EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNWTO Study on the Contribution of Islamic Culture and its Impact on the Asian Tourism Market
1. Background

International tourism has seen a rapid and continuous growth with an estimated 1.14 billion travellers in 2014. The domestic tourism component, according to the most conservative estimates, is five-fold this figure. Many factors have contributed to this phenomenon including the technological revolution, globalization and liberalization of trade and democratization of travel. The political, economic and cultural repercussions of the tourism phenomenon on society at large in practically all the countries in the world cannot, therefore, be under-estimated nor ignored.

The growth has also led to the emergence of a very lucrative market of Muslim travelers especially in Asia which is home to the largest population of Muslims. Their needs and concerns have not been fully researched nor understood. UNWTO Member states have expressed their wish to have a better picture of Islamic tourism in its global, regional, and country based dimensions and as a first step it has been decided to undertake an analysis of the Asia Pacific market.

2. The generic objectives of the proposed study

- Better understand the huge potential of the emerging market for Islamic tourism, especially in and out of Asia.
- Build bridges between the Muslim and non-Muslim populations and promote a culture of peace, stability and understanding between peoples.
- Develop policy recommendations to enhance facilitation, accessibility to, from and within the Islamic world and the provision of facilities and services for the development of Islamic tourism resources.

More broadly speaking, the proposed study is also aimed:

- Drawing attention to the contribution of Islamic culture to Asian history and heritage.
- Highlighting Islamic member countries of UNWTO as attractive emerging tourist destinations and help them better tap the potential of intra-Islamic travel.

3. Contents

- Overview of the Islamic world including brief history of Islam in Asia, economic and demographic profile.
• Countries monographs with a brief tourism arrivals profile and chart highlighting the importance of travel and tourism in Islamic countries at a global level, covering both arrivals and expenditure.
• Stocktaking of iconic sights including monuments and cultural centres of Islamic countries in the wider context of Asia as a geographical entity.
• Countries covered: Muslim-majority countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Brunei, Maldives), other Asian countries with a significant minority Muslim population (India, China, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines), and non-Islamic countries interested in the potential market (Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea).
• Saudi Arabia will be considered as a case study of Asian visitors participating in the Haji and Umra Pilgrimage.

4. Tourism in the Islamic world

The huge diversity of the Islamic world is a goldmine opportunity to unleash the next big wave of global travel & tourism – to, from and within the 57 member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The potential becomes even bigger if the huge Muslim population in the Islamic-minority countries is included, such as China and India, as well as the Muslim diaspora in Europe, North America, South Africa, Oceania and beyond.

Amongst the Islamic countries of the Asia-Pacific region, some clear trends stand out:
• The geographical diversity of the region includes landlocked countries such as Afghanistan and sea-locked island archipelagoes such as Maldives.
• The income diversity of the region is reflected in countries such as Brunei Darussalaam, which has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world, and Bangladesh, which has one of the lowest.
• All countries promote tourism as part of their economic development strategies. The oil-producing countries such as Brunei and Iran are seeking to diversify their economies over the long-term; the non-oil countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan see tourism as a promising service-sector activity for job-creation and income-generation.
• Visitor arrivals in the OIC countries are polarized between the have’s and the have-nots. The vast majority of arrivals are concentrated in Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt, Morocco and the UAE. In the Asia-Pacific, this polarization also exists between countries such as Bangladesh and Malaysia.
• This diversity is also reflected in the facilitation. The Maldives gives visa-free access to nearly every country in the world. Pakistan and Iran have a universal visa requirement for all countries.
Indonesia has one of the world’s highest average lengths of stay. Brunei one of the lowest.

All this adds to the policy-making, intellectual and professional challenge of meeting the various objectives of promoting travel to, from and within the Islamic world. Tourism statistics of the countries under study of the evolution and performances over the past 5 years give a clear picture of their status. These include:

- Balance of Foreign Travel
- Balance of International Tourism as % of GDP
- International Tourism Receipts as % of Exports
- Intra-OIC Tourist Arrivals
- Number of Tourist Arrivals
- Tourism Expenditures
- Tourism Receipts

5. The Economies of the Islamic World

According to the Islamic Growth Markets Investment Report 2015, produced by the data research and consultancy companies, Thomson Reuters and DinarStandard, the 57 Organization of Islamic Cooperation member countries representing a GDP (current) in 2013 of $6.7 trillion are projected to grow 2015-19 at a higher rate (5.4%) than rest of the world (3.6%) or BRIC nations (3.9%).

Malaysia, Indonesia, and UAE lead the inaugural 2015 Islamic Growth Markets Investment Index™ which ranks countries investment potential relatively within the OIC member country grouping. The Index is based on a set of nine metrics covering the categories of a country’s growth fundamentals, growth momentum, investment momentum and relative country risk.

According to the report, Indonesia showing the strongest growth fundamentals among the top three having the highest population (249 million, 2013) and GDP ($870 billion, current US$, 2013), while Malaysia the strongest growth and investment momentum (217% FDI inflows growth 2009-13). GCC economies led by UAE are also on the top ten list including Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Other markets on the top 10 include Kazakhstan, Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, and Mozambique.
Halal Food & Tourism Summits

This enormous business potential has spurred a surge in business events, forums, trade shows and conferences focusing on the Halal sector, covering primarily food but also now being expanded to cover

- A Halal Tourism Conference was held for the first time in Cordoba, Spain, and the first time in Europe, between 22-23 September 2014. It brought together delegates from all over the world including Tourism Boards, Tour Agencies, Tour Operators, Restaurants, Media, Hotels and Airlines to network and inform on industry trends. The Conference was followed by a two-day tour of the region of Andalucia to provide businesses with a live case study of a region that is becoming more Muslim friendly and is actively working to meet the needs of Muslim Travellers.

The organisers of that same event are holding the next Halal Tourism Conference 2015 from December 1-3, 2015 at the Istanbul Convention & Exhibition Centre. They are projecting an attendance of more than 1,000 delegates from over 50 countries.

- The Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS), the world’s premier integrated trade fair of Halal products and services organised by Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE), was founded in 2004 and continues to garner strong business confidence. Themed “The Next Steps”, MIHAS 2015 was held from 1-4 April 2015 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, KLCC, alongside the inaugural World Halal Summit 2015 (WHS 2015) which is hosted by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and organised by MATRADE.

Organisers of MIHAS reported preliminary sales of USD122.17 million (RM443.16), between 427 foreign buyers from 307 companies located in 41 countries, including China, Algeria, Indonesia, Thailand, India, South Korea, Vietnam, Japan, Qatar and Taiwan, just to name a few. The ASEAN countries involved in the event were Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, Singapore, Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR while the participating OIC member countries were Algeria, Indonesia, Qatar, UAE, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi, Uzbekistan and Bahrain. The top six exhibiting countries at MIHAS were Thailand, China, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and South Africa.

Alongside MIHAS, other events complementing the World Halal Summit are six conferences and forums namely the 6th JAKIM International Halal Certification Bodies Convention, the 8th World Halal Conference (WHC), the Certifiers Forum, Scholars Forum, Academics Forum and the Business Forum.
The first Thailand Halal Assembly was held in Bangkok between 28-30 December 2014. An estimated 1,500 delegates from all around Thailand and 47 countries (within ASEAN and as far away as Brazil, Switzerland and South Africa) helped make it by far the biggest turnout of global Muslims for such a convention and exhibition in Thailand.

Organised jointly by the Halal Science Center of Chulalongkorn University, the Central Islamic Council of Thailand and Halal Standard Institute of Thailand, the event was designed to help upgrade the standards of made-in-Thailand halal products and services to cater to the rapidly growing Islamic market. It saw the launch of Thailand Diamond Halal, a brand concept under which all halal products and services sourced in Thailand will be marketed and exported. Two workshops were devoted entirely to helping Thai halal companies upgrade their branding and better understand the plethora of confusing certification standards.

The event was a milestone for Thailand, a Buddhist-majority country whose six million Muslims comprise a little under 10% of the total population. It went a long way towards helping Thai-Muslims better understand the importance of their community to the country, the region and the world, not to mention their own faith and families.

Abu Dhabi will host another World Halal Travel Summit from 19th – 21st October 2015, which it claims will be the largest gathering ever assembled of global Halal travel specialists. The Durban Chamber of Commerce & Industry, in partnership with Durban Tourism, also hosted South Africa’s 1st Halal Tourism Conference in Durban on 29 May 2013. The Tourism Committee of the Durban Chamber felt the time was ripe for Durban and KZN Province to prepare for a share in this significant market. The conference will highlight the ways in which both city and province need to prepare to make the destination attractive to the Muslim market by understanding its needs and expectations.

World Islamic Economic Forum
One of the most important groupings promoting trade, transport, travel & tourism within the Islamic world is the World Islamic Economic Forum, based in Kuala Lumpur. The tenth instalment of the World Islamic Economic Forum (WIEF) held in Dubai between October 28 to 30, 2014 was the biggest ever, with 3,150 participants from 102 countries coming together to enhance cooperation and strengthen bonds among Muslim and non-Muslim countries.

Marketplace of Creative Arts, MOCAfest
The WIEF is not just a forum for advancing business interests. It also makes place for arts and culture. One event is the Marketplace of Creative Arts, MOCAfest, which strives to fortify the bridge connecting culture and arts to the business world, establishing a space where the creative industry can thrive, and thus contributing to a sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
The 7th MOCAfest, in collaboration with the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, was held in conjunction with the 10th WIEF from 28-30 October in Dubai, UAE. The international arts festival brought a burst of sound and colours to the capital of UAE, featuring at least 40 artists and speakers, 15 fellows, as well as three days of dialogues, networking sessions, masterclasses, workshops, film screenings, exhibitions and performances.

Culture and arts, or the creative economy, is not only one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the world economy, but also a highly transformative one in terms of income-generation, job creation and export earnings. The festival sparked meaningful discussions on a wide variety of issues concerning the creative industry, such as the role of culture and creativity in business, the role of film in highlighting socioeconomic issues, as well as financing for the business of arts.

**Conclusion of the 10th WIEF**

In his closing speech, Tun Musa spoke about the journey of the Forum and the many milestones it had achieved over the past 10 years. The Forum, which began on a much smaller scale, had grown in leaps and bounds: “It’s amazing how we have changed. It’s amazing how widespread the acceptability has been with WIEF. To find a list of non-Muslim countries saying welcome to our respective cities and countries so that we can all collaborate together...to me symbolises how far we have [come] on the international level.”

Musa stressed the importance of cutting across borders - geographical, religious and cultural. “Business does not recognise nationality, it does not recognise region, it does not recognise race...The reality is that the world has no choice but to collaborate, cooperate and work together in order to achieve collective success in terms of economic development for the interests of the ummah and for each and every one of us,” he said.

**The 11th WIEF 2015**

The 11th WIEF will take place on 3-5 November 2015 at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Its focus will be on securing financial stability and generating growth in the face of years of uncertainty and sluggish development that have followed the 2008 financial crisis. Says the rationale: “More and more countries, Muslim and non-Muslim, are now seeking an economic model that is more equitable and sustainable. The concept of the Islamic economy is increasingly gaining global traction in the past few years. It has been proven to be more resilient, and it has presented to the world its vast potential to bring upon peace and prosperity with its underlying principle of being ethical and inclusive. The Forum also promotes the values of cross-border business and economic partnerships as it provides an international platform for governments and the business community to showcase their cutting-edge ideas, galvanise
support, and recruit collaborators. More details are available here: http://wief.org/#sthash.r7TgTTeB.dpuf

The conclusions of the 11th WIEF 2015 will supplement this report
Australia

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Australia, like other countries around the world has recognised the growing importance and economic potential of the Muslim market. Increasing numbers of Muslim tourists are travelling to Australia – attributable to the country’s geographical proximity to major Muslim-generating markets such as Indonesia and Malaysia and increased aviation capacity through the Middle East. Within Australia, destinations such as the Gold Coast have been particularly proactive in positioning itself as a Muslim-friendly location in an effort to attract a share of the growing numbers of Muslim visitors, while the State Tourism Authority Tourism Victoria has recently launched a major tourism campaign in the Middle East including the production of Arabic visitor guides.

Australia has a long history with the Islamic world dating back to the ninth century. In the late 1600s, the influence of Muslims from Indonesia was reflected in the culture, art and language of the Yolngu people of Arnhem Land in northern Australia. In southern Australia Muslim Afghan cameleers from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran are credited with opening up the interior of Australia to Europeans during the 1800s through the transportation of supplies for miners and graziers.
In 1861 a mosque was erected in the central Australian town of Marree (in South Australia) and in 1885 Australia's first major mosque was built in Adelaide, South Australia. As a result of these early pioneers South Australia has a significant Muslim community. In 1908 Queensland's first mosque was built in Brisbane and subsequently mosques can be found throughout Australia's capital cities and regional centres.

Since the late 1960s there have been a number of significant Muslim migrations into Australia, Australia is a multi-cultural country, and is tolerant of religion, race and other cultures. Muslims are free to worship and many employees and education institutions respect religious commitments. Australia’s resident Muslim population is 476,300, which equates to 2.2% of the total population with over a third (36%) of Muslim Australians being Australian-born. Approximately 8.4% (525,000) of the total visitors to Australia in 2014 were from Muslim countries including Malaysia, Indonesia and the Middle East.

