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The Performativity and Institutionality of 'Islamicness' in 'Islamic Tourism'

Aliakbar Jafari
University of Strathclyde, aliakbar.jafari@strath.ac.uk

Abstract

This article suggests that Islamic tourism be theorised not as a type of tourism but as a subject area that conceptualises tourism as an institutional field in which different actors at micro, meso, and macro levels discursively and performatively co-constitute multiple realities for Muslim populations. This conceptualisation can: 1) enable researchers to shift away from constraining definitions to one that allows them to examine how tourism both shapes and is shaped by social, economic, cultural, political, ideological, emotional, psychological, and environmental realities of Muslims; 2) help situate tourism in a broad spatial-temporal institutional setting where Islamicness is not a pre-determined entity but is a fluid concept in constant processes of 'becoming' (i.e., being shaped by other entities) and 'making' (i.e., shaping other entities); and 3) help foster reflexivity and critical thinking by drawing attention to the institutional and historical structures within which Islamic/halal tourism research has emerged and evolved.

Keywords: Islamic tourism, halal tourism, Islamicness, Institutions, Performativity

Introduction

For more than three decades, a large number of scholars have contributed to a growing body of research that has come to be known as 'Islamic tourism' (e.g., Battour et al., 2017; Carboni, Perelli, & Sistu, 2014; Henderson, 2009; Jamal, Griffin, & Raj, 2018; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010) or 'halal tourism' (e.g., Battour & Ismail, 2016; El-Gohary, 2016; Mohsin, Ramli, & Alkhulayfi, 2016; Rasul, 2019; Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2019). As several reviews also suggest (e.g., Aziz, Rahman, Hassan, & Hamid, 2015; Boğan & Sarıışık, 2019; Jafari & Scott, 2014; Henderson, 2009; Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2019), studies in these streams of research have examined a broad array of tourism phenomena in relation to Muslim populations. For example, rejecting prevalent stereotypes about Muslims as mainly sharia-bound individuals (e.g., Ritter, 1975), researchers have tried to justify Muslims' engagement in tourism, travel, and leisure activities with reference to the compatibility of the sacred and the profane in Islam (e.g., Din, 1989; Henderson, 2003; Ibrahim, 1982; Rimmawi & Ibrahim, 1992). The motivations (e.g., religious and non-religious) underlying such activities have also received considerable attention (e.g., Battour, Battor, & Bhatti, 2013; Battour & Ismail, 2016; Battour et al., 2017; Han et al., 2019; Preko et al., 2020; Raj, 2020). On the supply side too, studies have looked into businesses' response to Muslims' religious or cultural needs (e.g., Eid & El-Gohary, 2015a, 2015b; El-Gohary, 2016; Henderson, 2016). Studies have also shown how tourism instrumentally

serves different social, economic, or political agendas (e.g., Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004; Bhuiyan et al., 2011; Haq, 2014; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010).

Valuable insights from these studies have collectively enlightened us about different aspects of tourism, travel, and leisure in Muslim societies at micro (individual), meso (market), and macro (societal) levels. However, we are still largely short of clear answers for two basic questions: what makes a tourism phenomenon Islamic? And, what/who are involved in its making? As this article will explain and discuss, existing theorisations of 'Islamic' and 'halal' tourisms have paradoxically inhibited an in-depth understanding of myriad dynamics that shape 'Islamic' tourism and constitute 'Islamicness' in tourism. Lack of sufficient theorization on these issues, stems primarily from the incomplete definitions that underlie the literature. In other words, limited definitions, which originally were meant to serve specific research questions in discrete studies, are often generalised in the field without acknowledging the ontological and epistemological limitations they impose on researchers' analytical lens. To put it up bluntly, partial theorisations built upon partial definitions create several blind spots in our understanding of a wide range of actors, actions, and interactions that shape different social realities in tourism.

