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Book Review: The Routledge Handbook of Halal Hospitality and Islamic Tourism

Introduction

This review is based on the book, 'The Routledge Handbook of Halal Hospitality and Islamic Tourism' edited by C. Michael Hall and Girish Prayag (Hall and Prayag, 2020). The main aim of this book is to provide a better understanding of the state and future of Halal hospitality and Islamic tourism research across a myriad of contexts and issues.

The book is authored by over 30 international academics and consists of 26 chapters divided into six main parts: (1) Halal hospitality and lodging in Chapters 2 to 7; (2) Halal markets and developments in Chapters 8 to 15; (3) Heritage tourism in Chapters 16 to 18; (4) Emerging issues and relationships in certification in Chapters 19 to 21; (5) Issues and challenges in Chapters 22 to 25; and (6) Emerging and future issues in the final Chapter 26.

Common ground and Shariah fatigue

Chapter 1 begins with an introduction to halal hospitality and Islamic tourism. It clarifies the definitions of key terms including halal, hospitality, Islamic tourism, and associated terms such as 'halal hospitality'. This introductory chapter does well to create a common ground with readers who may not belong to the Islamic faith. For instance, the chapter explains the dietary needs of consumers of the Islamic faith vis-à-vis other major world religions including Judaism and Christianity.

Several of these explanations and themes, including the interpretation and application of Shariah principles in tourism and hospitality, are repeated in different chapters of the book.

To this, gradients are sometimes presented, such as in Chapter 8 where the changing views of the permissibility of Muslim women to travel alone are presented. However, reiterations of the same Islamic rulings and concepts can create convoluted arguments and even Shariah fatigue. This is perhaps an unavoidable consequence given the nature of the book publication which attempts to coherently stitch multiple independent chapters by different authors. In this specific book instance, these repetitions are more apparent as chapter authors often need to explain the context of their insights by citing similar viewpoints from the Islamic tradition.

Diversity of methodologies, markets, and themes

Upon reading the chapters, one observation that becomes apparent is the need for more empirical research in the Halal hospitality and tourism literature to measure and validate the suggestions as well as ascertain their boundary conditions. For instance, while Chapter 6 gives a prescriptive list of the components of a Shariah-compliant hotel, it would be more valuable to understand the drivers and barriers towards implementing such initiatives, as well as which of the components are most influential in achieving key outcomes such as customer trust and satisfaction.

In terms of markets, there is a good representation in the research and case studies in this book, with segments from different age groups and genders across most continents except for North and South America. It was particularly interesting to learn the various Halal tourism strategies of diverse destinations, such as Brunei in Chapter 13 and Japan in Chapter 14. As for the themes, while there was a good breadth of topics, several key areas were noticeably absent from the book. One key weakness of the book was its lack of exploration of the role of emerging technologies in Halal tourism. These include discussions on the acceptance of AI and service robots from both companies (Xu et al., 2023) and customers (Ladeira et al., 2023) as well as the impact of new travel landscapes with the metaverse (Buhalis et al., 2023). The lack of focus

on technology in Halal tourism was noticeable even in the concluding Chapter 26 which would have been appropriate to discuss the role of technology as an emerging issue in Halal hospitality and tourism. With the book discussing concepts from the services marketing literature including a novel service blueprint supported by the Islamic literature in Chapter 3, other services marketing concepts could have been advanced in the book. This includes the shift towards more transformative services and a focus on well-being (Field et al., 2021), which, while alluded to in Chapter 16, needs to be given more weight in the book. In addition, the idea of Muslim customers co-creating Halal hospitality service experiences, based on the service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2016), was an area that could have been further encouraged. The inclusion of these topics would have propelled Halal hospitality and tourism research and updated the book's discussions to be in tandem with the state-of-the-art research in hospitality and services marketing.

Research gaps and opportunities

Discussions that are present in the book chapters do highlight several important gaps in the literature surrounding Halal hospitality and tourism. For instance, Chapter 2 points to the gap in serving the true travel needs of Muslims; while the literature often emphasizes tangible or physical cues such as having Halal food or prayer facilities, the central purpose of travel in Islam is to attain internal spiritual aims. Indeed, several scholars in the literature have attempted to define the needs of Muslim travellers more holistically to include non-tangible elements such as the Muslim travellers' views of themselves and their sense of relationships with others (Oktadiana et al., 2016). Table 1 fleshes out this gap as well as other insights from the book which can serve as directions for further research.