Australia is a significant outbound destination for Malaysian travellers, although that includes both the Muslim Malays and the non-Muslim Malaysian Chinese. Malaysia was an important inbound market for Australia with 322,400 visitors in 2014; the 7th most important inbound market for Australia. Indonesia is the 12th largest inbound market and showed a 7.6% growth over 2013 mainly due to the increased aviation capacity. Much of the growth in these key generating markets can be attributed to increased aviation capacity in the region. For instance, Malaysia Airlines and AirAsia X have extended their flight operations in various destinations of Australia.

Australia has yet to develop specific tourism products for the Muslim market; instead there is a clear focus on developing facilities and services to cater for this market. Most tourist attractions and hotels in Australia cater for Muslim tourists with prayer rooms and the availability of halal foods. Some hotels have introduced facilities such as a Ramadan evening lounge while others offer prayer mats for guests. Larger shopping centres in popular tourist precincts are also offering prayer rooms for Muslim visitors and residents.

States such as South Australia have significant Islamic attractions with a number of historical mosques in Adelaide including the oldest mosque in the southern hemisphere, which was built in 1888, as well as Australia's only dedicated Islamic gallery. In Melbourne, the Islamic Museum of Australia offers visitors insights into the artistic heritage and historical contributions of Muslims in Australia and abroad through the display of various artworks and historical artefacts.

Australia is well connected with major transit hubs in Asia and the Middle East. A recent partnership between Australia's national carrier Qantas Airways and Emirates Airways has seen all European bound flights routed through Dubai instead of the traditional Singapore hub. As
noted previously, increased capacity from airlines such as Etihad Airways have increased accessibility between Australia and the Gulf countries.

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils is the primary Islamic association in Australia, which aims to give a public voice and face to Islam, both in state and federal politics and matters of community representation.

Australia’s ‘Tourism 2020 Strategy’ includes objectives to grow demand from Asia with Indonesia and Malaysia identified as key inbound tourism markets. In the South- and South-East Asia region, Tourism Australia focuses its activities in Singapore, Malaysia, India, Indonesia and Middle East.

Several tourism authorities have websites and/or online visitor guides for Muslim visitors including:

- The Muslim Guide to Western Australia by Tourism Western Australia
- Muslim Travellers website by the South Australian Tourism Commission
- CrescentRating, the online guide to halal and Muslim-friendly travel, includes city guides for each of the major states in Australia. Most major cities and/or universities have guides for Muslim students studying in Australia.

There is a growing need for developing strong strategic alliances between Australian Destination Marketing Organizations and key partners in Muslim countries. This collaborative approach was proved successfully in Tourism Australia’s partnership with Malaysia Airlines, which resulted in a 24.5% increase in bookings to Australia during the campaign period.
Bangladesh covers a total area of 147,570 km² with a population of 157 million of whom 90.4% are Muslims. Situated on the Ganges delta, it straddles the largest wetland region in the world. Bangladesh also boasts the world’s longest unbroken sea beach - Cox’s Bazar - and the world’s single largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans.

Primarily an agricultural country, Bangladesh is slowly moving towards a modest industrialization and service sector development. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2013 the direct contribution of Bangladesh travel and tourism to its GDP was BDT 222.6 billion (2.1% of total GDP), and forecast to rise by 7.7% in 2014, and 6.1% per annum, from 2014-2024. Bangladesh has paid special emphasis recently in developing its tourism sector where pilgrimage and religious tourism play a significant role.

These data also showed that in 2013, travel and tourism directly supported 1,328,500 jobs (1.8% of total employment). This was expected to rise by 4% in 2014 and rise by 2.7% per annum to 1,809,000 jobs. Bangladesh has paid special emphasis recently in developing its tourism sector where pilgrimage and religious tourism play a significant role based on Bishwaljtema that attracts around 5,000-6,000 Muslims devotees from India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Maldives, Malaysia, BruneiDarussalam and other countries.

Islam was introduced to Bengal during the period of the Rashidun Caliphate in the 8th century mainly by the arrival of Arab and Persian missionaries and merchants and later through the conquests of the region by North Indian Muslim Sultanates. Bangladeshi culture is influenced by three great religions- Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism - with Islam having the most pervading and lasting impact.

Bangladesh possesses several landmark Islamic cultural heritage sites, mosques, shrines and wonderful festivals that appeal to Muslim visitors and indeed visitors of all faiths. Bangladeshi culture is influenced by three great religions- Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism - with Islam having the most pervading and lasting impact. The following Islamic heritage sites bear testimony to this history: Shait-Gumbad (60-domed) Mosque at Bagerhat district; The Shrine of Hazrat Shah Jalal at Sylhet District; Shrine of Shah Amanat; Sona Masjid (Mosque); Shrine of Sultan Bayazid
Islamic heritage sites of Bangladesh are held in high regard. The government has plans to conserve all the sites as per the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) code of conduct. UNESCO has designated the 60-domed mosques along with Paharpur Buddhist Monastery and the Sundarbans as World Heritage sites. Other mosques declared as protected sites and included in the national heritage list are Lalabagh Fort Mosque, Sat Gambud Mosque, Sona Masjid (Mosque), Sura Mosque, Tangail Atia Jame Mosque, Gourer Mosque, Binat Bibi Mosque, Shah Suja Mosque of Comilla, Badshahi Mosque of Panchagarh, Kusamba Mosque of Naogaon, etc.

Bangladesh is considering the launch of Islamic heritage circuit package tours for both domestic and foreign Muslim tourists. The tour will cover all the famous Islamic heritage sites of Bangladesh. The Department of Archaeology and Bangladesh Tourism Corporation are jointly implementing the Asian Development Bank (ADB) sponsored ‘South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project’ (SATIDP) at the four heritage sites of Bangladesh - Paharpur, Mahasthangarh, Kantajeu Temple and 60-domed Mosque Complex City.
Malaysia dominates visitors from Asian Muslim majority countries with almost 52,000 arrivals in 2013 followed by Indonesia (16,000). India also figures prominently in the arrivals of pilgrims trailed by Indonesia and Malaysia. One of the features of Bangladeshi statistics is the “purpose of visit” tab that is part of the frontier formality embarkation card that enables the Bangladesh Tourism Corporation (BPC) to identify visitor motivations. Being a Muslim country Bangladesh does not have any issues concerning food and dress habits governed by halal compliance. Since the country is embarking on its tourism promotion much later than most neighbouring Asian destinations that have a head start, initial infrastructure and human resource development needs are a priority. However, Islamic tourism especially through domestic and pilgrimage tourism based on the cultural assets of Bangladesh is a boost to the general tourism industry.
Brunei Darussalam is a country rich in culture and heritage. It is a small (only 5,675 sq. km.), peaceful and prosperous kingdom on the northern shore of the ecologically-rich island of Borneo. Brunei became independent in 1984 and due to its large reserves of oil and gas, has one of the highest standards of living in the world. Its population is just around 422,700 made up of two-thirds ethnic Malay, the remainder being Chinese, Indian and other indigenous groups.

Brunei became a Muslim country with the conversion of the first Sultan and ruler of Brunei, Awang Alak Betatar (1363-1492), to Islam. Today, Brunei remains the world’s only Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB) with an unbroken royal lineage for 600 years. The Muslim population of Brunei is around 333,100, equivalent to 78.8% of the total population.

Due to its oil wealth, Brunei’s per capita income almost doubled from USD 19,000 in 2003 to USD 36,600 in 2014. The rich middle-class population has a propensity to travel. Neighbouring destinations are keen to tap the small but lucrative market of visitors from a predominantly Islamic country.

Tourism has been identified as a significant potential contributor to socio-economic development as part of the national agenda to diversify sources of income away from oil & gas exports. The Brunei Tourism Development Department (BTDD), under the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources (MIPR) is responsible for developing tourism and positioning the country as distinct destination in the region while upholding the national philosophy of Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB). The three components of MIB cover Malay culture, Islamic religion, and the monarchy. They support inclusiveness, sustainability and a green growth agenda. The BTDD Master Plan 2011-2015 identified two main clusters to drive tourism growth under the primary offerings i.e. Nature and Culture & Islamic (heritage). The direct contribution of the tourism sector to GDP was BND317.0mn (1.5% of total GDP) in 2014, and forecast to rise by 2.5% in 2015, and to rise by 4.7% pa from 2015-2025. In 2014 the tourism sector directly supported 5,000 jobs (2.4% of total employment). This is expected to remain unchanged in 2015 and rise by 2.6% pa to 7,000 jobs (2.6% of GDP) in 2025.

In 2014, tourist arrivals to Brunei reached a total of 3.9mn, up 19% over 2013 with overland arrivals from Malaysia comprising the largest share of 94%.
Islamic heritage is intrinsic to Bruneian culture which emphasizes the sanctity of Malay language, culture, community and most importantly the teaching of Islamic laws and values. Places of interest such as mosques and Islamic exhibitions and galleries and the like. Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Exhibition Gallery, are the main Islamic tangible products being offered to tourists In addition, the country's rich natural forest cover is also promoted, exactly in line with the love and respect for the divine creations, as sanctified in the Holy Qur’an.

The first ever Grand Mosque in Brunei was proposed by the late Al Marhum Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifuddien, the 28th Sultan of Brunei and conferred his name. Opened in 1958, this beautiful mosque has become an icon of Brunei and one of its primary tourist attractions. The second grand and largest national mosque is the magnificent, Jame’ ‘Asr Hassanil Bolkiah Mosque which was opened in 1994 by the current Sultan of Brunei, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of his reign.

Brunei has a wide range of accommodations, including numerous international brands. There were 54 lodging options in 2013 offering a total of 4,648 rooms. Muslim prayer rooms are available in most hotels and public buildings. Taking advantage of Brunei’s core competencies, including its international reputation and observant Islamic Culture with strict adherence to halal standards, the country is looking to serve the growing global demand for Syariah-Compliant products by expanding its own stable of halal offerings i.e. the Brunei Halal Brand (BHB). Mastercard Crescent Rating provides ‘halal friendly travel scores’ to assist Muslim visitors where Brunei scores 64.3 on the Global Muslims Travel Index (GMTI).
The BTDD is focusing its promotional efforts on markets with good connectivity to Brunei, while also looking to expand into other market segments though the ASEAN region still remains the primary focus. Brunei is covered by the ASEAN Single Aviation Market which calls for an “open skies” policy. That will open up more accessibility by low-cost carriers such as Air Asia, Lion Air and Cebu Pacific.

DaruSSalam Holdings Sendirian Berhad (DHSB), a Government-Linked Company is a well-placed travel agent to promote Brunei as an Islamic tourist destination. Established in 1993, its primary duty is to provide Bruneians with a complete support package for their Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage. DHSB understands their clientele and the importance of compliance with Islamic principles.

Brunei is stepping up its participation in International Islamic Tourism Conferences and Travel Marts worldwide. BTDD promotes the Islamic Tour packages under the banner, “Brunei, the Islamic Experience” together with DHSB, RBA and the State Mufti’s Office. In November 2012, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the BTDD, DHSB, the Tourism Malaysia and the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) Malaysia. The ‘Brunei-Malaysia: The Islamic Tour Experience’ was launched at the London Central Mosque Islamic Cultural Centre, United Kingdom, alongside the World Travel Mart 2012. The package was designed to promote Islamic Tourism particularly in Southeast Asia and introduce both countries’ Islamic legacies to the rest of the world. In 2012, RBA supported by the BTDD, initiated a campaign with five Muslim-owned Singapore travel agencies and RBA to launch Islamic tour packages to Brunei. BTDD has published a booklet on Islamic tourism, “Brunei Darussalam: Tracing the Beauty of Islam” and set up a website, www.IslamicTourismBrunei.com to support the initiative. Other information about Brunei including places of interest can be viewed at www.bruneitourism.travel. An application is also available that can be downloaded from the App Store or Android App on Google Play on “Discover Brunei”; “Discover Brunei: Islamic Tourism”. According to the MasterCard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), Brunei was in the Top 10 of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) destinations in 2015.
China is the leading tourism source market in the world in terms of departures and expenditure. It is also the fourth largest inbound market and occupies the top spot in Asia, far ahead of most of its neighbours. China’s population and GDP point to a bright future in terms of potential for future growth especially with an affluent middle-class that has disposable income for travel. It is therefore evident that China possesses the necessary infrastructure in terms of transport, and accommodation, and also the human resources to cater to growing demand.

Islam spread to China in the 7th century, as early as the beginnings of the faith. In the centuries following, it became integrated with Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism and developed into a frame of “one house with four rooms”. Nowadays Chinese-Muslims are scattered all over China. Overall, China has enormous potential to attract inbound Muslim visitors to many of its provinces with significant Muslim populations. It has also significant potential as an outbound source market for its own indigenous Muslim population to visit other Islamic countries, especially in Asia.

Chinese Muslim ethnic groups are: Hui, Uygur, Kazak, Dongxiang, Kyrgyz, Salar, Tajik, Bao’an, Uzbek and Tatar. In addition to these ten groups which comprise of people who were born Muslims, there are also small numbers of people from Han, Tibet and Mongolia who converted to
Islam. Precise statistics of this group are not available. According to statistical data the Muslim population of China is 23 million. The Muslim population is unevenly distributed in China. Most Muslims live in the north and are generally scattered around rural and urban areas in small settlements. Most Islamic cultural tourist resources are also located in the north, especially the northwest.