In this article, research focus is on the above-mentioned questions to propose a general definition of Islamic tourism, *not* as a type of tourism – e.g., religious or spiritual, as suggested by many (e.g., Battour & Ismail, 2016; Carboni & Janati, 2016; Rasul, 2019; Preko et al., 2019), but as an area of interest in which scholars examine the intersections of tourism and 'Islamicness' (i.e., not Islam per se but what presents and represents it) in different ways. This article propose a definition here: Islamic tourism as an interdisciplinary subject area that theorises tourism as an institutional field in which different actors (human and non-human) at micro, meso, and macro levels discursively and performatively co-constitute multiple realities for Muslim populations in local, regional, and global contexts. Theoretically speaking, this conceptualisation is useful for three main reasons:

1) *it enables researchers to shift away from constraining definitions to one that allows them to examine how tourism both shapes and is shaped by social, economic, cultural, political, ideological, emotional, psychological, and environmental realities of Muslims.*
2) *it helps situate tourism in a broad spatial-temporal institutional setting where Islamicness is not a pre-determined entity (e.g., engraved in tourists' mind or in halal products/services) but is a fluid concept in constant processes of 'becoming' (i.e., being shaped by other entities) and 'making' (i.e., shaping other entities).*
3) *it can help foster reflexivity and critical thinking in the field by drawing attention to the institutional and historical structures within which Islamic/halal tourism research has emerged and evolved.*

The article further will present an overview of some key theorisations of Islamic and halal tourisms. In doing so, the aim is not to offer a detailed review of the literature as this is beyond the remit of this paper to discuss how Islamic and/or halal tourism has been conceptualised and outline their key limitations. The focus here is also on how definition of Islamic tourism can help advance theory in the

field and offer impactful contributions to practice and policy. Using insights from neo-institutional theory (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012) and performativity (Austin, 1962; Butler, 2010; Callon, 2010; Latour, 2005). In conclusion, researchers will be invited to adopt a more reflexive approach when researching and reporting different tourism phenomena in relation to Muslim geographies. Such reflexivity can help build constructive dialogues in the broad field of tourism research.

Existing Definitions of Islamic and Halal Tourisms

Several attempts have been made by individual academics and institutional organizations – including Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), World Travel Market (WTM), and Malaysia's Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) – to define 'Islamic' and/or 'halal' tourism. To begin with, institutional definitions vary in their specificity and scope. For example, OIC (2017, p. 4) offers a very broad, ambiguous, and flexible description:

> *"Islamic tourism is mainly targeting people with Islamic beliefs in particular, though it could also have a universal appeal even for the non-Muslims due to a multitude of reasons like fair pricing, peace and security, family-friendly environment and hygiene etc. Islamic tourism as a concept has been used with different names and connotations in the tourism theory and practice. Halal tourism, Sharia'h Tourism and Muslim-friendly tourism are the most common terms, which are used alternatively. However, none of these terminologies has a universally understood definition …. Moreover, there are some related terms such as 'Halal hospitality', 'Sharia'h compliant hotels', and 'Halal friendly travel' concerning the services in this sector."*

In contrast to the OIC's broad description, the definitions presented in the WTM Global Trends Report (2007, p. 18) tend to be very specific: "halal tourism" is defined as "tourism activities permissible under Islamic law in terms of behaviour, dress, conduct and diet. Halal tourism falls under religious tourism, but differs from Islamic tourism where non-Muslims visit Muslim countries to find out more about Islamic culture." ITC (2009, in Kamarudin & Nizam, 2013, p. 398) also defines Islamic tourism as "a sphere of interest or activity that is related to travel to explore Islamic history, arts, culture and heritage and/or to experience the Islamic way of life, in conformity with the Islamic faith."

These institutional definitions, as Neveu (2010) notes, appear to have emerged based on specific motivations such as states' situational intentions to collaboratively develop tourism among Muslim countries or to competitively pursue their own national interests. For example, collaboration between states in Muslim-majority countries in the 2000s was largely driven by a common goal to reconstruct the global image of Muslims in the post-9/11 era. However, each country would simultaneously try to maximize their own national gains by acquiring a bigger share of the tourism market.

Regardless of underpinning motivations, however, the above-mentioned definitions have, in one way or another, informed theorisations of Islamic or halal tourism in the works of a vast majority of

academic researchers (e.g., Battour et al., 2017; Bhuiyan et al., 2011; Henderson, 2003, 2009, 2010, 2016; Preko et al., 2020).

