

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON TOURISM: PRINCIPLES, ETIQUETTE, AND ETHICAL PRACTICES

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Abstract: *Tourism is not only a form of leisure but also a medium for reflection, knowledge acquisition, and worship when guided by Islamic principles. Islam permits travel for noble purposes such as da'wah, seeking knowledge, and strengthening faith, provided it is aligned with Shariah and free from sinful activities. This article examines tourism through an Islamic ethical framework, emphasizing three dimensions: ethics with Allah (ḥablum min Allāh), ethics with fellow humans (ḥablum min an-nās), and ethics with the environment (ḥifz al-bī'ah). The discussion highlights the importance of correct intention, gratitude, fulfilment of obligatory worship, and acceptance of divine decree during travel. In human interactions, tourism requires modesty, respect for cultural norms, and social responsibility, while environmental ethics emphasize conservation, cleanliness, and humane treatment of animals. Drawing from the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical jurisprudence, this study shows that Islamic ethics elevate tourism beyond recreation, transforming it into an act of worship with holistic benefits for individuals, society, and the nation. The findings affirm that when conducted responsibly, tourism strengthens spiritual awareness, promotes social harmony, and contributes to national development, making it a valuable platform for Muslims to uphold faith while engaging with the modern world.*

Keywords: *Islamic tourism, ethics, ḥablum min Allāh, ḥablum min an-nās, ḥifz al-bī'ah, worship*

Introduction

Since the time of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w, traveling or embarking on journeys was permitted for the Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*) and the Followers (*Tābi'īn*). The primary purposes of travel at that time were for *dā'wah* (propagating Islam), seeking knowledge, and performing acts of worship.

In the contemporary context, tourism is not solely for rest and relaxation but also serves to observe and explore evidence of divine signs and acquire knowledge, particularly knowledge related to the interpretation of the Qur'an and other religious sciences. Such experiences cultivate awareness of Allah's power and the importance of living by Shariah law.

Islamic teachings do not restrict human mobility in pursuit of experience and knowledge, however, travel must be accompanied by a righteous intention to learn and not to engage in sinful activities. In Islam, when undertaken with proper intentions, one's journey can be considered an act of worship. Nevertheless, the question arises that, to what extent does tourism align with Islamic principles to attain benefit and Allah's pleasure, rather than merely traveling for leisure and appreciating natural beauty? This is in accordance with Allah's command: "And (remember) I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me." (Al-Dhariyat: 56).

And the command of Allah when He said:

"(They are) those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying: 'Our Lord, You have not created all of this in vain. Glory be to You! Protect us from the punishment of the Fire.'"

(Al-Ma'idah: 191).

Hence, Islam has established a framework for tourism ethics, which encompasses three dimensions: ethics in the relationship between humans and Allah SWT, ethics in interactions among humans, and ethics concerning the environment.

Literature Review

Research on Islamic tourism has primarily focused on the development of Muslim-friendly tourism and the implementation of Halal certification within the tourism and hospitality industry, especially the food served by hospitality establishments (Karim, 2019; Rosli et al., 2024; Wong et al., 2024). Muslim-friendly tourism provides products and services that align with Shariah principles, including Halal food, prayer facilities, and modest recreational activities (Battour and Ismail, 2016). Hence, while Malaysia has developed a strong tourism sector, the implementation of Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) remains limited due to low awareness among industry players (Ariff Irshad et al., 2022). This leads to the need for a better understanding of MFT concepts, services, and regulations to enhance opportunities and attract investment. Besides, a few researchers emphasised the importance of Halal certification as a guarantee of compliance, which enhances the confidence of Muslim travelers (Hussain et al., 2021; Hashim & Mohd Fauzi, 2022; Najmuddin et al., 2023).

In Malaysia, several studies have addressed the challenges and opportunities of Halal tourism. A study by Md Shaarani et al. (2023) examined the role of Halal certification in building Malaysia as a global Halal hub for tourism. Scholars such as Abd Razak and co-workers (2019), explored the perception and readiness of the hospitality sector in adopting Muslim-friendly standards, showing the significant role of certification in shaping customer trust.