Though China is rich in Islamic cultural tourist resources, the marketing and development of Islamic tourism both international as well as domestic requires further inputs as it is not a priority at the moment. Iconic mosques include the following: Niujie Mosque in Beijing, Grand Mosque in Datong, Shanxi Province, Huajuexiang Mosque in Xi’an, Xiguan Grand Mosque in Lanzhou, Gansu Province which have a long history and cultural heritage. Also all around these mosques, there are thriving communities of Chinese Muslims with many halal restaurants. They receive visitors not for any economic gain but rather to present Islamic culture in a positive light.

Many Chinese Muslims institutions are beginning to realize better the value of attracting both Muslim and non-Muslim visitors. On one hand, it creates more job opportunities and wealth; on the other, it helps non-Muslims gain a better understanding of Islam and Muslims. For example, Xinjiang International Bazaar in Urumqui has attracted millions of domestic and foreign visitors since its establishment in 2003. Another example is the Chinese Hui Cultural Park in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, a theme park dedicated entirely to Islamic culture which was established in 2005.

Many Chinese out-bound tourists choose to visit Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates and Maldives. These countries market themselves in China for their beaches, shopping and other visitor attractions. However, visiting them does expose Chinese visitors to many aspects of Islamic culture and heritage. Malaysia, Indonesia and the Maldives are the leading Islamic destinations of Asia and the Pacific.

In recent years, Chinese Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia have totalled over 10,000 annually. Besides, there is another pilgrimage activity in the northwest of China. Each year a large number of Muslims visit the mazars (handmade holy sites in Sufi Islam) to worship or meditate. Apart from the above two components of Islamic pilgrimage tourism which have a cultural element in them it must be noted that Muslims from China who undertake leisure travel to predominantly Muslim countries in Asia are motivated by experiencing Islamic culture in these destinations.

Malaysia and Indonesia are important source markets of China. Both are geographically close to China with good flight connections. Tourists from these countries visit both Islamic and non-Islamic regions, cities and scenic areas. In some northern cities of China, such as Beijing, Tianjin,
Jinan, Zhengzhou, Xi’an, Hohhot, Muslim tourists can easily find Halal food. In north western cities such as Lanzhou, Yinchuan, Xining or Urumqi, halal food is very much a part of the local culinary fare. In Southern China, several cities of Yunnan province such as Kunming and Shadian also have Muslim minority populations which have created their own Islamic culture with local features.

China’s accommodation units are estimated to be around 40,500 which cater to a wide variety of tourists both international as well as domestic. While there is an evident concentration in the main tourist areas and cities of the of the East coast, the availability of accommodation units in the mainly Western regions where the Muslim heritage sites are concentrated is not a major issue since the volume of visitors is still not on a scale for it to be a major hurdle for promotion of Islamic tourism.

China’s infrastructure in road, rail, sea and air transport and connectivity is second to none. This has indeed been one of the cornerstones of the economic development of the country and also of its tourism. In 2010, China ranked the 6th among all destination countries of Muslim outbound tourists. However, the current number of Muslim visitors to China is not commensurate with its rich Islamic tourist resources.

Islamic tourism could become a new source of growth for the Chinese tourism industry. As China’s new Belt-and-Road initiative see it expand its trade, economic, social and cultural links with the countries of Central Asia, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific, the resulting closer communication and exchanges will greatly expand the in-bound Muslim tourism market.
The Muslim population of Xi’an today consists of around 70,000 Hui, and their main mosque stands at the heart of a bustling Muslim quarter. The Great Mosque itself is of considerable antiquity, having been founded in 742. But it has been altered and restored several times in its history.

Overall, there is an attractive blend of styles in the Great Mosque. For example, the prayer hall is very much Chinese in its exterior aspect, but is enhanced by some very fine silk Persian carpets. Outside the prayer hall, to the right as a visitor approaches it, is a pavilion in Chinese style but with a roof of turquoise tiles reminiscent of the great domes of Esfahan and Qom. Indeed the links with Persia have remained strong, and several excellent silk carpets in the inner sanctum area are the donations of Ayatollahs and Presidents of Iran who have visited since 1979. There is a fine wooden Ming style minbar, and at the heart of the mosque from the same era a magnificent stone-carved mihrab - the symbolic doorway which indicates to the faithful the direction of the qiblah in Mecca. The atmosphere in the exterior courtyards is one of great antiquity and solemnity, with exquisite workmanship in the columns and eaves and inscriptions on both Arabic and Chinese. The mosque is a lively centre of community activity and every Friday and on special feast days hundreds of local Muslims go there to say their ritual prayers.
The large and concentrated Muslim population of Xi’an defined themselves by their nearest mosque and lived in what has been called an ‘aural community’ in which they could until the advent of recent traffic noise hear the call to prayer from their own mosque.

Around 30,000 Muslims live in their traditional district of Lianhu within the city walls, which comprises an area of approximately two square kilometres. The area is dominated by the presence of the Great Mosque, the bazaar-style market which runs along its walls. There are other mosques in the city, mostly quite small. Altogether, within the whole city there are currently 34 mosques, some of them in new outlying districts. Apart from the Great Mosque, there are some other mosques of historical and touristic interest: Daxuexi Street Mosque, Xiaopiyuan Mosque, Daipyuan Mosque, Beiguangji Street Mosque, Sajingqiao Mosque.

Specific statistics for inbound Muslim tourists are not available. Most Muslim tourists in fact come from other cities in China; there are several hostels, some two-star hotels, and one three-star dedicated hotel for Muslims, the Hong Bao Hotel. Since Air Asia started regular direct flights from Kuala Lumpur in the summer of 2014, around 5,000 Muslim tourists from Malaysia have visited Xi’an, which makes that country the leading supplier of visitors. Promotional activities have also been made to attract Muslim tourists from Thailand and Central Asia.

The Great Mosque does keep track of numbers since Muslim visitors, whether for prayer or for tourism, are given free access while a fee is paid by non-Muslims. The average total number of visitors annually is around 80,000, of which 10,000 are Muslim visitors from outside Xi’an. At the same time however, the benefits to the Muslim community through ownership of hundreds of shops, street-side stalls and restaurants is immense, since local tourist authorities put the number of people passing through the district on important Chinese holidays as high as 1,000,000. Certainly most ordinary days will see tens of thousands.

The busy commercial heart of the old city has many excellent Muslim restaurants and specialist shops selling the lamb which so many local non-Muslim people also enjoy. The street behind the Drum Tower and to the east of the Great Mosque, colloquially known as Muslim Street or Muslim Snack Street, is a popular rendezvous for local people and tourists - Muslim and non-Muslim alike - especially on a summer evening when they can stroll along its length eating roadside snacks prepared by Muslim vendors. One distinctive feature of the street, and the entire area around it, is the wide availability of halal food, while Muslim-style sweet foods are also appreciated, such as Huanggui persimmon cake and San Son, also known as ring cake. In the narrower and busier lanes further west, renowned shops sell more genuine Islamic specialities. Permanent queues form outside some of the shops which have created well-known brands by achieving regular quality with traditional methods.
Islam is an integral part of Indian society, and with a population of 180 million, or about 15% of the total. Indian Muslims constitute the second largest Islamic community worldwide after Indonesia. Muslim association with South Asia began in Islam’s early days, with the interaction gaining strength from the 12th century onwards. North India was the centre of Mughal rule, which produced some of the world’s most stunning monuments, including contribution to the fields of arts and literature. Travellers can see the Mughal influence in food, language, dress and architecture not just in India but across South Asia.

Tourism’s share in India’s gross domestic product (GDP) is 6.8% and the sector accounts for 36.7 million jobs. In 2014, three member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) - Bangladesh, Malaysia and Pakistan – were among India’s top 15 source markets. The number of Indian tourists travelling overseas is estimated to be 15-20 million. Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia, Turkey, Indonesia, Oman, Iran and Dubai are investing huge efforts and funds to attract Indian travellers. Malaysia’s target is to attract 800,000 Indian tourists in 2015 after achieving a growth of some 20% in arrivals in 2014.
More than 25 million people of Indian origin and non-resident Indians (NRIs) live and work outside India. This segment is seen as a potentially important travel group that has disposable incomes, mobility and world exposure. Turkey, for example, grants visa on arrival to Indian nationals who are in possession of a visa for an OECD nation. This could be replicated by Asian countries. Islamic tourism in India is predominantly domestic given the size of its Muslim population and the rich Islamic cultural heritage where pilgrimages, festivals and religious events attract visitors by their thousands. Indeed the Islamic cultural heritage is the cradle to attract more Islamic visitors from abroad, particularly from the Asia Pacific market. From an outbound point of view the rising Indian middle-class that also includes Muslims could be a vital source for those countries in Asia interested in tapping this market.

Many of India’s iconic sites are from the Mughal period. South Asian architecture embraces Central Asian, Afghan, Persian, Turkish, European and Hindu traditions. Herewith a few key monuments identified with Islamic heritage: Taj Mahal, Agra Fort (both in Agra), Charminar (Hyderabad), Fatehpur Sikri (Fatehpur), Qutab Minar Red Fort, Humayun’s tomb (all in Delhi). In addition there are many Sufi shrines throughout the length and breadth of India.

India would need at least 200,000 new hotel rooms to accommodate the projected FTA growth, according to tourism officials. Needless to say these new developments should also be equipped to attract tourists from OIC countries. It involves tiny efforts. Malaysia’s practices in attracting Arab tourists can act as a guide for Indian hoteliers. Many Malaysian hotels hire Arabic-speaking staff members who understand the religious and cultural needs of their guests. This especially helps in attracting family tourists.
Halal food can be found all across India, especially in townships and cities with large Muslim populations, and in the vicinity of the numerous heritage sites dating back to the Muslim rulers. With India being a major halal meat exporter, there is no shortage of non-vegetarian supplies for local consumption.

The quality of transport infrastructure, hospitality services and accommodation are major issues afflicting Indian tourism. More than 90% of foreign tourists in India arrive by air, making it absolutely necessary to have modern aviation infrastructure. Over the past few years, India has developed airports in major cities - New Delhi, Mumbai, Cochin, Hyderabad and Kolkata - that are comparable to other international hubs with good facilities.

The aviation sector remains promising. National carrier Air India and its budget service Air India Express are dominant players. Emirates and Qatar Airways enjoy a significant share of traffic between India and the Gulf region. Dubai’s Emirates is sometimes referred to as “the national carrier of India,” while Abu Dhabi’s Etihad Airways is expanding routes, working with its partner Jet Airways for wider reach within India and attracting Indians travelling to the Middle East and Europe. Budget airline IndiGo has ordered new planes and is looking for a tie-up with Qatar Airways in its growth ambitions. No-frills AirAsia India is keen to capture more traffic between India and South-East Asia.

India is making major efforts to promote “Buddhist circuit” tourism. There is no reason why similar campaigns cannot be conducted for the large global population of Muslims. A concerted effort in attracting tourists from Muslim countries could lead to economic benefits that can be tremendous, both in creating jobs and attracting foreign exchange.
Shaik Nizamuddin Auliya was born in 1244 in the town of Badaon in North India. He acquired the title of Shaik (Master or Leader) and Auliya (Venerable) during his lifetime as a renowned Sufi scholar. His paternal and maternal grand-parents had fled the renowned town of Bukhara when the marauding armies of Genghis Khan laid waste to the flourishing Central Asian cities in the 12th and 13th Centuries. Hailing from a pious Islamic family Shaik Nizamuddin Auliya already had the seeds of Islam sown in him at a very early age. The family had a tradition of learning and resilience under adversity that was to stand him in good stead in his long career of 82 years as a philosopher, scholar, author, jurist and above all a humanist.

Islam in 13th century India was in its nascent stage but was to reach great heights during the Moghul reign. It left behind a legacy of social, cultural, economic and political contributions that were to profoundly shape the Indian subcontinent. The iconic cultural monuments of India of which the Taj Mahal is the standard bearer owe their origin to the Islamic roots of the Moghul dynasty.

Sufism is an offshoot of Islam that blossomed in countries where the new faith had taken a foothold with eminent thinkers and philosophic schools expounding the virtues of God on the one hand and universal love and understanding on the other. India bordered by Iran, Afghanistan, China and the Central Asian countries was at the epicenter of the Sufi movement. Shaik Nizamuddin Auliya was a precursor of the early Sufi schools and one of his peers, Shaik Farid Ganj-i-Shakar, entrusted him with the perpetuation of the famed Chisti order which through his Murids (disciples) led to the spread of Islam from the arid Deccan in the South to the scraggy mountains of Kashmir in the North. It is also noteworthy that the Sufi philosophy of love found resonance with the prevailing faith of a majority of Indians who professed Hinduism. It is therefore not surprising that Shaik Nizamuddin Auliya’s shrine in Delhi is a place of pilgrimage and veneration of different denominations, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This co-existence is an exception to the misguided view that Islam is not compatible with tolerance of other religious beliefs especially those of non-monotheists.