Parallel with these top-down definitions (i.e., individuals adopting institutional definitions), a number of other scholars have tried to independently theorize the concepts. In doing so, some have either thematically theorized other researchers' work or have offered their own definitions. For example, reviewing the existing literature on tourism in Muslim geographies, Jafari and Scott (2014, p. 13) argue that the studies focusing on "[t]he encouragement of tourists likely to meet the requirements of Sharia law" would identify with the term "Islamic tourism". Although Jafari and Scott never meant to theorize Islamic tourism as such, their work has been largely associated with Islamic tourism (see, for example, Battour & Ismail, 2016; Boğan & Sarıışık, 2019). A few definitions that more clearly aim at theorizing Islamic or halal tourism include the following. Zamani-Farahani and Henderson (2010) define Islamic tourism as "tourism mainly by Muslims, although it can extend to unbelievers motivated to travel by Islam, which takes place in the Muslim world" (p. 81). Carboni et al. (2014) define the same term as "tourism in accordance with Islam, involving people of the Muslim faith who are interested in keeping with their personal religious habits whilst travelling" (p. 2). Another recent definition is offered by Boğan and Sarıışık (2019): Islamic tourism is "a tourism type which has emerged as a result of individuals' preferences to travel with the purpose of gaining the consent of God" (p. 91).

Differentiating between Islamic and halal tourisms, Battour and Ismail (2016) define halal tourism as *"any tourism object or action which is permissible according to Islamic teachings to use or engage by Muslims in tourism industry"* (p. 151). This definition, the authors contend, "consider[s] the Islamic law(shariah) as the basis to deliver tourism products and service[s] to the target customers who are mainly Muslims, such as Halal hotels (shariah compliant hotels), Halal Resorts, Halal restaurants, and Halal trips" (ibid). It also "claims that the location of activity is not limited to the Muslim world" as it includes "services and products that are designed for Muslim travellers in Muslim and non-Muslim countries" (ibid). Finally, the authors clarify that their definition is not limited to religious motivations and entails any general tourism purpose. However, Battour and Ismail seem to interpret the term as a type of tourism motivated by religious beliefs and purposes. A somewhat similar distinction is made by El-Gohary (2016) who writes:

> *"…it should be noticed that Islamic tourism differs from Halal tourism. Describing a certain activity or product(s) as 'Islamic' gives an indication that such activity or product(s) is fully meeting all the rules, guidance and requirements of Islamic Shari'ah (which might not be the case in every single Halal tourism product and/or activity). Moreover, branding Halal tourism as 'Islamic tourism' might give a wrong impression that such tourism activities and/or products are only for Muslim customers, which is not true as non-Muslim customers can also consume Halal tourism products for many different reasons… As such, it is preferred to use the term 'Halal tourism' as the main and only term to brand and describe tourism products and/or activities that have full compliance with the rules and guidance of the Halal concept and Islamic Shari'ah. This gives a much better way of understanding the true nature and meaning of such type of tourism activities"* (p. 127).

The Ontological and Epistemological Limitations of Existing Definitions

The above definitions are priceless as they pay close attention to how religious beliefs can influence people's engagement in tourism, travel, and leisure activities. Despite their individual variances, collectively they also recognize Muslims' differential attitudes towards practising Islam. Almost all studies cited above somehow acknowledge the complexities associated with defining the terms 'Islamic' and 'halal' and testify to the existence of much confusion in theorizing the two terms (e.g., Battour & Ismail, 2016; Carboni & Janati, 2016; Rasul, 2019).

A closer scrutiny of these debates reveals that scholars' admirable efforts aimed at making clarifications have not only not yielded their intended results, they have also, sometimes, paradoxically exacerbated the widespread confusion. For example, while Battour and Islamil's (2016) and El-Gohary's (2016) definitions of halal tourism tend to allow some flexibility in interpreting Islamicness, Boğan and Sarıışık's (2019) definition crystalizes it as a fixed and purely metaphysical concept. The stark contrast between the two arises from the fact that the former clearly predicates Islamicness on material objects and practices (e.g., halal-compliant hotel, food, dress code, and services), but the latter bases Islamicness on an abstract entity like 'intention'. Each approach has different ontological and epistemological implications.