Nevertheless, while halal tourism has been widely addressed, there remains a significant gap in the literature concerning the ethics of tourism specifically grounded in Islamic principles. To date, most works focus on compliance with Muslim-friendly or Halal standards rather than the ethical dimensions of human behavior in tourism. Concepts such as *ḥablum min Allāh* (relationship with Allah), *ḥablum min an-nās* (relationship with fellow humans), and *ḥifz al-bī'ah* (preservation of the environment) have not been fully integrated into a framework for tourism ethics. This gap underscores the novelty of the present study, which seeks to bridge Islamic ethical teachings with contemporary discussions on tourism ethics.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach through library research as the main method of data collection. Data were gathered from textual analysis of the Qur'an, hadith, opinions of scholars, as well as relevant previous studies.

The process began with the selection and determination of the research topic, followed by the formulation of research questions, issues, and significance. Subsequently, an in-depth review of related literature was conducted by evaluating, comparing, and analyzing sources. The references included classical Islamic texts, tafsir works, hadith compilations, juristic opinions, academic journals, and scholarly articles. Through this method, the researcher was able to elaborate on the principles, ethics, and guidelines related to the study topic based on Islamic legal evidence and scholarly perspectives. The analysis also enabled the synthesis of previous findings to develop a more comprehensive framework applicable in the contemporary context.

Findings and Discussion

Tourism Etiquette

In Islam, ethics encompasses not only acts of worship but also the way humans maintain a harmonious relationship with Allah, other humans, and the environment. These three areas, which comprise ethics with Allah (*ḥablum min Allāh*), ethics with humans (*ḥablum min an-nās*), and ethics with the environment (*ḥifz al-bī'ah*) provide a complete guide for Muslim life. Together, these three ethics show how Islam guides people to balance their relationship with God, with others, and with the world around them.

Ethics With Allah SWT (*ḥablum min Allāh*)

Human beings are created by Allah SWT to serve as caliphs (*khalifah*) tasked with developing and sustaining the earth. However, as His servants, humans are bound and regulated by divine laws and Shariah to ensure the welfare of both humanity and the environment. In other words, as caliphs, the authority to manage and cultivate Allah's earth is not absolute but is constrained by the rules and regulations prescribed in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Similarly, in the context of tourism, humans must consistently uphold proper conduct and ethics as prescribed, ensuring that they do not exceed the boundaries set by Shariah.

Correct Purpose and Intention

All human actions are judged according to their intention. This aligns with the hadith of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w., which states: *"Indeed, every action is judged by its intention"* (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim). Intention forms the fundamental basis for ethical conduct and moral behavior towards Allah SWT, as every action and behavior is assessed according to it. Therefore, in engaging in daily activities, including leisure and recreational activities such as tourism, the intention should be purely for the sake of Allah SWT to attain His pleasure and blessings. Tourism undertaken without sincere intention solely for Allah SWT will merely constitute an ordinary activity, similar to other permissible actions.

Gratitude for His Blessings

Allah SWT has bestowed humans with the blessing of a vast and beautiful natural environment for their convenience and sustenance. The existence of nature allows humans to utilize it for leisure, rest, learning, tourism, and other purposes. Humans are also endowed with intellect and physical faculties to observe, explore, and optimally exploit these natural resources. Through tourism, one can travel and explore the creations of nature, drawing lessons and reflections by utilizing the faculties provided. As servants of Allah SWT, humans should always express gratitude for these blessings and appreciate all the favors bestowed upon them.

Maintaining Acts of Worship

Humans are created to worship and serve Allah SWT. In Islam, worship encompasses all aspects of life, including matters of faith, ethics, culture, and social interactions. Compliance with all of Allah SWT's commands, when performed with sincere intention, is considered general acts of worship. However, specific obligatory acts of worship should not be neglected under any circumstances. In the context of tourism, obligatory acts such as prayer, fasting, zakat, and Hajj must take precedence before or during travel to ensure that tourism is rewarded as an act of worship by Allah SWT.

