

Special issue: Globalising halal trade and tourism: the evolving business and marketing eco-system

Halal trade and tourism are rapidly burgeoning as industries that offer lucrative business in countries with Muslim majorities as well as in the global market. Fundamental to such rapid growth of the industries are friendly and supportive legal, business and marketing practices at both domestic and international levels. Large-scale production of halal food opened the path to a trade industry that has now successfully expanded into other areas of the market, which led to the promotion of other halal products such as Islamic banking and finance, health care, cosmetics, lifestyle, hospitality and tourism. With such new frontiers for halal industries, issues on good governance, best practices, good manufacturing practices and product standards are spaced to the forefront of discussions and must be dealt with to meet prospective consumer demands.

The special issue also dwells on Muslim-friendly hospitality and tourism. Although Muslim-friendly hospitality is still in its infancy compared to conventional tourism, however, the concept is rooted in the theory of “respect for dhuyuf (guests),” a theory whose origins could be traced back as early as the coming of Islam. Scholarly work addressing issues revolving around Muslim-friendly tourism such as concepts, practices, prospects and challenges are featured in this special issue.

The call for papers for this special issue was first posted in 2018, way before the emergence of COVID-19, which disrupted tourism on a global basis. However, the pandemic has also unearthed greater opportunities or need for a non-physical concept of Islamic tourism such as Islamic “entertainment and creative content” as many of the global population remains locked at home. Drama series like “Ertugrul” showcased Islamic culture and history to the forefront as the world is practically hooked on internet content and streaming sites 24/7. The hunger for good creative content that can be enjoyed by the whole household came to the fore.

Another spill-over effect of the pandemic is that it provides the opportunity to reorganise physical tourism sites and packages to be more welcoming and safer to tourists as we expect physical restrictions and social distancing in consequence of the pandemic to remain in place for another few years. Such means that the tourism industries need to revamp their tour packages and destinations to become more meaningful and attractive, as there will be lesser tourists in the years to come.

A unique way to enhance our services and products is to build trust in our offerings. Although halal certification is important, we have to leverage other mechanisms that will elicit premium value such as geographical indication, trademark or cultural heritage, to name a few. The need for a trusted system, to filter misinformation and build confidence and loyalty in our product is more imperative now, more than ever. As the famous saying goes, “trust takes years to build, seconds to break and forever to repair.” In this context, the term “trust” can be seen from many perspectives. It can refer to the mental state of “trusting others” or as a social attitude or the relationship of being in trust with another. In the context of halal trade, full trust in the environment, infrastructure, governance, system and processes is imperative, and it becomes more critical in an online environment, as there is a lack of face-to-face interaction to verify statements.

Here, I am reminded of how important trust is in regulatory function and governance. In Locke’s conception of government, political power is only ever held on trust. In a commercial



transaction, a certain promise or contract whose performance is based on trust and cooperation. On the same token, the legitimacy of money or currency is based on twofold trust, i.e. public confidence in the issuing government and confidence and the ability of the economic community to ensure the value of accepted money.

In the context of regulatory and governance, the fact that the global halal economy is expanding by leaps and bounds provides significant challenges to the policy makers and regulators in framing an eco-system that not only support but also nurtures and sustains the growth of the industry. Moreover, this legal framework, standards and governance, that defines “halal-ness” in its attributes, or “conformity with Islamic practices” must be world best, second to none. It is no exaggeration that the prospects of global trade in halal products and service depend substantially on the fundamental value, i.e. to build trust in the whole process. This COVID-19 pandemic provided us with the necessary pause to revisit, reconsider and rethink the fundamentals required for this trust to happen.

This special issue is a collection of 13 papers ranging from tourism, medical tourism, Muslim fashion, halal talent needs, halal brand, Islamic banking, halal wellness services, halal logistics, Muslim hotel consumers to halal food supply chain, all of which are written with the hope to provide the seeds for further discourse.