To elaborate, if Islamicness so much resides in material objects and practices, then, can one assume that it is these same entities that agentively construct the tourist subject and prescribe new, and, at times, different (because halalness itself has different interpretations among Muslims), tourism realities? Ontologically speaking, material objects and practices do not only represent Islam, they also *present* it. That is, they do not simply and statically describe Islamicness, rather, they proactively both prescribe and proscribe certain things in order to construct a particular form of Islamicness. Think about how the visual and sensory elements used in advertising and promoting halal tourism contribute to tourists' imaginations of what Islamicness can be. As Bottici (2014) argues, the 'imaginal politics' of visual materials create realities of their own. From an epistemological perspective too, how would researchers then consider the agentic role of materiality in the construction and evolution of reality when making claims to knowledge? Said otherwise, what researchers can study is not really Islam as such but what objects and people make of it.

Taking Islamicness as 'intention' also raises serious concerns about what assumptions researchers can make about tourists' intentions and how they can claim to be able to possibly delve into the hidden layers of tourists' intents. To elaborate this point a bit further, in Boğan and Sarıışık's (2019) definition, what makes a "tourism type" Islamic is "individuals' preferences to travel with the purpose of gaining the consent of God" (p. 91). Based on this definition – which clearly predicates Islamicness on consciousness (i.e., making conscious decisions to travel in order to please God), one could deduce that anything outside this narrow circle would not be Islamic. This is the boundary created by the definition. Following the same logic, one could also assume that a Muslim Malay's travel to visit the National Museum of Tajikistan in Dushanbe cannot be a case of Islamic tourism because the tourist's

intention may be to enjoy themselves (e.g., a recreational act) rather than necessarily trying to 'purposefully gain the consent of God'. Similarly, the pilgrimage of an Orthodox Christian Russian to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is, by default, Islamic because, after all, the pilgrim's purpose is to please God. Whereas the proponents of the above definition could argue that the Russian's case exemplifies Christian tourism (not Islamic tourism), a counterargument could be made by stating that these "types of tourisms" are eventually not about the true intentions of tourists (i.e., faith in God) but about their identity attributed to them as Muslims or Christians by researchers. Similarly, the case of Muslim Malay's travel would fundamentally negate most definitions (including the institutional ones) that clearly adopt a flexible cultural approach.

Such complexities and confusions in the literature stem mainly from combining the terms 'Islamic', 'halal', and 'tourism', not least because each concept is multifaceted and means different things to different people. For example, whereas tourism comprises several dimensions (e.g., cultural, religious, economic, hedonic, and political) each of which has its own set of specific theoretics (Rinschede, 1992; Robinson, Heitmann, & Dieke, 2011), 'Islamic' and 'halal' can entail normative, cultural-cognitive, or regulative conceptualisations of Islam (Jafari & Süerdem, 2012). Researchers' principle ontological orientation in each perspective can significantly influence the epistemological means and logics they employ to theorize different tourism phenomena and construct their idealized tourist subjects (e.g., more or less shariah-bound), objects (e.g., destinations and material products/services), and practices (e.g., halal-certification mechanisms undertaken by industry professional).

Despite such deep-seated ontological differences that underlie theorisations of the 'Islamic' and 'halal', one may ostensibly assume that, because of the normative order of the field they operate in, scholars of Islamic and halal tourisms have a more or less shared understanding of Islam and halal; therefore, they can, based on certain common and taken-for-granted assumptions, research different tourism phenomena in relation to Muslim geographies. However, if such normative order exists, then queries on a deeper level would adamantly aim at eliciting convincing justifications for the reason why it has become a normative order too (almost like a Déjà vu) for researchers of Islamic/halal tourism to persist on defining something on which there will never be a definite consensus. To put it bluntly, if Muslims agreed about what is or should be considered 'truly' halal or Islamic (as suggested by some scholars, see, for example, El-Gohary, 2016), the Muslim world would not be so dispersed and conflictual in theory and practice (Jafari, 2012; Süerdem, 2013).