Some of the profound humanistic teachings of the Shaik are encapsulated in the Malfuzat (speeches or discourses) compiled by his contemporary Hazrat Amir Kurso, in his own right an
eminent Sufi. The NShaik Nizamuddin complex comprises, apart from the main mausoleum of the Shaik, a number of adjacent tombs of which those of Hazrat Amir Kurso referred to above, Jahan Ara Begum, the eldest daughter of Emperor Shah Jahan (1628 to 1658 AD) famed for his construction of the Taj Mahal in Agra, and the four sons of Bahadur Shah II (1837-58), last Mughal emperor of India. The four sons were executed by the British following the Indian mutiny of 1858. The main mosque, Jama’at Khana Masjid, lies adjacent to the mausoleum while 18 other mosques are found within a radius of 3 miles.

The Shaik Nizamuddin Dargha is probably the most renowned South Asian Islamic architectural complex replete with mausoleums, mosques, madrasas, monuments and hordes of people milling around day and night. What gives it added value is the intangible cultural heritage of the site with its rites and rituals which have an unbroken history and tradition spanning 800 years. One such living tradition is the music associated with ghazals. Though shunned by orthodox Islam, ghazals originating from Hindu folklore and music, were integrated into the Sufi order and became a part of the daily rituals. Amir Kurso was one of the famous exponents of the ghazals whose poems extolling the virtues of love are sung every evening at the mausoleum with special communal sessions on Thursdays and Fridays of the week that attract a multitude of people of the area as well as tourists.

Based on Shaik Nizamuddin Auliya’s strict adherence to the meaning behind the Quran rather than a literal interpretation of the texts of the holy book, he made his abode (Khanqah) in Delhi a place accessible to the rich and the poor without any class, creed or racial discrimination. Through a regimented code of conduct his disciples and followers observed certain rules and regulations that have survived to this day which includes amongst others the distribution of food to the poor and the wayfarer. The traveler hence had his own status as a special guest. This social work has its roots in charity, one of the pillars of Islam. The Shaik extolled in his teachings that “every visitor should be served something; if there is nothing to offer, a cup of water may be offered” (page 101). The practice of serving food to visitors is an Indian custom that is an inherent part of Asian hospitality. It is of particular importance during the Urs celebrations that attract thousands of devotees and pilgrims. The Urs usually coincides with the death anniversaries of Sufi personalities who have been raised to sainthood by their followers. Since the Shaikh himself celebrated the Urs of his spiritual guide, Shaik Farid Ganj-i-Shakar, which fell on the 5th Muharram each year, the tradition has been perpetuated to celebrate the Urs of the Shaikh himself and those of some of his eminent disciples such as Amir Khurso on their respective death anniversaries.
The death anniversary of Shaikh Nizammudin Auliya and the Urs festivities last for 5 days attracting approximately 30,000 visitors, both pilgrims and tourists. The Muslims follow the lunar calendar and hence the Urs celebrations vary from year to year.

The Urs celebrations and other important events of the Islamic calendar such as Ramadan culminating in the Id-ul-Fitr festival, Id-ul Azha (Hajj festival), and the Holy Prophet's (sas) birthday are equally well attended by pilgrims, the visitors throughout the year number in their thousands.

The management of these activities is an exercise of great magnitude and calls for planning and logistical arrangements as the ebb and flow of human traffic is never ending. The policy and planning of religious and secular events associated with the Dharga are handled by a select number of committed and devoted persons whose dedication is matched only by their zeal.

There are other customs and rites which make the pilgrimage to the shrine an experience of a lifetime. From a tourism point of view there is much more to these pilgrimages where all the epithets - adventure, faith, culture, eco-friendly-- apply in equal proportion.

Given the status of Nizammudin Auliya in India and in the Indian subcontinent the volume of visitors is basically domestic or intra-regional. Therefore, one has to contend with a very large Muslim population covering neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, from whose base the visitors originate. Even a very small percentage of this total is sufficient to provide the volume in terms of numbers. In addition, Delhi itself has over 2 million Muslims who have easy access to the Dhargha. As mentioned earlier the visitors to the Dharga are not confined to Muslims alone and in a city as Delhi which is a megapolis with over 18 million people there is no shortage of visitors.

Given that Delhi is the Capital of India and a tourist destination in its own right, the accommodation facilities are sufficient to cater to the demand of pilgrims and visitors. However, the nature of the pilgrims, there is pressure on the informal sector for accommodation facilities.
Indonesia

Kindly contributed by Myra P. Gunawan, Budi Faisal, Ruwaida Fajriasanti
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Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world with 17,504 islands of varying sizes. The country stretches across 2830 km and has a land area of 1,910,931.32 km². The total population is 253,602,815 of whom 87% profess the Islamic faith making it the most populous Muslim country in the world.

International tourist arrivals in 2014 totalled 9.43 million, an increase of about 7.2% over 2013. Visitors from Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia and the Middle East contributed 15.3% to the total. Arrivals from China grew by 28.3%, comprising over 10% of total international arrivals in 2014. Neighbouring Malaysia has been a significant source of visitor arrivals for decades, with a market share of 13.5% in 2014. Visitors from the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE and Bahrain) are small in number but grew 27.04% between 2013-2014 - well above the total increase during the same period. The Ministry estimates that of the 8.7 million visitors in 2013, an estimated 1.2 million were Muslim tourists from various countries.

The domestic market has been growing steadily for decades due to the growth of the middle-class, improved education, changing lifestyle as well as improved accessibility. The advent of low-cost-carriers has enabled the population to travel to provinces and even remote destinations beyond Java and Bali. However, most of the travel is still generated to and from the most heavily populated island of Java. The total number of domestic tourists is close to a quarter billion. Given the Muslim population base, it can be claimed that Indonesia has at least 200 million domestic Muslim tourists, with immense potential for future travel abroad, especially to the Islamic countries.

The arrival of Islam to Indonesia is traced back to the 9th and 10th centuries AD. The spread of Islam in Western Indonesian regions particularly Sumatra in the 12th century is attributed to traders and merchants from Middle East and India who had converted to Islam. A major development for Islam in Indonesia occurred in the early 15th century, when the king of the Hindu kingdom of Majapahit in East Java converted. Thereafter, Islam’s influence grew rapidly and spread peacefully in a society that was dominated by cultures and civilizations influenced by animism (natural religion), Hinduism and Buddhism. Islam in modern Indonesia has undergone assimilation and new trends in religious observances and fresh Islamic lifestyles have emerged. An Indonesian Council of Islamic Scholar (Majelis Ulama Indonesia – MUI) has been established.
to provide halal certification for Foods, Drugs and Cosmetics, for the benefit of Muslim consumers specifically and Indonesian consumers in general.

Indonesia possesses a rich cultural heritage and abundant natural resources that justify its initial political slogan “unity in diversity” and certainly its tourist branding “the ultimate in diversity” that has now been superseded by “wonderful Indonesia”. All these tourism resources can be easily utilized for Muslim visitors with the inclusion of additional facilities that comply with Islamic norms and values such as the provision of halal food, places for prayer and Sharia-based accommodation. These diverse tourism resources can be a comparative advantage for Indonesia over other Muslim countries. The development of Islamic tourism can contribute to the advancement of events and public facilities, as well as indigenous Islamic arts and crafts.

Indonesia possesses over 700,000 mosques and mushollas spread over the entire country. However the following are noteworthy due to their cultural heritage: The old Mosque of Bayan Baleg, built in the early 17th century; wooden mosque in Bangka Island; Tamansari underground mosque in Yogyakarta; red mosque in Panjunan, Cirebon (West Java); mosque in Surabaya named after Captain Zheng He (the well known Chinese explorer), Kudus mosque, located in Kudus in the northern part of Central Java.

As in other countries, all the Islamic religious events are marked with great enthusiasm. They also help promote people movements amongst the regions for visiting relatives, recreation and worship, usually in combination. For example, before the Eid Al Fitri, Muslims return to their hometowns or place of birth, a trip popularly called “mudik”. This movement usually starts from seven days before Eid Al Fitri and peaks two days before it. It leads to a huge exodus from large cities to the small towns or rural areas. In 2014 alone, the number of “mudik” travellers is estimated at 30 million people across Indonesia. Because it involves a very large movement of people in a relatively a short time, the government strives to help with improved transport services and public facilities to enhance comfort and safety.
The Ministry in charge for tourism has taken a strategic step by collaborating with MUI (Indonesian Council of Islamic Scholar) and other stakeholders to develop “sharia tourism”, the concept of which goes beyond religious or Islamic tourism. Sharia tourism deals with material as well as spiritual aspects of tourism. Sharia tourism product included halal food, sharia-compliant accommodation, cosmetics, spas, as well as fashion and accessories, supported by financial services that include sharia banking and insurance. This is also intended to enhance a better understanding of Indonesian history as well as awareness of the country’s diversity.

The Ministry of Tourism is preparing detailed manuals and guideline for standardization of the sharia tourism products, competency improvement as well as regulatory guidelines. These will help enhance the quality of the visitor experience and allow Indonesia to attract more sharia-tourism visitors from all around the Islamic world. As of August 2005, Indonesian Government had visa on arrival (VoA) facilities for 52 countries available at 15 airports and 21 seaports. These include countries with significant Muslim populations such as Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, Maldives, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Suriname and United Arab Emirates.

For Islamic tourism, Indonesia is a preferred destination for visitors from China, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. The government has designated some provinces as priority destinations for sharia tourism, namely: West Sumatera, Riau, Lampung, Banten, Jakarta, West Java, East Java, South Sulawesi, and West Nusa Tenggara (Lombok).

**Indonesia Case Study: Bandung City, West Java Province**

Heritage tourism is usually focused on specific areas of interest such as colonial architectural heritage of Dutch East Indies era in Indonesia, which attracts colonial history enthusiasts. As a former colonial Town, Bandung city has many heritage buildings such as in Bandung historical avenue around Asia Afrika and Braga Street displays rich collections of Indies and Art deco architecture from early 20th century.
A well-known Dutch architect Prof. Ir. Kemal Charles Proper Wolff Schoemaker (1882-1949) played a significant role in designing many heritage buildings in Bandung. Among his most notable buildings were the Sociëteit Concordia building on Braga Street (1921), where the Asian–African Conference was held in 1955 (today known as Gedung Merdeka), the Hotel Preanger (1929), the Pasteur Institute of Indonesia, the St. Peter Cathedral, Villa Isola (1932) and the unique ‘East meet West’ Cipaganti Mosque (1933). The only mosque built in the European residential area in the northern part of Bandung, it is a good example of how Dutch architecture blends with traditional Javanese architecture. At the same time, it proves that Islamic values are very adaptive and can share universal values. The mosque is in very good condition and a popular visitor spot for both Muslims and non-Muslims.

For many years, Islamic teachings were imparted in a traditional Institution called Pesantren which exist almost in all rural areas, especially in the island of Java. Pesantren is a very old educational system compared to the formal one. Established in the 1990s, it has once become one of the most visited places in Bandung, even though it is not listed in any of the tourism maps. In Pesantren Daarut Tauhid, students (santris) study religion along with entrepreneurship and leadership. Alongside religious facilities such as Mosques and Boarding Schools, this pesantren has support facilities such as a mini market, medical center and facilities for Muslimah (women). It also initiated the first Islamic TV station in Indonesia. The Pesantren Daarut Tauhid gets about 30,000 visitors a month, even from Europe, USA, Japan and China. Most of them use homestays owned by local communities. It is an example of harmonious community empowerment and in line with Pesantren Daarut Tauhid’s motto: to become a social hub among neighbours that leads to one big family, and to lead a spiritual life without neglecting worldly needs.
Bandung has long been known as Indonesia’s creative hub. The first waves of creative culture came in the 1920s, introduced by European residents and visitors. Bandung has become a haven for fashionistas. In recent years, the growing consciousness of sharia among the city’s Muslim inhabitants has created a very promising room for development for the fashion subsector. Although demand for Muslim clothing has existed for long, its development was limited. The first Muslim fashion outlets emerged in late 1980s and early 1990s. The first, Shafira, was established in 1989, followed by Rabbani in early 1990s. The two were the first to break the stereotype about Muslim clothing being too conservative and unflattering. Both have now successfully established high quality brands and expanded their outlets to other cities in Indonesia. The Islamic fashion market in Bandung has now attracted more and more players. New outlets specialized in women and men wear are emerging, becoming must-visit locations for both domestic and international visitors. The Islamic fashion designers and hijabis community of Bandung are promoting the city’s Islamic fashion through these events, to Indonesians as well as the global market. Hijab Fest, an annual event held since 2010 in Bandung, is dubbed as Indonesia’s biggest Islamic fashion festival. The city hosts other events such as International Islamic Fashion Fair, Indonesia Muslim Fashion Week (IMFW), and Bandung Hijab Fashion Week. Thanks to the city’s creative environment, as well as local government, community, and industry initiatives, Bandung is now aiming to be the Mecca for global Islamic fashion.

Like in any other business sector, all products have to meet a specific requirement for a specific market. The concept of sharia tourism is not meant to separate Muslim tourists from others, but simply to present a choice for those who favour products or standards in accordance with their lifestyle. Sharia tourism is a concept, whereby elements of tourism product are standardized and certified to guarantee that it can be safely consumed by travelling Muslims as well as those who for whatever reasons also need the same standard of product.

As the Indonesian younger generation is entering the global market for sharia-related product, it will strengthen the pursuit of national identity, generate economic benefits, improve community welfare, create jobs and enable a better distribution of economic benefit among the country’s population. All this can build better understanding and peace among different communities, which will be exactly in line with Indonesia’s national slogan “Unity in Diversity”.

