosque, Sator Mosque, Badshahi Mosque, Shrine of Isha Khah, Boholtali Mosque, Gaibi Mosque, Thana Para Mosque, Shrine of Shah Madar, Kazibari Mosque, Shrine of Batoimuri, Tajpur Mosque, Phataragata Mosque, Kazishah Mosque, Shrine of Five Peer, Shrine of Shalah Baba, One Dome Mosque, Bandar Shahi Mosque, Shrine of Bibi Marium, Ashrafpur Mosque, Dewan Sharif Mosque, Shrine of Shah Polowan, Budir Hat Mosque, Atia Mosque, Shrine of Shah Adam, Khamarpada Mosque, Pakula Mosque, Thabadia Mosque, Donbari Mosque, Kadimhamzani Mosque.
Chittagong	Ulchpada Mosque, Shrine of Mahmud Shah, Madda Khah Mosque, Shrine of Shahrasti, Three Dom Mosque, Shrine of Amanat Shah, Shrine of Dadar Awlia, Oli Khah Mosque, Andarkilla Shahi Mosque, Hamzar Mosque, Shah Suja Mosque, Shrine of Pagla Miah, Mohammad Ali Mosque, Chatgazi Mosque, Tita Khah Mosque, Motka Mosque, Bozra Shahi Mosque
Rajshahi	Shrine of Shah Sultan, Khadua Mosque, Small Sona Mosque, Shrine of Mohiuddin Jahangir, Darsbari Mosque, Khonjon Digir Mosque, Donai Chak Mosque, Chamcika Mosque, Three Dome Mosque, Shrine of Shah Naimotullah, Chapai Mosque, Shrine of Bulun Shah, Maharaipur Mosque, Majpara Mosque, Shahi Mosque, Shrine of Nimai Pir, Vathara Mosque, Chalmohor Mosque, Somaj Shahi Mosque, Bridhoo Moris Mosque, Shah Farid Mosque, Azim Chowdhury Jomidar Bari, Shrine of Shah Mahtab Uddin, Kushumba Mosque, Shrine of Shah Mukhdum, Baga Mosque, Two Dome Kismot Mosque, Shrine of Shah Sultan, One Dome Rui-para Mosque, Bagdani Mosque, Three Dome Vagna Mosque, Shahjadpur Mosque, Two Dome Choiani Para Mosque, Shrine of Mokdum Shah
Khulna	Sixty Dome Mosque, Shrine of Khan Zahan Ali, Singair Mosque, Bibi Begni Mosque, Chunkhola Mosque, One Dome Mosque, Nine Dome Mosque, Shrine of Pir Ali, Rombijoypur Mosque, Zindapir Mosque, Reza Khoda Mosque, Shrine of Shah Aulia, Goldhari Mosque, Badshahi Mosque, Shrine of Khaza Malik, Dopa khali Shahi Mosque, Imam Bari of Hazi Muhammad Mohsin, Khoda Mosque, Phatagar Mosque, Monohor Mosque, Shekhpura Mosque Shuvrada Mosque, Mirzanogor Mosque, Gopar Mosque, Maliker Mosque, Nungola Mosque, Kayemkola Mosque, Godar Mosque, Golakhata Mosque, Godbangla Mosque, Satgachia Mosque, Shahi Mosque, Zawdia Mosque, Shrine of Mokaram Ali, Chadagat Mosque, Thatulia Mosque, Pro-bajpur Mosque, Shrine of Gunachorkati
Barisal	Bibichini Shahi Mosque, Sujabad Port, Sangram Port, Abadula Mosque, Koshi Mosque, Vatikhana Mosque, One Dome Mosque, Nasarabad Complex, Kulkhati Mosque, Surichoda Mosque, Nadorar Mosque, Miabadi Mosque, Shahi Mosque, Shrine of Sultan Fakir, Pirojpur Old Mosque, Momin Mosque
Sylhet	Baniachong Puranbag Mosque, Shrine of Nasir Uddin, Shrine of Shah Mustofa, Shelboros Mosque, Shrine of Shah Zalal, Shrine of Shah Paran, Shahi Eid Field
Rangpur	Chahelgazi Mosque, Sura Mosque, Nayabad Mosque, Chandamari Mosque, Shahi Mosque, Nidadia Mosque, Lost Mosque, Kalibari Mosque, Syedpur Chini Mosque, Mirzapur Shahi Mosque, Shrine of Baro Awolia, Karamotia Mosque, Jamalpur Jomidarbari Mosque, Shrine of Shah Nekomrd, Mohalbari Mosque, Salbari Mosque, Sangao Shahi Mosque, Fatahpur Mosque, Modiney Sagor Mosque, Gadhuda Mosque,
Mymensing	Shrine of Shah Jamal, Shrine of Shah Kamal, Five Dome Rospal Mosque, Shrine of Seven Shahid, Shrine of Shah Komor Uddin, Shrine of Dorbesh Shah, Shrine of Shah Kamal, Shrine of Shar Ali, Baro Duari Mosque, Kosba Mugal Mosque, Gagra Mosque, Mai Sahaba Mosque,

Being the fourth largest Muslim populated country, Bangladesh has great potential for developing Halal tourism destination. The largest sea beach- Cox's Bazar, coral island – Saint Martin, eco parks at different locations, safari parks, religious places and monuments, Mosques and Shrines of great Muslim saints could be very good Halal destinations for the tourists. The Crecent rating (2015) have grouped the OIC countries according to their potentialities for halal tourism development. Bangladesh has positioned

in the group-4 which indicated that Bangladesh needs special attention for halal tourism development. The rating identified that some potentials are remaining in Bangladesh for halal tourism such as, high cultural heritage and experiences, create an eagerness to explore the destinations, ease access to prayer facilities, high Muslim travel market. Moreover, the country is showing rich Islamic artifacts around the country including mosques and shrines. Access of wide variety of halal food around the country is potentials for halal tourism development. The Islamic religious, cultural, historical and heritage sites of the country can be attracted by the Muslims as well as non-Muslim tourists.