Valuing the Concession (Jama' and Qasar Prayers) – A Gift from Allah SWT

Allah SWT provides rukhsah, or concessions, in the performance of certain specific acts of worship when the conditions and circumstances are met. Rukhsah is considered a gift from Allah SWT. The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. said: *"Indeed, Allah Ta'ala loves that His concessions be taken, just as He loves that His obligations be fulfilled."* (Narrated by Al-Tabrani and Al-Bazaar). In the context of tourism, Muslims are permitted to utilize these divine concessions in performing certain acts of worship, such as combining (jama') prayers or shortening (qasar) prayers, as well as fasting adjustments, provided that the journey meets the conditions, such as traveling beyond two marhalah (approximately 82 km per marhalah) and other specified requirements. There is numerous evidence from Islamic sources granting these relaxations to travellers, thereby facilitating the fulfilment of religious obligations while undertaking travel.

There are many Quranic Verses and *Hadith* regarding *Rukhsah* for travellers. Among the evidence from the Quran and *hadith* related to shortening of prayers and breaking fast during travel are as follows:

1. *"And when you travel in the land, there is no sin upon you if you shorten the prayer, if you fear that the disbelievers may attack you. Indeed, the disbelievers are ever an open enemy to you."* (Al-Nisa': 101)

2. *"So whoever among you is ill or on a journey – then [let him] break his fast and make up for it on other days."* (Al-Baqarah: 184)
3. *"And whoever is ill or on a journey – then [let him] break his fast and make up for it on other days. Allah intends for your ease, and He does not intend for your hardship, and [He wants] for you to complete the number of fasts and to glorify Allah for guiding you, and perhaps you will be grateful."* (Al-Baqarah: 185)
4. The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. said:
"Ya'la bin Umayyah once asked Umar bin al-Khattab, 'Why must we shorten our prayers even though we are in safety?' Umar replied, 'I asked the Prophet s.a.w., and he said: "The shortened prayer is a charity that your Lord has given you; so accept His charity.'" (Narrated by al-Nasa'i and Abu Dawud)
5. Narrated by Aisha Radhiyallahu 'anha: Hamzah bin Amr al-Aslami asked the Prophet s.a.w., *"May I fast while traveling, as I am one who fasts frequently?"* He replied, *"If you wish, then fast; and if you wish, you may not fast."* (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim)
6. Narrated by Abud Darda r.a.: *"We once traveled with the Prophet s.a.w. on a very hot day, to the extent that he placed his hand over his head due to the scorching sun. None of us were fasting except the Prophet s.a.w. and Ibn Rawahah."* (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim)
7. Narrated by Jabir bin Abdillah r.a.: *"On a journey, the Prophet s.a.w. saw a crowd and a man taking shelter beneath it, so he asked, 'Why is this person here?' They replied, 'He is fasting.' The Prophet s.a.w. said that fasting during travel is also a virtuous act."* (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim)

Acceptance of What Occurs

Belief in Qada' and Qadar (Divine Decree) is an integral part of the articles of faith (arkan al-iman) that every Muslim must uphold. Everyone is obliged to accept whatever occurs in life with patience and an open heart, for truly only Allah SWT possesses complete knowledge of all events. Similarly, during travel and tourism, one should maintain an attitude of acceptance and composure toward any circumstances encountered—whether favourable or otherwise—and embrace them with contentment (redha) and openness.

Avoiding Harmful Actions

One of the fundamental principles in Islamic jurisprudence is the prevention of harm. Islam, as a practical and realistic religion, prohibits its adherents from engaging in actions that may cause damage or harm to oneself or to the surrounding environment. Similarly, during travel, individuals should remain vigilant and consciously avoid participating in or being associated with activities that could result in harm or negative consequences.