Iran is located in the Middle East region. It has an area of 1,648,195 km² and a population of around 78 million. It is eighteenth in world ranking in terms of size, population and economy (World Bank, 2009), (UNDP, 2010). Home to one of the world's oldest civilizations, it has a unique place in the world tourism map.

Iran's location at the intersection of major Asian, Middle Eastern and European countries and trade routes has shaped its diverse cultures and history. Iran's tourism assets belong to different periods of Persian Zoroastrianism (3000 BC), Ackaemenian (559 BC) and the Sassanian (224 AD) empires to post-Islamic dynasties of Samanid (864 AD), Ghaznavid (977 AD), and Safavid (1501 AD). The invasions of Alexander of Greece (330 BC), Arabs with their new Islamic religion (651 AD), and the Mongols (1256 AD) have all been instrumental in shaping Iranian culture and heritage. Of the thousands of historical sites and monuments scattered across the country, about 12,000 are officially registered as potential tourism attractions.
Iran also is endowed with magnificent physical, natural, and ecological diversity. The three mountain ranges in Iran, the volcanic, fertile Sabalan range in the northwest, the Jurassic-era Zagros in the west, and the Alborz range in the north (including the highest mountain in Iran at 18,600ft), the two great deserts, Dashte Lut and Dashte Kavir, plus rivers, lakes, caves, and forests shape the natural environment of Iran’s tourism industry. Diversity of the natural environment and climatic seasons in Iran affords tourists the ability to enjoy winter sports and water sports in the same months.

Tourism policy and planning in Iran is both a political and social issue and there is a lack of private sector development Iran’s natural characteristics along with its archaeology, cultural heritage, and traditions are an ideal and important tourism destination for foreign tourists.

The population is mainly Muslim (Shia), but there are small communities of Christians and Zoroastrians as well as Jews. There are numerous events and religious monuments of great potential interest to both devout followers of the particular systems of beliefs as well as visitors with a casual interest. To visit Iran is a unique experience, the experience of being in the cradle of a civilization and culture that has had and continues to have its impact on the world for more than 2500 years of written history – antiquity versus modernization.

The government has said that it desires to earn revenue only from halal sources and not to depend on the sale of any Haram sources. According to officials, this was ‘part of an educational programmer to ensure tourists respected the local tradition and culture in the interests of Muslims’ and ‘required of Islam’. Tourism policy and planning in Iran is both a political and social issue and there is a lack of private sector development. Iran’s tourism promotional efforts are hampered by a negative image of the country that is more perceived than real. The vast wealth of religious and cultural sites, events and festivals make Iran an ideal pilgrimage destination for Muslims who are in quest of religious fulfillment not to mention a fascinating destination to others who appreciate art, culture, cuisine and warm hospitality at a relatively modest price.

The role of pilgrimages in Iran is quite specific to the country as there is a long tradition of visiting shrines (Ziyarat) of which there are many in Iran itself as well as in neighboring Iraq that are revered by the Shias (Zamani Farahan, 2011). The main source countries for pilgrimages to Iran have been Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. Although Saudi Arabia is largely considered a Sunni country, 15% of the population are Shia and hence look to Iran for religious authority and key sites. This type of tourism holds the most potential in the short term in Iran, as political and security issues are likely to remain.
The majority of incoming tourists in Iran are religious tourists visiting the notable Shia shrines of Imam Reza in Mashhad city and his sister Fatima in Qom city. As for pilgrimages in Iran it is estimated that from 1978 to 2011 there was a sharp increase from 6.29 million pilgrims in 1978, to 27 million pilgrims in 2011. Nowadays there are more than 1100 Shiite shrines, but not all have the same importance and consequently not all of these sanctuaries accommodate an equal number of faithful. The most visited shrines in Iran - Ziyarat – housing the tombs of the eighth Imam in Mashhad and his sister Fatima in Qom, the other shrines - Imamzade - which commemorate descendants of Imam - they do not receive many pilgrims as it is of minor importance in terms of faith, whether they are located in the desert or in very remote places and their location discourages the pilgrimage.

Some of the most important of Iran's Islamic and religious attractions are following:

**Shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad**
Mashhad metropolis is the holiest destination in Iran, its name literally means ‘place of burial of a martyr. Over 12 million pilgrims annually visit the shrine of the eighth Shiite imam and direct descendent of the prophet Mohammed, Imam Reza, who died in AD 817, and these numbers have increased with the conflicts in Iraq.

**Shrine of Fatema Mæ'sume in Qom**
City of Qom is considered holy by Shi`a Islam, as it is the site of the shrine of Fatema Mæ'sume, sister of Imam Reza. Qom is the one of largest center for Shi'a scholarship in the world.

**Shrine of Shah-e Cheragh in Shiraz**
A place of pilgrimage but also worth visiting for its unbelievable mirror work, it contains the tomb of the brother of Imam Reza. In 1958 its dome was reconstructed. This shrine is one of the most famed places of pilgrimage for the followers of the Shiite sect in Iran and in the world.
Iran Case Study of a Shia Religious Festival, Ashura, as observed in Yazd, Iran

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Ashura as an Islamic religious event is marked with considerable intensity in the city of Yazd, known as a “museum of Muharram” in Iran. The city of Yazd has a population of about 10.6 million located 689 km southeast of Tehran at an oasis where the Dasht-e Kavir desert and the Dasht-e Lut desert meet. The city is called “the bride of the Kavir”, a prosperous township that was once at the crossroads of the most important caravan routes from central Asia and India. Marco Polo, who came here on his way to China in 1212, called it “The Good and Noble City”.

Well connected to the rest of Iran by air, road and rail, Yazd is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in Iran, dating back to the Sassanian period (224-651 AD). According to UNESCO, Yazd is a world heritage site which has resisted modern urbanization and maintained its traditional structure. Yazd is also the center of Zoroastrian culture and boasts unique ancient desert architecture which blends with the Islamic monuments and sites. It has more than 80 public accommodation units with 1,298 rooms and 3,122 beds. Yazd is the driest major city in Iran, with an average annual rainfall of only 60 millimeters (2.4 in). It is hot in summer and cold in winter and moderate in spring and autumn. To deal with the extremely hot summers, many buildings in Yazd have magnificent wind catchers, and large underground areas. Because of its climate, it has one of the largest networks of qanats (Underground water channels, to transport water from its source to cities) in the world.
The word “Ashura” literally means "10th" as it is on the 10th day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic year and marks the climax of the Remembrance of Muharram. Tasua and Ashura, the 9th and 10th of Muharram, are religious holidays in Iran. The commemoration of the Battle of Karbala on the day of Ashura is annually honored by Iranians, in each and every big and small city. Yazd is a prominent religious city for holding Ashura memorial ceremonies, one of the most important mourning ceremonies observed in Ashura is Nakhl-Gardani.

The Nakhl Symbol of Imam Hussein (AH) Tomb, is a huge structure sometimes as long as 12 meters, weighing several tons. Traveling through the cities in central desert of Iran, one may see many of these Nakhls in the mosques and tekyehs. The ones in Yazd and Taft, a nearby town, are considered to be the oldest and tallest in Iran, dating back approximately 450 years.

“Nakhl-Gardani” literally means “carrying and turning the Nakhl”. Almost all the other male mourners gather in the center and the women on a bigger circle around them. People hold and move the Nakhl amazingly in harmony. There is a sense of teamwork, an unwritten law or discipline; it’s a special procedure which is quintessentially Iranian. After the Nakhl-Gardani ritual, people listen to religious sermons until sundown. After the night prayers, they hold the Sham-e Ghariban (literally the night of the strangers) as candlelight vigil for the martyrs of Karbala. Other communal forms of mourning in Yazd include Ta’ziyeh which is actually a passion play usually performed during the first ten days of Moharram culminating in a passionate and emotional peak on Ashura day. The term Ta’ziyeh refers to an Iranian dramatic genre which might be compared to the western passion play. This ritual drama has both an Islamic and Persian heritage. It combines several different elements from a processional mourning to pure bodily symbols to the most significant scenic and iconic themes, from simple choral signings to the most difficult Iranian traditional musical performances.

Ashura is the most crowded day in Yazd. During these days all public accommodation are fully occupied and many residents prepare their extra rooms to accommodate visitors. An estimated two million visitors come to attend or watch the ceremony, the vast majority of whom are domestic tourists. Attracting more international tourists will require more capacity, as mentioned in the 2025 vision plan of Iran. The government also plans to increase the number of transport facilities for the festival as the current capacity falls well short of demand. There is also a shortage of qualified staff. In Yazd there are only two official educational institutes offering training courses in tour operating, guiding and visitor management. As of 2015, there were only 246 English-speaking tour guides.
Cooking Nazri (food cooked for mourners) is another common custom of this festival. Special camps are arranged for drinking water, meals, sleeping and medical services. The people of Yazd are also happy to invite visitors to stay with them, which will be even more interesting for international tourists to experience the traditional life style. Some Yazd families work under the supervision of the tourism authorities provide lodging facilities in peak seasons and during such events. Since Ashura, due to the nature of the lunar calendar, varies from year to year this has an impact on the organization of the event.

The first chapter of Fifth Five Year Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on development of Iranian-Islamic cultural patterns through promulgating Islamic values and religious and cultural teachings. This importance can be achieved through development of religious tourism.

The Ashura festival has great potential for the promotion of Islamic tourism. Yazd is promoted by the Yazd Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization. In 2013, international tourists from 16 countries in 2013 participated in this event.
Japan has realized the importance of the outbound Muslim market only very recently. The Japanese government started promotions to attract international visitors since 2003, but at that time, Muslim tourists travelling to Japan were very few. The situation changed in 2012 due to the Great East Japan Earthquake and territorial disputes which resulted in Japan stepping up its inbound tourism promotions. As a result, inbound arrivals from South East Asia including major Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia increased significantly in 2012 (63.9% increase YoY and 59.7% increase YoY respectively). Though Japan does not keep statistics of Muslim tourists, arrivals from two major Muslim-generating countries, Indonesia and Malaysia, reached a record high in 2014 (158,700 and 250,000 respectively). As Muslim arrivals grew, major prefectures such as Hokkaido, Tokyo, Kanagawa, Nagano, Osaka, Kyoto, Fukuoka, Kumamoto and Okinawa began to seek ways to host them by improving the environment to ensure a smooth travel experience.

There are no official statistics as to the number of Muslim residents living in Japan. The Japan Muslim Association estimated 100,000 Muslims in Japan as of 2014, which represents a mere 0.08% of the total population. These Muslim residents are made up overwhelmingly of non-Japanese. Visitors from Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia are estimated to consist mostly of Muslim travellers. Profiles of these two countries are good references to understand the potential of Muslim markets from Asia. Malaysia ranked the 8th most important inbound market for Japan with 250,100 visitors in 2014 (41.4% increase YoY). Indonesia ranked the 14th most important inbound market for Japan with 158,700 visitors in 2014 (16.0% increase YoY).

In the past, Japanese tourism products specifically for the Muslim market were not well developed. There are about eighty mosques in Japan, mostly built by non-Japanese Muslim workers and students who migrated to Japan from the 1980s onward. These mosques can be found in most major cities. Tokyo Camii which belongs to Turkish Embassy is the largest mosque in Japan and boasts a prominent Ottoman Turkish style dome and minaret, both of which are very rare in Japan.

The last few years have seen a gradual increase in Muslim-friendly tourist facilities and services. Even though truly halal facilities and services are limited on the whole, there is potential for
growth, especially in major tourism destinations, which will be driven by the preparation for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020.

As of August 2015, six out of ninety seven Japanese airports have both a prayer room and a restaurant offering a halal menu: Narita International Airport, Tokyo International Airport, Chubu Centrair International Airport, Kansai International Airport, Fukuoka Airport and Naha Airport. Two Japanese airports have a prayer room: New Chitose Airport and Kagoshima Airport. In 2013, Kansai International Airport declared itself as the first Muslim Friendly Airport in Japan and started to promote an improved environment for Muslim tourists in cooperation with surrounding local governments, hotels, restaurants, commercial facilities, etc.

One of the earliest known regional efforts is Muslim Friendly Project started by Hakuba Goryu Tourism Association in 2012. Over twenty accommodations in Hakuba Goryu area came together to organize a promotional campaign and build a website for Muslim tourists. The hospitality sector in Japan is also realizing the future importance of the Muslim market. The Kamori hotel chain obtained the halal certification by Malaysia Halal Corporation Co., Ltd. and started to serve halal menu in their restaurants in 2012. The same year, many hotels and some Ryokans in Japan began to offer halal food services and set up prayer room. Hotel Granvia became the first hotel in Western Japan to acquire the local halal certificate in 2013. The Hotel Yugaf Inn Okinawa that became the first hotel in Okinawa to acquire a local halal certificate in 2014.
The travel agency Miyako International Tourist co., Ltd. is known for its first halal package tour. The first tour was conducted in January 2012 with 16 Malaysian participants travelling around Nara, Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe for 3 days 4 nights. The tour was sold out and there was a reservation for 500 people in the first six months after the first tour. Okinawa Tourist Service Inc. followed with a Muslim-friendly tour in June 2012 with 100 Singaporeans travelling to Okinawa for 3 days 4 nights.