Challenges for Halal Tourism Development in Bangladesh

Muslim friendly and Shariah compliance application is necessary for halal tourism development in any country. These applications can fulfill halal tourism requirements in tourist attraction arrangements, accommodations, airlines, foods and travel agents. Although Bangladesh is a Muslim populated country, it hasn't developed Shariah compliant' application in all tourism related services. The tour operators in the country have failed to create Muslim-friendly packages and services, halal travel opportunities, Muslim market segment and Muslim cultural souvenirs. Their travel packages not properly combine the halal tourism requirements such as halal food, stay in halal accommodations, arrange prayer timing, and recruit Muslim tour guides and visit the Muslim monuments to attract the tourists from the Muslim countries. The maximum accommodations in the country are not following Shariah based operation system in their business. This is one of the challenging matters for Bangladesh to maintain the halal components in the accommodation for the tourists. The professionals and employees in the tourism industry are not well educated and trained regarding the halal issues for efficient halal tourism operation. Besides, Bangladesh is branding religious tourism specially Buddhist tourism. So, it is crucial and a big challenge to present the halal tourism in the country without hampering the other religious tourism.

Most of the people of the country do not have adequate knowledge and consciousness about halal tourism practices. The basic tourism facilities like accommodation, transportation, infrastructure and services have not yet strongly developed in the country. Visa issuing system is another obstacle for the tourism sector. The country is losing huge foreign tourists every year due to visa complexity. The natural beauties and positive image of Bangladesh rarely come to the light due to lack of proper media highlights, advertisements and attention. Bangladesh still has no special strategies within the tourism policies to give emphasize and prioritize the halal tourism development. The country has insufficient attention and ineffective publicity to engage Bangladesh as a halal tourism hub and popular this segment in the home and abroad.

There are some potentialities as well as barriers that are remaining for halal tourism development in Bangladesh. These potentialities and barriers are shown as in Figure

2 highlights a SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats) analysis.



Figure 2. SWOT analysis for halal tourism development in Bangladesh.

Necessary Steps for Halal Tourism Development in Bangladesh

Bangladesh can foster halal tourism market in the country with a strong and positive role. The country can promote halal tourism through improving products, services and facilities with Shariah compliant'. Based on a survey on global Muslim tourists, Dinar Standard (2016) showed that 67% of tourists were giving emphasize on the halal food during their travel period.

Bangladesh can promote its halal food to attract Muslim tourists to create its image as a halal tourism destination. Halal hotel is the most choosing options to Muslim tourists. These hotels provide halal food and beverages, prayer facilities with separate ablution facility for women, kiblah direction and women prayer clothes. The tourism attractions and public premises i.e. hospitals, shopping complexes and offices should be arranged with prayer facilities for the tourists. Food and beverage products supply in the restaurants should be organized in the halal process. Chicken and animals must be slaughtered according to Shariah principles. Halal tour packages can attract Muslim tourists through their Islamic requirements. These tour packages may combine a visit to the historic mosques and Islamic monuments; arrange events during the Ramadhan month, Eid-ul Fitr and Qurban; arrange exhibition with halal products and services, promote halal food, buffets and accommodations. Bangladesh Biman, the national airline of Bangladesh can provide halal services to the Muslim travelers who are choosing this service to travel. This airline should provide halal friendly services such as halal foods and beverages, prayer facilities and cleaning operation.

It is necessary to create awareness both in the public and private sector regarding halal tourism development to cater country's tourism potentials. The tourism spots

should be arranged with prayer facilities for the tourists, facilitate halal foods and recreations compliant with Shariah. The government can inspire private entrepreneurs for making investments in the tourism sector to facilitate halal tourism activities. The foreign missions of Bangladesh should campaign and develop a positive image of the country as a halal tourism destination to attract tourists from the abroad. Bangladesh should arrange simple and easy visa processing system for the foreign tourists. The country may increase visa on arrival (VOA) facilities for foreigners from tourist attracting countries. The government should include specific strategies in the tourism policies for halal tourism development in the country. The tourism and hospitality educational institutions are needed to include halal issues in their education and training programs. Finally, the success of halal tourism activities depends on the active participation of the local people. The local people can participate and contribute to halal tourism related activities such as employment, business, tour guides, accommodation, decision making, planning, benefit sharing and promotion.

Conclusion

Halal tourism has already gained popularity around the globe and may be considered as new and potential tourism segment in Bangladesh. The country has huge opportunities to develop the fast growing halal tourism concept due to the increasing number of Muslim local visitors and foreign travelers. The country is facing challenges to maintain halal facilities to attract the tourists.

This study is descriptive in nature and a pioneering approach to investigate the potentials of halal tourism in Bangladesh on the basis of existing infrastructure and benefits. Since no concrete data is available till now, cross-validation of observed strengths and weaknesses cannot be evaluated quantitatively.

It is revealed that Bangladesh requires branding and positioning the country as a lucrative halal tourism destination in the world through developing new Islamic tourism product. The country can develop and highlight Islamic attractions and increase the publicity about these attractions through media and travel agents. Finally, strong co-operation between government and private sector is essential to create and develop a sustainable halal tourism. Existing harmonious relationship among the Muslim and non-Muslim communities is encouraging and should be further sustained in this regard.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their valued comments and observations that help to enrich the contents of the manuscript. A shorted version of this paper has been presented in 1st International Halal Tourism Congress, Alanya, Turkey, 07-09 April 2017.

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