Some may imply that the field of Islamic/halal tourism is nascent; therefore, trying to define some basic concepts can be a normal part of the field's maturation process (e.g., Battour et al., 2017; Henderson, 2009; Preko et al., 2020; Rasul, 2019). In principle, I agree with this logic, but the challenge is that current dominant discussions in the field are generally around Islamic tourism as a type of tourism not as a field of study. This is an ontological obstacle that can significantly slow down the field's maturation speed in the long term. As explained earlier, for example, efforts geared at establishing Islamic tourism as a type of shariah-bound tourism would unintentionally consider a large number of tourism related phenomena in Muslim societies un-Islamic or unworthy of investigation. Such narrow theorization would also go thoroughly against what Din (1989) had tried to clarify. A

careful reading of Din's seminal article suggests that he did not mean to conceptualize Islamic tourism as a type of tourism; rather, in an attempt to refute stereotypical images about Muslims, he had tried to show that like other human societies, Muslims do engage with the profane. In doing so, he had also tried to show how compared with many Muslim-majority countries, Malaysia's top-down approach (i.e., the policies of a religious state) had created a different social reality in the context of tourism. Attention to such institutionalization of certain tourism environments can help analytically differentiate between the vantage points from which Islamicness can be theorized.

To sum up, extant definitions of Islamic and halal tourisms are valuable and helpful in their own right so long as they help their authors to achieve their specific research questions in discrete and small-scale research settings. However, collectively, they contribute to the growth of a body of research in which there is still a lot of ambiguity on what constitutes Islamicness and what/who are involved in making different tourism phenomena Islamic. As poined out earlier on, one root cause of the prevailing ambiguity seems to be that scholarly efforts have concentrated on trying to define Islamic/halal tourism as a type of tourism. As such, the theoretical boundaries created by the definitions have prevented researcher from exploring a wide range of issues that, although implied in many studies, have remained significantly under-theorized. In the next section, I will argue how defining Islamic tourism as a field of study can help researchers to view the tourism landscape from a broader perspective and to surface those hidden research problems. This is an important task because so long as researchers discretely publish on the same (niche) topic in different journals, they are less likely to encounter significant critique. However, once they start to shape and share a distinctive identity under a formal banner (i.e., Journal of Islamic Tourism in this case), they are more likely to receive serious questions from different stakeholder audiences from both within and outside of the field. Therefore, it is expected that, instead of trying to repeat the much-debated definitions of Islamic/halal tourism all over again, authors could embark on more creative and innovative topics that could make impactful contributions to tourism research at large.

Islamic Tourism as a Field of Study: Institutionality and Performativity of Islamicness

In the introduction, I suggested that Islamic tourism be seen *not* as a type of tourism but as an interdisciplinary subject area that theorises tourism as an institutional field in which different actors (human and non-human) at micro, meso, and macro levels discursively and performatively co-constitute multiple realities for Muslim populations in local, regional, and global contexts. This general definition can help researchers interested in exploring multiple junctures between Islamicness and tourism to examine a wide range of phenomena in relation to what shapes tourism and what tourism shapes in and for Muslim societies. Two concepts are pivotal in my definition: institutionality and performativity. In order to discuss how these concepts can help advance theory, firstly research will briefly explain the two terms.

Institutionality refers to the fact that there are multiple institutions and institutional actors and interactions involved in shaping social reality. From this perspective, society is theorised as an 'inter-

institutional system' in which different institutions (i.e., the state, the market, the corporation, the professions, the family, the community, and religions) interactively create certain orders and realities (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012). Each of these institutions have their own logics.

> *"the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organise time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality"* (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804).