Thereafter, a number of Japanese and non-Japanese travel agencies started to offer Muslim-friendly tours. Overseas office of Japanese tour operators including JTB Malaysia offers Muslim-friendly tours to Japan. Bus service company Hato Bus Co., Ltd. started to offer a bus tour for Muslim tourists in 2014. Non-Japanese travel agencies such as Apple Vacations & Conventions (Malaysia), PNL Travel (Malaysia), WITA Tour (Indonesia) and Prime Travel & Tour (Singapore) have also started to offer such tours.

Over the last few years, in addition to the Japan Muslim Association and Islamic Center Japan, more Islamic organizations have emerged to improve the halal environment, e.g., the NPO Japan Halal Association, Halal Japan Business Association and MHC Co., Ltd. Due to the Japanese tourism-related industries’ increased interest in attracting non-Japanese Muslim tourists and the potential of halal food business, these organizations are keen to provide halal certification for food, products and services, organize seminars about Islam and halal, etc. In 2013 Japan Tourism Agency and Japan National Tourism Organization took a booth dedicated to Muslim travellers for the first time at the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) Fair in Malaysia, where Japanese suppliers also promoted their tourism products.

Japan National Tourism Organization, ASEAN-Japan Centre and some local authorities have websites and/or online guidebooks for Muslim travellers. In February 2013 the Japanese government held its first ‘Japan Muslim Tourism Seminar’. After the JTA and JNTO attended the MATTA Fair in Malaysia in 2013, local governments around Japan started to hold more seminars on Muslim culture and how to cater to Muslim tourists for tourism related industries in cooperation with the JTA, JNTO and ASEAN-Japan Centre. In November 2014 the first international forum and exhibition of Islamic market and halal business called ‘Japan Halal Expo 2014’ was held to raise awareness of halal market and to develop a domestic halal environment. Seminars on halal food have become common nowadays in Japan. Now, many restaurants and accommodations are offering ‘Muslim friendly’ menus or obtaining halal certification. However, they are located mainly in major cities and most of their services require prior reservations.
Republic of Korea

Kindly contributed by Sun Jin Ji,
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The Republic of Korea is located in North-East Asia and covers an area of 100,033 km². Mountains cover 70% of the land mass. The recent total population is 50 million people. Of that, around 53.1% affiliate themselves with a religion. In 2014, the country’s gross domestic product reached USD 1,304 billion. The economy grew by 3.3%, up from 3% in 2013, but growth remained lower than the average of 4.8% during the pre-crisis years of 2002/2007.

The Republic of Korea is generally regarded as an industry-oriented country, but it is also one of the fastest growing nations in medical tourism sector. After the visit by President Park Geun-hye to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Qatar in March 2015, both national and regional Governments see Islamic tourists as a potential market for medical tourism to the Republic of Korea. Indeed, medical tourism is becoming one of main purposes of visit to the Republic of Korea from Islamic countries.

Islam in Korea is a recent phenomenon and dates back to the 1950s. After the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988, a significant number of Muslim migrant workers began to flow into the Republic of Korea. Since 2005, the number has increased sharply. Muslim communities have emerged in industrial areas, especially amongst the small and medium sized businesses. The resident Muslim population in the Republic of Korea is approximately of 135,000 people comprising 35,000 Korean and 100,000 foreign Muslims according to the Korea Islam Foundation.

The number of outbound tourists began rising again after the economic recession of 2007 and 2008, going from 9 million in 2009 to more than 12 million in 2010, and hitting more than 16 million in 2014. More remarkably, however, the number of inbound visitors has recorded an even higher growth, more than doubling from 6.8 million in 2008 to 14.2 million in 2014.

According to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism an estimated 384,000 Muslim visitors came to the Republic of Korea in 2010, rising to 751,000 in 2014, up nearly two-fold in five years. Approximately 5% of the total visitors to the Republic of Korea in 2010 were from Muslim countries and 6% in 2014. In 2014, visitors from Malaysia and Indonesia rose by 17.7% and 10% respectively over 2013.
Medical tourists visiting the Republic of Korea are increasing notably since the medical law was changed to permit attracting foreign medical tourists in 2009. The number of medical inbound tourists increased by 26.2% in 2014 over 2013. The average annual increase of medical tourists is recorded at 34.7% over the past six years. Medical tourists from Islamic countries are prominent in their growth especially from the Gulf States and the Central Asian Republics. Increasing numbers of hospitals in the Republic of Korea, particularly larger hospitals in the capital cities such as Seoul National University Hospital, now have prayer rooms and offer halal food. Some oriental medicine clinics provide interpretation services in Arabic to the Muslim patients. Over 90% of medical tourists from Islamic countries stated that they will revisit the Republic of Korea due to the Muslim-friendly services and high standards of medical treatment. In addition to halal foods, Islamic patients can get Arabic TV channels and prayer rooms.

In 1940 Turkic Muslim Islam Mosque was set up in Seoul. Today, two main Islamic organizations Korea Islamic Foundation (KIF) and Korea Muslim Federation (KMF) are recognized officially in the Republic of Korea. KIF was approved in March 1967 and KMF, the only Muslim missionary organization in the Republic of Korea, was established in October 1964. There are a total of 15 mosques in Seoul, Busan, Kwangju, Jeju and approximately 100 Islamic activity places including prayer rooms (Musalla) through the nation.

Several hotels which host international conferences that attract large attendance by delegates from Islamic countries now have prayer and ablution facilities and keep the Holy Quran in hotel rooms, along with prayer mats and the indicator showing the direction of Mecca.
Many tourists from Islamic countries are seeking to enjoy Korean food (Hansik) thanks to the positive influence of Korean Dramas. However, it is not easy to find restaurants which have Muslim-friendly facilities such as prayer rooms. To address that gap, the Korea Tourism Organization has published a special guidebook with information of Halal restaurants, mosques, praying times, etc. The Republic of Korea has around 140 Muslim-friendly restaurants nationwide, mostly of Indian, Turkish, Pakistani and Arab origin. About 50 Korean restaurants have menus catering to Muslim visitors, mainly offering fish or seafood and vegetarian food. However, only five restaurants offering Halal food have been certified by Korea Muslim Federation Islamic cuisine can be best found in the Itaewon area, thanks to the influx of immigrants from Africa, Gulf Region and South Asia since 1990. In 2015, the Korean Tourism Organisation published an English guidebook named “Muslim Friendly Restaurants in Korea”, listing Islamic Cultural restaurants and Muslim friendly Korean Restaurants. A “Muslim Food Guidebook” has also been published in Arabic. A grade system for Muslim Friendly restaurants is to be adopted by the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) from 2016. Muslim friendly restaurants will be designated in five categories: Halal certified, Self certified, Muslim friendly, Muslim welcome and pork-free.

Altogether, the KTO has plans to participate in 31 international travel fairs in Asia and the Middle East for attracting Islamic tourists in 2015. It is also planning to step up its PR and advertising campaigns. Road shows and fam tours to the Republic of Korea targeting Muslim travel agents are being expanded, and conducted in cooperation with Korean provinces.

While Muslims constitute one of the largest religious groups in the world it is imperative that the marketing efforts of the Republic of Korea take note of the demands and sensitivities of the Muslim traveller. This was one of the fundamental lessons learnt at the Islamic Tourism Forum that held in Duman on the 12th and 13th, 2011.
Malaysia is located in the south eastern part of the Asian continent with a total land surface area of 336,700 square kilometres. Malaysia has a population of 30.3 million. The peninsular is more populated than the states of Sabah and Sarawak. The west coast region of the peninsular is economically more advanced than the rest of the country. Malaysia is formed by a pluralistic society, which is dominated by three main races, namely the indigenous Bumiputra of which the Malay forms the majority, Chinese and Indian. Bumiputra constitutes 65.1% of the total population while Chinese and Indian constitute 26.0% and 7.7% respectively. In terms of religious affiliation, Malaysia's population is 60.4% Muslim, 19.2% Buddhist, 9.1% Christian, 6.3% Hindu and 2.6% Confucius/Tao/other Chinese religious believers. Although Islam is enshrined as the official religion, the constitution still ensures that there is complete freedom of worship for all people.

The government has recognized the potential of tourism as one of the engines of growth and an important pillar in the economic development of the country. In 1972 the Tourist Development Corporation (TDC) was founded through an Act of Parliament. A tourism master plan was drawn up in 1975. By 2013, tourism had risen to second-highest earner of foreign exchange at RM65.4 billion after manufactured goods. In 2014, international tourist arrivals reached 27.4 million with RM72 billion in receipts.

A new phase in tourism development began when the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism of Malaysia (MOCAT) was set up in May 1987. The establishment of the Malaysia Tourism
Promotion Board MTPB) further energized the government’s active role in promoting tourism. The government has started to include Islamic tourism as a promising new market by building upon its Islamic heritage and traditions. An Islamic Tourism Centre was set up in March 2009 under the Ministry of Tourism. According to Crescentrating Malaysia is the top-ranked Halal-friendly holiday destination amongst the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) member states. While the Middle-east and the Gulf States constitute the bulk of the traffic from Islamic countries one new feature has been the growth of the Chinese Muslim tourists that has more than doubled in the spate of 5 years with a total surpassing 100,000 arrivals. With Muslims comprising 60.4% of the population, or about 18 million people, Malaysia has no shortage of facilities, products and services catering to the Muslim traveller.

There are around 6,000 mosques nationwide, many decorated with intricate and beautiful Arabic calligraphy. One of the most famous is the Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin Mosque in the administrative capital of Putra Jaya, near Kuala Lumpur. Aptly named as Masjid Besi or Steel Mosque, it was completed in August 2009. Some mosques apart from being places of worship have become iconic monuments popular among Muslims and non-Muslims as tourist attractions. Special mention may be made of the following: National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur; Tranquerah Mosque in Malacca. The mosque, one of the oldest in Malaysia, was built in 1728 (It has distinctly Javanese architecture but has a pagoda in place of a minaret, symbolising the heritage of Malacca at the time); and the Crystal Mosque in Kuala Terengganu, to the east of the peninsular. Within the same ground of the Crystal Mosque is the 10-hectare Islamic monument park which boasts replicas of 22 monuments from 21 countries including Al-Hambra Citadel, Spain, Taj Mahal, India and Kalyan Minaret, Uzbekistan, all prominent icons of Islamic civilization in different parts of the world. Mention must also be made of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia which is one of the best places to study exhibits pertaining to the world of Islam with approximately 11,000 titles on the open shelf.

While Malaysia’s accommodation sector is well-established to cater to the more than 27 million tourists, the country has gained international prominence for its innovative homestay programme that has become very popular with foreign as well as domestic tourists. Homestay is an alternative form of lodging albeit with participatory activities organised by the hosts. In Peninsular Malaysia, a majority of the hosts are Muslims who live in kampung (villages). Tourists are encouraged to participate in programmes that reflect the socio-culture of the villages including observing local customs, taste home-cooked food, do jungle trekking, rubber tapping or indulge in local past times.

Malaysia celebrates all Islamic festivals which are festive moments and also lead to family reunions thereby boosting the domestic tourism sector. A unique Malaysian event is the annual
Tilawah Quran (Recital Quran) that has gained international recognition with participation of both males and females from Muslim countries around the world in addition to the locals.

Malaysia’s air transport infrastructure affords excellent international and regional connectivity and accessibility which has been one of the pillars of the country’s success in tourism where with 27.8 million arrivals in 2014 it is ranked 12th in the world. The growth of Low Cost Carriers (LCCs) where Malaysia is a leader in Asia is another contributing factor to the democratization of travel that has led to the growth of tourism. Malaysia has also invested in cruise tourism and is claimed to be the home of the world’s first Muslim-friendly cruise trip. Pelayaran Islamik Penang – Phuket – Krabi 1-4 Februari 2015 with tagline Shukur, Tenang dan Damai (Gratitude, Serenity and Peace) that offers a 4 day voyage of leisure laced with Islamic religious programmes which is designed to better understand Islam and its practices.

Malaysia has a played a pioneering role in Islamic tourism and this can be attributed to the opening of the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) on the 16th March 2009. Besides the collaboration and cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and Tourism Malaysia the centre serves as an advisory body on Islamic tourism to the governing bodies. “Over the years the centre has increasingly become a point of reference among stakeholders and industry players, and seen as an industry expert on Islamic tourism”.

The ITC undertakes research, training courses, capacity building, information exchange on sustainable tourism best practices. The initiatives of the ITC over the years range from training courses, seminars and workshops, publications, and strategic plans for the future of Islamic tourism with neighbouring partner countries such as Indonesia, Brunei, Thailand and the Philippines. Major events include the organization of the “International Islamic Tourism Conference and Travel Mart” (2010), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia,” “Islamic Tourism and Halal Conference (ISTHAL),” (2009), Selangor, Malaysia, and the “Islamic Fashion Festival” (2012), Kuala Lumpur Malaysia.
The Republic of Maldives is an archipelagic nation in the Indian Ocean–Arabian Sea area, consisting of twenty-six atolls, oriented north-south. Its population of 328,536 (2012) inhabits 192 of its 1,192 islands with the largest city and capital, Male', located at the southern edge of North Male' Atoll, having almost a third of the total. All Maldivian nationals are Muslims. The Maldives is the smallest Asian country in both population and land area.