Ethics in Relation to Other Humans (*ḥablum min an-nās*)

Humans are servants of Allah SWT, endowed with intellect and entrusted as caliphs to develop and maintain the earth. Allah SWT created humans in diverse nations and lineages, primarily to encourage mutual acquaintance and understanding. At the same time, Allah SWT has established a structured and systematic social framework to safeguard the welfare of humanity.

This is achieved through the legislation of rules and laws regarding modesty (aurah) and the boundaries governing interactions between men and women.

Personal Appearance

Appearance is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, reflected through an individual's character and conduct. Taking the Prophet Muhammad (P.b.u.h) as the exemplary model of human character, every person should strive to cultivate good and refined manners. Moreover, the laws and regulations concerning the coverage of one's aurah should serve as a primary basis in social interactions. The prescribed limits of aurah for both men and women, together with the boundaries of interactions between genders, should be given paramount consideration in all human relations. As narrated by Abu Az-Zinad:

Ibn Jarhad informed me from his father that the Prophet (P.b.u.h) passed by him while his thigh was exposed, so the Prophet (P.b.u.h) said: "Cover your thigh, for indeed it is 'aurah'".

Hence, one must observe proper covering of the aurah even while travelling, especially in water recreation areas. It is permissible to swim and enjoy leisure activities, but both men and women are required to cover their aurah appropriately.

Individual Ethics as a Tourist

In the context of ethical conduct during travel, proper behaviour and good manners should be manifested through appropriate attire, which covers the aurah and aligns with the norms of the activity being undertaken. One should also maintain respectful and polite language to ensure acceptance by the local community and avoid unnecessary conflicts. In terms of self-care, tourists should secure suitable accommodation and engage in beneficial and safe activities during their travels. Furthermore, tourism activities should be planned and executed in accordance with the scheduled time to prevent potential issues with fellow travellers or the local community.

Social Ethics in Tourism

From a societal perspective, ethical conduct during travel involves upholding good manners and personal integrity toward both individuals and the local community. Tourists should respect local customs, traditions, and beliefs to avoid conflict or dissatisfaction. Additionally, boundaries in interactions between men and women should be preserved to prevent actions prohibited in Islam. As Muslims, travel should be undertaken with the noble intention of fostering friendly relations and making new acquaintances, while simultaneously safeguarding one's own rights and fulfilling the rights of others.

Ethics towards the Environment (*ḥifẓ al-bī'ah*)

The natural environment, created by Allah SWT, consists of animals, plants, and other living creatures. The existence of these natural resources, such as flora and fauna, greatly facilitates human life by maintaining ecological balance, providing food sources, supporting tourism, and serving other purposes. As rational beings endowed with intellect, humans are entrusted with the responsibility to manage and govern these natural resources responsibly and ethically, ensuring that no injustice or harm is inflicted upon Allah's other creations.

Islam as a Comprehensive Religion that Values Ethics and Cleanliness

Islam, being a comprehensive religion that emphasizes ethics and cleanliness, has established specific guidelines regarding proper conduct and environmental ethics. Just as Islam provides

guidance on social interactions among humans, it also outlines principles that should be observed when utilizing and interacting with natural resources, including plants and animals. A fundamental principle is the prohibition against committing injustice toward Allah's creations and the encouragement to preserve and rehabilitate all natural resources on Earth. This principle should be practised during travel. Moreover, travellers are encouraged to seek benefits and knowledge by studying the uses and advantages of natural resources.

Ethical Conduct Towards the Environment

In the context of environmental ethics, individuals as travellers should enjoy the beauty of the natural environment, which includes flora and fauna, without causing harm to plants or disrupting the ecosystem. Tourism activities should ensure cleanliness and maintain the aesthetic integrity of the visited area. The site should be kept tidy, beautiful, and inviting. As Muslim travellers, we are obligated to uphold proper conduct towards the environment according to established regulations and laws, such as refraining from relieving oneself in stagnant water, on hard rocks, or in hidden holes, to ensure the well-being of humans and other creatures.