Table 1: Summary of selected research gaps from book chapters

Book Section	Chapter title	Authors	Selected research gaps and opportunities
1. Halal hospitality and lodging	Ch. 2: Understanding halal hospitality	Razak, Hall and Prayag	The original intent of travel in Islam is to attain spiritual aims. However, current halal hospitality literature emphasizes the tangible needs of Muslim travellers.
	Ch. 4: Malaysian accommodation providers' understanding of halal hospitality	Razak, Hall and Prayag	Many studies on halal hospitality focus on food and less on accommodation. More understanding of halal hospitality perceptions between different stakeholders, including Muslims and non-Muslims, is required.
	Ch 5: Explaining the competitive advantage of Islamic hotel concepts	Karia and Fauzi	Few Muslim companies are getting Shariah-compliant certificates for hotels. More research is needed to understand customer attitudes including motivators and inhibitors of Shariah-compliant certificate adoption.
	Ch 7: Islamic tourism: the practices of a Shariah-compliant hotel in De Palma Hotel, Malaysia	Marzuki, Hall, Ballantine	Similar to cost-effective service excellence (Wirtz et al., 2023), how can cost-effective Shariah-compliant service excellence be achieved?
2. Halal markets and developments	Ch 9: Exploring Muslim millennials' perception and value placed on the concept of "Halal" in their tourism preferences and behaviours	Salam, Muhamad and Abd Ghani	How are Muslim tourist preferences shaped by the need for experience compared to the need for Halal across different traveller profiles and regions?
	Ch 10.: Islamic Ziyara and Halal hospitality in Palestine	Abed Rabo and K. Isaac	What are the factors that encourage non-Muslims to visit historic Islamic sites? How do these factors differ for Muslim travellers?
	Ch 13. Brunei Halal tourism outlook	Muhamad, Leong and Masri	How can non-Muslim tourists benefit from tourism experiences within Shariah frameworks?
	Ch 14. Meeting the needs of Muslim tourists: the case of Singapore	Henderson	How does the country profile, including the level of urbanization and country size, affect destination marketing strategies in the context of Halal tourism?
	Ch 15. Strategies for attracting Muslim tourists without obtaining Halal certification	Takeshita	How does the disclosure of ingredients compare with Halal certification in the motivation to purchase Halal food? How does this consumer behaviour differ in Muslim versus non-Muslim countries?
3. Heritage tourism	Ch 18: Muharram in Iran: a religio- cultural festival	Hassibi and Sayadabdi	What is the role of religious festivals and its different facets (e.g., rituals, culinary) in Halal tourism?
4. Emerging issues and relationships in certification	Ch 19. Halal food certification in China	Chen, Qi and Hall	How can Halal brands effectively harmonize with national identities? What are the implications of this on international marketing and expansion of Halal products and services to international markets?
	Ch 20. Food certification: the relationships between organic and Halal certification in Malaysian food retailing	Ibrahim, Hall and Ballantine	What are the synergies between the organic food industry and Halal food industry? What are the similarities and differences in consumer behaviour across both industries?
5. Issues and challenges	Ch 22: The challenge of the Halal/pork binary for Muslim immigrants in Spain	Riesz	What is Halal consciousness? What are the antecedents, outcomes, mediators and moderators of Halal consciousness?
	Ch 24. Halal certification uproar: the Muslim	Debney	What are the adverse effects of Halal certification?

Book Section	Chapter title	Authors	Selected research gaps and opportunities
	scapegoat as national safety valve		

Conclusion

Overall, The Routledge Handbook of Halal Hospitality and Islamic Tourism serves its purpose as an important publication to both introduce readers to the world of Halal hospitality and tourism and get them up-to-speed with some of the challenging issues in the research and implementation of this industry. As the academic world waits for more novel theories (McCabe, 2024), key publications, and textbooks on Halal tourism, this present book is a welcomed guide for academics, students, and professionals in the hospitality industry to critically understand how best to design hospitality services for Muslim tourists to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive tourism industry for the future.

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