The Maldives remained largely unknown to tourists until the early 1970s. The first tourist resorts were opened in 1972 with Bandos island resort and Kurumba Village (now called Kurumba Maldives), which transformed the Maldives economy. Today, Tourism is the biggest foreign currency earner and the largest contributor to the country's GDP (28% of GDP and more than 60% of foreign exchange receipts. Over 90% of government tax revenue comes from import duties and tourism-related taxes. Tourism has bolstered the economy and created direct and indirect employment and income generation opportunities in other related industries.

The unique ‘one-island-one-resort’ concept makes the resort sector the most attractive form of accommodation in the Maldives. Maldives received 1.2 million tourists in 2014, up 8.1% over 2013. According to the Maldives Tourism Year Book 2014, Europe, although the leading source-market of visitors to the Maldives over the years, has been losing its market share to the growing number of visitors from the Asia and the Pacific. As an important historical crossroad for seafarers in the Indian Ocean, Maldivian culture is a melting pot of various influences gathered from visitors who set foot there over the centuries. Influences of India, Sri Lanka, Arabia, Persia,
Indonesia, Malaysia and Africa are evident everywhere.

Some of the leading Islamic cultural sites including mosques and monuments are as follows:

**Male’ Friday Mosque** known in Dhivehi as “Male’ Hukuru Miskiy” is known for its fine lacquer work and intricate wood and coral stone carvings. It is the oldest mosque in the country, originally built in 1658.

**Masjid-al-Sultan Muhammad Thakurufaanu Al Auzam**, the Islamic Centre, is an architectural, cultural and historical landmark in Male’ that was opened in 1984.

**Friday Mosque**, Meedhoo, Raa Atoll believed to have been built under the reign of the first Sultan from Dhiyamigili Dynasty, Sultan Muzaffar Mohamed Imaduddin II around 1705.

**Isdhoo Old Mosque**, Isdhoo, Laamu Atoll dating to 1701.

**Friday Mosque**, Fenfushi, Alif Dhaalu Atoll. Built between 1692-1701, during the reign of Sultan Mohamed of Dhevvadhu. Features a unique coral stone bathing tank, coral stone wells, a sundial.

The Maldives has huge potential for Islamic tourism, thanks to its Islamic culture and heritage. Another positive contributing factor is that all islands are isolated. This means that Maldives can open up resorts offering total privacy for families. It will not be difficult task to open a halal resort. Introducing Islamic tourism would increase the number of visitors from the Middle East and from the numerous Asian destinations where there is a sizeable Muslim population. Located at Male, the National Museum of Maldives houses an array of different kinds of historical artifacts of historical interest associated with Islamic culture.
Accommodation services have changed significantly since tourism first started in the Maldives. Today there are possibilities of lodging in resorts, hotels, guest houses in local islands, safaris and many more. The Maldives hold a huge potential for Sharia Compliant Hotels, especially in the locally-inhabited islands where all accommodation service providers do not provide any form of “haram” food or drinks.

International flights connect the Maldives to many destinations in Europe, the Gulf regions and Asia and the Pacific. The Maldives is pitching itself to the Islamic tourism market following a surge of interest in the destination from the Middle East and Gulf region. Resort Managers say that the Maldives, a 100% Muslim Country, is a perfect destination for Muslim Travelers as all food items in the resorts are “Halal”, apart from pork and alcohol, and all the islands have prayer places. All Halal cuisine is made and served separately.

The Maldives is already in a joint venture to develop a five-star, resort in Shaviyani Atoll Gaakoshibee with Caprice Gold. Caprice Gold, renowned for Islamic tourism, will invest USD 170 million in the resort, which is expected to become operational by the last quarter of this year. The resort will be the first Sharia-compliant resort in the Maldives. Although the Maldives has hosted Muslim guests, including royal family members from Gulf States, a Sharia’s Complaint Resort, has been lacking for some time.
Pakistan

Kindly contributed by Zafarullah Siddiqui, Adjunct and Visiting faculty in Bahria University, Pakistan

Kindly contributed by Muhammad Ali Imam, Consultant of Tourism Feasibility and Development, Pakistan

With hundreds of Islamic sites and shrines dating back to its rich history, Pakistan has the potential to become one of Asia’s top Islamic tourism destinations. In fact, it could hold the key to potentially one of the most promising socio-cultural and economic sectors of national progress and development.

The state of Pakistan was established on 14 August 1947 in amalgamating the Muslim-majority eastern and northwestern regions of British India and named Islamic Republic of Pakistan. It has a total land area of 803,940 km² and an estimated population (2015) of 191,715,847 of whom 95% profess the Islamic faith, the second largest Muslim population in the world. Pakistan is currently undergoing a process of economic liberalization which includes privatization of all government corporations, aimed to attract foreign investment and decrease budget deficit. In Pakistan the importance of tourism has not been fully recognized. This will need to change if the full potential is to be realized, covering both general tourism and Islamic tourism.
Tourism has all the ingredients to contribute significantly to the national economy. Unfortunately the country is gripped by various domestic issues and challenges and also a serious image problem. Religious tourism potential stretches across the whole country. Due to its rich history and heritage, Pakistan has many monuments, shrines and sites of spiritual and historic importance to all the major religions of South Asia: Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhism and Islam.

The Medieval period (642–1219 CE) is defined by the spread of Islam in the region. During this period, Sufi missionaries played a pivotal role in converting a majority of the population to Islam. The zenith of Islamic activity in the area which was a part of the Indian sub-continent came with the Moghul Empire which disintegrated with the advent of British rule. The Islamic cultural sites of Pakistan coupled with the Sufi shrines are too vast to enumerate since mentioning a few does injustice to the others. Being an Islamic country Pakistan abounds in innumerable mosques.

Today, the territory comprising Pakistan is considered the gateway of Islam to South Asia. Major tangible Islamic Tourism assets are shrines of saints and preachers and Islamic cultural heritage sites e.g. Historical Mosques, Monuments, Islamic academies, Islamic art and culture exhibitions centers etc. These monuments and shrines are also the “homes” of many Festivals, Urs, Islamic customs and traditions practiced by Pakistani Muslims during holy months and in their daily life. Millions of devotees from within the country and small numbers from abroad, visit these shrines and participate in Urs Celebrations. This forms the backbone of religious and pilgrimage tourism of Pakistan.

Pakistan is well connected with Muslim countries on its eastern and western borders, especially Iran. This means there is great potential for cross-border tourism. It has excellent air links with the Gulf countries. Karachi port also has good potential in future to be a cruise port. The domestic
road transportation network is reasonable and will improve in future as the government goes about trying to improve the infrastructure across the board to boost Regional Connectivity as part of its Vision 2025 Plan.

The Government in its Vision 2025 planning recognizes Art, Culture & Heritage as a vibrant Potential sector of national integration, cultural promotion and development. Steps will be taken for the proper projection and propagation of cultural diversity in Pakistan. Culture will be employed as a tool for national development, culture diplomacy and socio economic development. Intangible and tangible culture, including national heritage sites will be promoted, protected, preserved and projected.

The concept of Islamic Tourism in Pakistan will take considerable time and effort to bear fruit. Some of the key areas that will need to be upgraded in order to take the concept forward involve Information Management, Tourism Enterprise Development, Product Development and Quality Assurance, and Marketing and Promotions. However, given the vast potential for the development of Domestic tourism, a concerted effort will have to be made to support this sector until such time as the negative image of Pakistan is overcome in the eyes of international visitors. Regional cooperation with neighbouring Islamic countries could offset the loss of regular international visitors.

Islamic tourism in Pakistan can make a significant contribution to attracting foreign tourists within the context of overall tourism development programs and strategies. It will not only generate local Jobs and income but also make a major contribution towards enhancing a more positive understanding of Islamic heritage and history. However it is important for the government to develop a proper Islamic tourism strategy, upgrade infrastructure and boost public-private sector cooperation for better management of the tourism resources. Pakistan would also need to reorganize its policies and plans since the former Federal Ministry of Tourism was dissolved in 2011 with the work being assigned to the provincial authorities. The various statistical data on arrivals and accommodation etc. are therefore outdated without proper central authority monitoring.
Sri Lanka’s historical and cultural heritage spans over 2500 years. The strategic location of Sri Lanka attracted sea-farers and traders from the Arabian Peninsula. One of the earliest names of the island “Serendib” is of Arabian origin and was recorded in use as early as 361 C.E., even before the advent of Islam. The Muslims of Sri Lanka therefore owe their origins to these early entrepreneurs who later with the spread of Islam established settlements dating back to the 9th century C.E.

Sri Lanka had a population of 20.5 million in 2013. In terms of ethnic composition, 74.9% of the population is Sinhalese, 11.2% are Sri Lankan Tamils, 4.2% are Indian Tamils and 9.2% are Sri Lankan Moors. The Muslims of Sri Lanka comprise largely of three distinct ethnic groups, namely the Moors, Malays and Memon though there have also existed smaller groups such as the Sammankarar and Mukkuvar who appear to have been amalgamated into the larger Moor community. The Moors constitute the largest Muslim ethnic group with about 98% of the total Muslim population while the Malays are the second largest Muslim community numbering around 41,000.

Tourism has always been a vital industry in the government policy framework since its official recognition in 1966. The Development Policy Framework of the Government of Sri Lanka aims at positioning Sri Lanka as a model tourist destination benefiting from the country’s natural bio
diversity backed by a strong culture, historical artifacts, exotic beaches, green environment and friendly people. The Government has set a target of attracting 2.5 million tourists in 2016.

Official statistics show that as at end 2013, the industry had 270 hotel units with a total room capacity of 16,223. In addition to this, the accommodation capacity in the supplementary units (informal sector) was 688 with 7,373 rooms. The industry had 592 travel agencies and tour operators, 31 airlines, 62 agencies providing recreational facilities, 58 tourist shops and 4,295 trained guides. Around 20 travel agents are in the business of Islamic tourism.

Around 50% of tourist arrivals are serviced by the national carrier, Sri Lankan Airlines with the other half served by international airlines. Five domestic airports serve the needs of internal air travel in addition to travel by helicopter tours and sea planes to some of the more popular tourist destinations.

Since the inception, the mainstay of the tourist industry was Western Europe accounting for about two-thirds of the total tourist traffic. By the turn of the century, there was a marked drop in the share from Europe and an increase from Asia which now has a share of around two-fifths. Together, Western Europe and Asia account for 76% of total tourist arrivals.

Sri Lankan providers of tourist products and services are well aware of the needs of Muslim visitors. There are plenty of options to find halal food in Sri Lanka. Due to the large and active Muslim community, halal food is widely available. However, only a handful is certified by the All Ceylon Jamiiyathul Ulama, the main halal certifying body in Sri Lanka. Many Muslim-owned restaurants assure patrons that they serve halal food. Dozens of roadside food outlets are also Muslim-owned, usually indicated by appropriate signage. Some serve arguably the best local cuisine in Sri Lanka. Being a majority Buddhist country, there is also a wide selection of vegetarian food outlets all across the island. Though not all Muslim women in Sri Lanka wear the hijab and nikab it is a common sight in most parts of Sri Lanka where Muslims live. As such this is not an issue for the foreign Muslim women.

The hotels are well equipped to offer facilities such as Qiblah direction locator tool (prayer direction) and prayer timings. With many mosques and shrines spread throughout the country, Muslim travellers can always find one at any time during their travels in Sri Lanka.

Through broad market segmentation, an approximate idea of the volume of Muslim traffic to the island can be estimated. It could be reasonably assumed that most of the nationals from the Middle East are Muslims. Some of the other Muslim majority countries that generate tourists to Sri Lanka are Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Maldives, Turkey and Kazakhstan. In
addition, India is home for 10% of the world’s Muslim population and 15% of the population of India are Muslims. India is the largest generator of tourist traffic to Sri Lanka. Indian visitor arrivals to Sri Lanka totaled 178,359 in 2011, rose to 191,281 in 2012 and 229,674 in 2013. Assuming around 15% of the Indian traffic to be Muslims it is estimated that the total inbound Muslim traffic to Sri Lanka would have been around 250,000 or 20% of the total tourist traffic to the island in 2013.

Outbound travel by Muslims are undertaken to perform Umra and Hajj in the Holy city of Mecca and Medina. There are Muslims in Sri Lanka who visit India on religious (mainly pilgrimage) and cultural voyages to places of interest such as Nagore Dargah in south India, Hazrathul shrine at Srinagar, Jama Masjid in Delhi, Ajmer Sharif in Rajasthan, Sheikh Salim Chisti’s Dargahat Fatehpur Sikri and the Taj Mahal in Agra.

Sri Lanka offers numerous sacred pilgrimage sites scattered across many parts of the island. The Muslims of Sri Lanka appear to have had a strong pious tradition similar to that of the Catholics where people of faith who are supposed to have led lives of exemplary holiness were highly revered both in their lifetime and upon their death: Dargahs or shrines were erected over their graves. Sri Lanka has a number of such shrines which are visited during certain periods of the Islamic lunar year. Here are a few such important places: Kataragama, Adam’s Peak, Jailani (Balangoda). The following shrines are visited by domestic people: Dewatagaha Mosque in the Cinnamon Gardens area of Colombo, Dargah Town near Aluthgama, Ketchimalai Mosque in Beruwela, Pallimulla in Panadura, Gintota, Ratmalana, Gampola, Akuressa and Matara. These sites form a part of the rich mosaic of Islamic culture of Sri Lanka. Due to the nature of the festivals and rites associated with these shrines, issues are emerging related to accommodation, health and sanitation which call for an assessment by official authorities in terms of infrastructure, carrying capacity and safety and security.
Thailand is a mosaic of diversity and culture. A nation of over 60 million, the Thai sense of identity is allied with Buddhism and the Monarchy. It is a country proud of its independence, rich heritage and tradition, but it has also adapted and embraced the rapid change brought about by globalization. Thailand is a good example of how a Buddhist-majority Asian country is using tourism as a means of social and cultural integration and economic advancement of its Muslim-minority population. Ensuring a comprehensive integration of the Muslim population is a national priority for Thailand. Tourism can and does play a major role in that process.