Ethical Conduct Towards Animals

Regarding ethical treatment of animals, tourism should be conducted with awareness of the diverse roles and benefits that animals provide, both directly and indirectly, to humans. Animals, like all other creations of Allah SWT, have multiple purposes and benefits for the natural environment. Muslim travellers are prohibited from killing animals without valid and necessary reasons, as such acts constitute cruelty. Similarly, travellers should refrain from polluting or damaging animal habitats and should not mistreat animals in any manner, including frightening, abusing, or otherwise harming them.

Benefits of Tourism

Based on the evidence from the Qur'an and Hadith discussed earlier, Islam encourages tourism activities, whether for the purpose of seeking knowledge, observing historical events that affected previous communities, or engaging in da'wah to spread the message of Islam. Therefore, tourism in general provides both direct and indirect benefits to individuals, society, and the state. Among the benefits that can be obtained are:

Benefits of Tourism to the Individual

Tourism is encouraged in Islam as a means for humans to observe the signs of Allah's existence and greatness. Individuals are encouraged to travel and explore in order to witness the remnants of historical communities, such as the people of 'Ād and Thamud, and the effects on figures like Pharaoh. In doing so, one can draw lessons and take heed from the consequences faced by those who rejected and disobeyed Allah's commands. Tourism also provides an opportunity to observe the signs of Allah's power, manifested in the diverse forms and functions of the earth, which serve various purposes and benefits. Allah said in Surah al-Hajj, verse 46:

Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts.

As His servants endowed with intellect, humans are encouraged to reflect and study the natural world for the overall sustainability and welfare of society. Moreover, tourism serves as a primary platform to engage with and learn from communities beyond one's immediate environment, allowing the acquisition of knowledge and exposure to advancements in science

and technology achieved by the societies visited. Most importantly, through travel and exploration, individuals are encouraged to contemplate their own existence as humble beings before Allah, fostering spiritual reflection and drawing them closer to their Creator. This process enables individuals to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and to develop greater awareness of their place within the universe.

Benefits of Tourism to Society

Allah SWT has created humans in diverse appearances and skin colours to foster acquaintance and interaction among one another. Through tourism, individuals are encouraged to visit new and unfamiliar places to witness historical remnants and appreciate the natural beauty of the environment. Such activities provide opportunities to meet and engage with people from different communities, thereby promoting mutual understanding and strengthening social relationships. Simultaneously, this facilitates the development of interpersonal ties and reinforces ukhuwah (brotherhood) among human beings.

Benefits of Tourism to the Nation

Tourism has emerged as a rapidly growing industry in many countries. Statistics indicate a consistent increase in tourist arrivals in Malaysia each year. The tourism sector serves as a significant contributor to national revenue, as tourism stimulates local economic activities, benefiting both local entrepreneurs and the broader economy through multiplier effects. Malaysia recorded 7,560,642 international tourist arrivals from January to April 2024, marking a 27.5% increase compared to the same period in the previous year, following a total of 20.14 million arrivals in 2023 and 10.07 million in 2022 (Abdul Aziz, 2024). Such substantial returns have prompted the government to actively promote new tourism products, including religious tourism during Ramadan and health tourism. Therefore, it is imperative to encourage tourism activities that not only benefit individuals but also contribute positively to society and the nation.

Conclusion

Tourism, when guided by the principles of Islam, provides comprehensive benefits at individual, societal, and national levels. For individuals, tourism encourages reflection on the signs of Allah's creation, facilitates learning from historical precedents, and fosters spiritual growth. At the societal level, tourism promotes interaction among people from diverse backgrounds, strengthens social cohesion, and cultivates mutual understanding and respect. Nationally, tourism serves as a significant driver of economic development, stimulating local businesses and generating substantial revenue, thereby contributing to the country's overall prosperity.

Islamic guidelines emphasize that tourism should be undertaken with proper intentions, ethical conduct, and adherence to religious obligations. By aligning travel with these principles, tourism becomes more than leisure; it transforms into an act of worship and a source of holistic benefit for both the traveller and the broader community. Thus, tourism can be viewed as a valuable medium for personal enrichment, societal harmony, and national progress when approached responsibly and ethically.

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