The first part of the special issue highlights specific features of the halal food industry. Consisting of a total of six papers, it commences with the paper by Wan Rusni that deals with the theory of forgetting. The focus is how human by nature tend to forget details as the main reason why branding is so important, not only to assists customers in purchasing decision but also to build in trust and confidence in a particular product. As brand also brings with them a certain level of quality assurance, having the right brand is critical in attaining and later retaining loyalty among customers. The halal brand logo plays an important role in “identity” of a specific type of product that fulfils religious requirements and particularly relied upon religious conscious Muslim consumers.

The second paper dwells in the criticality of having the right pool of talents to shoulder, support and sustain the halal industry. This paper examines the functional model of all the main stakeholders of the halal governance in Malaysia. Using a cause-and-effect chain analysis, this paper seeks to prove that poor sustainability development of the halal talent could cause serious problems to the industry.

The third paper by Mohd Imran Khan, investigates the various risks in halal food supply chain using the multi criteria decision-making (MCDM) approach to identify the various risk elements in halal supply chain. The factors measured in his paper, among others, include raw material cost risks, supplier fairness, raw material integrity issue, halal market and the rest. Using quantitative methods, the ranking of the risks was done based on evidence, and the findings would contribute towards to the halal food industry.

The fourth and the fifth papers examine the halal supply chain and halal logistics, respectively. The integrity of “halal-ness” of products depends substantially on the transportation, warehouse, package, store and handling of halal products. More so, in this global world, supply chain becomes more complex. The fourth paper by Haleem Abid, measures barriers towards the management of halal supply chain. The barriers range from those relating to management, institution, resources, government support and demand. The fifth paper by Muhammad Khalilur Rahman, provides an empirical examination of the model of halal logistic services and its impact on manufacturer’s trust and satisfaction. As has been said earlier, trust is the bedrock of a burgeoning halal industry. In this paper, the importance of trust in mediating between the providers and the buyers are measured. The sixth paper, by Noorliza Karia, explored the various integration models between halal

transportation, halal warehousing and how these activities can be implemented without exposing the halal products to contamination.

The second part of the special issue takes Muslim-friendly tourism and hospitality as its theme. Consisting of five papers, the first by Ikram Muhram, appraises the disclosure practices among hotels that claim to be Muslim friendly. The marketing materials of the hotels were scrutinised and triangulated with the consumer's perception of features, which were considered to be Muslim friendly. Of most important to the consumers, according to the finding, is the articulation of Islamic identity of the hotels. The second paper, by Anna Shnyrkova, probes the needs of Muslim hotel clientele in Russia through informal interviews and questionnaire. Among the important attributes highlighted in the paper is the hotel facilities, which include food, room amenities, bathroom amenities, position of Qibla and availability of the Quran upon request. The third paper, by Juliana, assesses factors that appeal tourists to revisit Bandung as tourist destination. Revisit intention is the desire to comeback to a particular tourist destination. Having repeated visitors is critical in sustaining tourist activities and ensuring the continued appeal of a tourist destination and attraction. The fourth paper, by Andyan Kurniati, provides an empirical investigation into the attributes that wellness customers value as meaningful Islamic identity that satisfies customer's satisfaction and attain their loyalty. The fifth paper by Hamed Dabaghi forays into the customer experience and management in medical tourism. The authors in this paper measure factors that appeal to customers ranging from mechanical aspect to human aspects. Friendly behaviour, helpful staff are among attributes that customers cherish the most in a medical facility.

The third part of the issue dwells in Muslim lifestyle and fashion. The only paper by Alshaimaa Alanadoly, in this part, tests the factors that predict the willingness of a customer to pay premium price for a hijab. Despite social identity as the main reason Muslim ladies don a hijab, its product design is the most important in enticing the ladies to indulge in buying hijabs with premium pricing.

The last paper by Jomo Munandar deals with Islamic banking, with specific focus on the management strategies adopted by these banks to establish loyalty among their customers. Through empirical investigation, the study seeks to gauge the importance of trust in customers by improving customer experience and bridging confidence in the products.

Happy reading.

Prof Dr Ida Madieha bt Abdul Ghani Azmi
Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyyah of Laws,
International Islamic University Malaysia
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Ida Madieha Abdul Ghani Azmi and Noriah Ramly

*Civil Law Department, International Islamic University Malaysia,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and*

Majdah Zawawi

*Islamic Law Department, International Islamic University Malaysia,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*