Thai Muslims constitute about 18% of the total population. They are Thailand's largest religious minority and are concentrated mainly in the southernmost provinces of Songkhla, Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, and Satun. Islam is said to have been introduced to the Malay Peninsula by Arab traders and explorers during the 13th century. Most Thai Muslims are of Malay descent, reflecting the common cultural heritage Thailand's southernmost provinces share with cross-border ASEAN neighbour, Malaysia. The local language is Yawee. The social characteristics of the area are those of Malay Muslims, who form the majority of the people in the society.

Thailand's Muslims enjoy full state support and are free to teach and practice their religion according to their own tenets. The Thai Muslim community is not regarded by the Thai authorities and society as a “minority” group. The minorities who live in Thailand consist of various ethnic
groups such as Thai Yai, Karen and Wah. The Thai Muslim community, on the other hand, consists of Thais who profess the Islamic faith. They enjoy the same legal and political status as Thais of other religious beliefs such as Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Confucians. They have enjoyed inspirational and financial support from the King, who provided money for translating the Holy Qur'an into Thai. The Royal Thai government also provides funds for building and renovating mosques.

A recent survey by the Ministry of Culture shows that Thailand has a total of 3,406 mosques located in 61 of the 76 provinces. The majority are located in Southern Thailand. In order to enable Thai Muslims to conduct their trade and financial affairs in accordance with Islamic practices, the Government established the Islamic Bank of Thailand in 2003.

Thailand has been welcoming visitors from the Islamic world for many decades. The Tourism Authority of Thailand has published guidebooks for Muslim visitors and regularly participates in travel shows in the Muslim world, such as the annual Arabian Travel Mart in Dubai. The country is expecting a significant increase in Muslim visitors from Indonesia and Malaysia after the ASEAN Integrated Community takes effect this year. As such, it is working closely with the Thai-Muslim community and the tourism industry to ensure it is well prepared to provide the social, cultural and religious facilities and services that many Muslim visitors seek. Attracting more Muslim tourists is also in line with the government policy to promote production and exports of halal food.

Arrivals from some of the top Muslim majority countries provide some indication of trends. Allowance has to be made for non-Muslim arrivals from these countries. For example, Malaysia and Indonesia are Muslim-majority countries but also have significant non-Muslim minorities. With due annual variations the leading destinations from Asia in 2014 were Malaysia with 2,644,052 arrivals followed by Indonesia (508,171), Bangladesh (88,375), Pakistan (75,577) and Brunei (11,281). Thailand also gets small but growing number of arrivals from other Muslim-majority countries such as Iran, Turkey, the Central Asian Republics and many Muslim visitors from Muslim-minority countries such as India and Sri Lanka.

Thailand claims to host the Muslim world’s first Halal Science Lab, located at the prestigious Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. The Lab strives to improve the education process and knowledge base about the application of science in the halal food production procedure. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports together with the Halal Standard Institute of Thailand have launched the Halal Food Standard Certification for food shops, restaurants and hotels in major cities nationwide. Dozens of Islamic restaurants all over Thailand have received the Halal Tourism Certificate. Phuket is gearing up to be a Halal food center. While Thai Muslims make up about 30 percent of Phuket’s population, the resort island also welcomes an average of 100,000
Arab tourists each year. The provincial authorities realize the standard Halal food preparations will show the island’s readiness in catering to the special dietary needs of Muslim visitors.

In line with the growing number of Muslim visitors, a range of Muslim-friendly hotels have also begun to emerge. Although they are quite common in South Thailand, the trend is also catching on in Bangkok. The most prominent Muslim-friendly hotel in Bangkok is the Nuovo City hotel, (http://www.nouvocityhotel.com/) located close to the UN’s regional headquarters in the Thai capital as well as many of the tourist landmarks and the backpacker area. It proves to be very popular amongst the many delegations from the Islamic countries coming to attend UN events. Another hotel coming up is the Al Meroz hotel which is due to open in late 2015 (http://www.almerozhotel.com/), located close to the Islamic Centre of Thailand. Both are owned by prominent Thai-Muslim business families which had extensive interests in real estate and are now converting them into commercial projects.

The TAT website lists the following prominent mosques in Central and South Thailand which are open to visitors. Timings vary and are best checked in advance.

**Masjid Nurul Yaman**, located in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province, about two hours drive from Bangkok, has a long history since Ayutthaya Period. It is the centre of the local Thai Muslim community which has lived there for centuries. The original mosques in the area were built in the reign of King Naresuan the Great (1578 - 1593) but suffered in the wars over the years.

**Satun Central Mosque** (Masjid Mambang) is located in the center of Satun province in South Thailand. The mosque was built in modern Islamic architecture style and decorated with marble and colourful glass. The original Masjid deteriorated because of its wooden structures and because it was too small to accommodate worshippers. It was then rebuilt and completed in May 1979.

**Krue Se Mosque** is located at Ban Krue Se, about 7 kilometers east of Pattani town in South Thailand. With a dominant Middle Eastern style, the mosque is said to have been built during the reign of King Naresuan the Great (1578 - 1593).

**The Central Mosque of Pattani** is one of the largest and most beautiful mosques in Thailand. The Narathiwat Central Mosque (Old) is also widely known as Yumiya Mosque, or Rayo Mosque, this mosque compound was built in 1938 in the Sumatran-style and is the burial place of the old city Lord, Phraya Phu Pha Phakdi.

On June 5, 2015, the Tourism Authority of Thailand organized its first dedicated forum to promote Thailand as a Muslim Friendly Destination alongside its annual travel trade show, the Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM +) 2015. The TAT invited 113 representatives of travel agencies and media from Iran, Egypt, Kuwait, Tunisia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Oman, the UAE, Turkey,
India and Singapore to participate in the forum. Many of the delegates were visiting Thailand for the first time. They were flown in by Thai Airways, Emirates, Etihad, Oman Air and Mahan Air. The TAT arranged business meetings between the invited travel agents and 92 Thai tourism operators interested in attracting the Muslim market. Later, the invitees also had a chance to meet with other tourism operators exhibiting at the TTM+ 2015.

The TAT hailed the event as “a very special and historic moment.” Mrs. Juthaporn Rerngronasa, the then Acting Governor, said in a speech, “The Muslim population worldwide is about 1.6 billion, representing 23 percent of the total global population. Thailand has great potential to serve this market. Today, we are seeing a whole new generation of young Thai-Muslims emerging nationwide, and it is very important for them to seek promising opportunities in the tourism sector.” She noted that Thailand is already the top destination for Middle East travellers in Asia. Amongst the non-Muslim countries, Thailand is ranked second in the world by the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2015.

A special forum was also organized to provide the invitees with insights and background of Thai tourism policy. The TAT cited opportunities for tourism in the southern provinces along proposed routes linking Thailand and Malaysia. The invitees were also taken on fam trips to survey tourism products and services for Muslim tourists in Pattaya, Hua Hin and Phuket. The trip included special stops to focus on products and services aimed at the high-end and intermediate markets, family and women groups.

At the same event, the TAT launched its first App designed specifically to help Muslim visitors find their way around the country. The App for iOS and Android is both an online and offline guidebook listing mosques, halal restaurants and hotels, shopping centres with prayer rooms, and other facilities required by Muslim visitors. The initial version was in Thai and English, with plans to expand it to include Arabic and Bahasa Indonesia later. This will supplement the guidebooks and brochures which the TAT has long produced to help Muslim visitors, such as “Halal Check-in Thailand (which contains a list of halal-certified restaurants) and Islamic Attractions in Southernmost Provinces (Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani).
Conclusions and recommendations

This landmark study is intended to help tap an emerging new market that is rapidly making its presence felt on the global tourism landscape. Because it is relatively “new”, it will undergo a “learning curve” period before it goes mainstream and realises its full potential.

The numerous communiqués, resolutions and declarations of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meetings contain valuable recommendations for promoting intra-Islamic travel. Rather than duplicating that guidance, this report is designed to build on that solid foundation and take it to a new level.

The OIC and its various affiliate bodies all recognise well the economic diversity of the Islamic countries, and the vast differences in development priorities and policies. Many OIC countries lack technical know-how and have weak promotional activity. Skilled and well-trained tourism professionals are in short supply. Publicity and promotional exposure is hampered by limited communication systems and technological services. Many also lack the sufficient infrastructures necessary for the development of a sustainable tourism sector.

To address these challenges, numerous reports have already made many recommendations such as promoting tourism investments; integrating tourism policy-making and overcoming policy conflicts both between and amongst the public and private sectors; streamlining the administrative, regulatory and institutional frameworks; enhancing tourism safety and security; promoting sustainable tourism; upgrading the quality and efficiency of tourism-related infrastructure and services; and improving facilitation and accessibility.

This study will add to those recommendations, as follows:

- The Islamic Development Bank (ISDB) must officially and publicly recognise the enormous socio-cultural and economic potential of tourism and chart an appropriate strategy to incorporate tourism into its policies and plans. In the past, tourism was mistakenly seen as an un-Islamic activity which encourages alcohol consumption, gambling and nightlife. Today, that policy needs to be reviewed. There is no doubt that adequate funding for tourism can go a long way towards meeting all the strategic goals of both the ISDB and the OIC – to facilitate a better understanding of Islam, alleviate poverty, create jobs amongst young people, women and small & medium sized enterprises, and promote inter-faith understanding. To date, the ISDB provides funding for associated sectors, such as transport, infrastructure and education, all of which contribute to travel & tourism, but not directly to the travel & tourism sector per se. This policy needs to be replaced with a more holistic, strategic vision that makes travel & tourism a mainstream sector well
deserving of ISDB support.

- If proper ISDB funding is made available, top priority should be given to the restoration and preservation of the many Islamic mosques, gardens, forts, monuments and landmarks in the Asia-Pacific, many of which are suffering from serious neglect, especially in the developing economies. This includes everything from landscaping and interpretation to the quality of toilets. Their websites and publicity materials are also well below par. Many of the museums, too, are in poor condition. Because of their ruinous state of disrepair, they are not popular on the tourist circuit and cannot be financially self-sustaining. Governments are reluctant to give them high priority vis a vis the other priorities on national budgets. If the ISDB can set in motion a three- to five-year plan to spruce up priority Islamic spots, it will go a long way towards fulfilling the resolutions and objectives of the Islamic tourism ministerial summits.

- If the ISDB takes the lead, it will send a clear signal to many other sources of Islamic finance, including sukuk and waqf funds and Islamic banks, to follow suit. The ripple-effect will facilitate financing to Muslim tourism entrepreneurs, especially small & medium sized enterprises. Many young generation Muslims will find tourism a promising industry in which to carve future careers, provided they can be assured of start-up support. On the demand side, the market potential is well-established. Ensuring professional supply-side facilities and services will complete the match-up.

- Every Asia-Pacific country needs to develop a marketing plan to attract Muslim visitors. Islamic countries already realise the potential of this captive market. Non-Islamic countries are catching up. This is in fact no different from attracting any other niche market with its own specific set of requirements. Under the broad umbrella of “Muslim visitors”, numerous sub-niche markets can be tapped, such as weddings and honeymoons, religious tourism, health & wellness, etc. Each has its own distinguishing drivers and parameters.

- Step up industry-wide training programmes on how to better cater to the specific requirements of this market. Non-Muslim suppliers of products and services need to better understand its dynamics and cultural nuances. At the same time, Muslim suppliers need to get more involved in helping to grow this level of understanding. The benefits can and must percolate industry-wide, without prejudice towards any caste, colour or creed.

- Step up market research. Muslim visitors can be sourced from all over the world. They are specially important in countries where the Muslim diaspora is in a minority, such as South Africa, Russia, United States, UK, Australia, China and India. Each market has its own distinct characteristics.

- Upgrade the quality of guidebooks and information for Muslim visitors, including media material and websites. A number of destinations such as Japan and New Zealand are doing this. As new facilities emerge, such as halal restaurants and prayer rooms at
airports and shopping malls, providing updated information could prove to be a competitive advantage in attracting Muslim visitors.

- Encourage the formation of Islamic travel & tourism associations in Muslim-minority countries to liaise with their respective national tourism organisations, provide advice and guidance, organise events, maintain quality control and help provide a better experience for Muslim visitors.

- Encourage Ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps in the Muslim-minority countries to set up OIC “chapters” to carry forward the plans, communiqués and resolutions, covering all decisions of the OIC meetings. This a major missing-link in the implementation process. The OIC has numerous affiliate and subsidiary units located in different parts of the world. All their decisions, activities and events need to be publicised and acted upon, because they are meant for the benefit of the entire Muslim world, not just the OIC countries.