As symbolic and material principles, these logics *"provide a link between individual agency and cognition and socially constructed institutional practices and rule structures"* (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 101). Driven by different logics, actors, therefore, can undertake 'institutional work' (i.e., different actions) in order to negotiate 'legitimacy' – i.e., cultural, normative, or political acceptability (Scott, 1995) – for certain things and create, maintain, or disrupt certain orders and realities in the broad arena of social life (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Performativity is a concept that draws attention to how different entities such as practices, language, material artefacts, symbolic things, and technical tools create realities. From a linguistic perspective, Austin (1962) demonstrates that speech has the agentic power to enact a reality so long as the speaker has legitimacy among the audience. For example, a teacher asks students to start an exam and students do so. From an actor network theory lens, Latour (2005) argues that non-human actors such as material objects, technology, and devices and their ensuing interactions agentively develop different forms of reality. To elaborate, for Latour, different types of materials used in objects (e.g., consumables) can enact certain types of functionalities for those objects. Similarly, Callon (2010) contends that different human and non-human entities can recreate social realities because in human society different factors insert different changes in the environment. For example, economic tools such as taxation mechanisms need to be updated according to the economic realities of a given society. Conversely, Butler (2010) argues that human identity is not fixed because people often tend to behave in ways defined by their social structures. Therefore, to perform their own intended reality, they need to be reflexively aware of those social structures so they can enable themselves to act differently.

With these theoretical insights in mind, now I proceed to discuss how conceptualising tourism as an institutional field can help better understand what constitutes Islamicness in tourism and who/what are involved in this constitution.

Many studies and entities I cited in the earlier sections already allude to the role of institutions in shaping Islamic tourism. For example, considering the institutional definitions, it becomes apparent that several states (e.g., in OIC) and professional bodies (e.g., WTM) are involved in prescribing what Islamic and halal tourisms should be. Conceptual and empirical studies (e.g., Bhuiyan et al., 2011; Carboni et al., 2014; Din, 1989; Neveu, 2010; Seyfi & Hall, 2019; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010) also clearly document how states, religious institutions, and commercial organizations aim at institutionalizing certain tourism phenomena. Now, it has become common knowledge that the above-mentioned institutions follow different ideological, political, or economic logics, and in materializing

those logics, they proactively construct Islamic and halal tourisms. For example, on one hand, and from a performativity perspective, Islamic and halal tourisms perform those institutions' idealized realities. In this regard, Neveu (2010) tactfully shows how by rebuilding mausoleums of the pre-Islamic prophets and the Companions of the Prophet of Islam, the Jordanian state attempts to represent itself as a key player in the Muslim world in the eyes of both Muslims and non-Muslims. The reconstruction of those mausoleums marketed as Islamic tourism destinations is meant to serve political and economic objectives. In a different scenario, Mohsin et al. (2016) also discuss how the concept of halal tourism has been propagated by industry players (e.g., hoteliers) after they have observed the economic success of adopting the logic of halal by banks and financial institutions in adjacent fields such as Islamic banking. From this vantage point, therefore, both Islamic and halal tourisms are socially constructed by certain institutional actors in order to perform the specific realities envisaged by those institutions.

These tourisms themselves are performed via certain material objects, symbols, and practices of halal. For example, physical buildings and architectures in Neveu's (2010) study and hotels, resorts, food and drink, and clothing in Mohsin et al.'s (2016) work all play a role in the performation of Islamicness. As Tayob (2020) also argues, halal certification mechanisms, symbols, and practices all carry certain meanings aimed at performing a specific reality (namely the Islamic) parallel to the rest of realities in society. Similarly, Fischer (2016) demonstrates how technology and technical devices contribute to the development of halal standards and certification mechanisms. Taken altogether, therefore, it could be argued that it is not just the religious/cultural motivations of Muslim tourists that drive the development of Islamic/halal tourism; rather the semiotic, material, and technical entities in halal industry and economy also shape Muslims' imaginations of ideal tourism. Süerdem (2013) particularly argues that the development of halal industry is not a bottom-up venture (i.e., fuelled by Muslim consumers' demand); rather, it is predominantly a top-down project which seeks to construct a specific consumer subject in the interest of political-economic gains. Halal industry, Süerdem argues, creates new power relations in the marketplace as powerful industry actors determine what people should consume and how.

Based on the above discussions, it would be fair to conclude that the relationship between human and non-human actors is symbiotic. That is, on one hand, different human actors (i.e., individual and institutional) as consumers, business practitioners, members of professional and policy organizations collaboratively develop certain entities (e.g., discourses, material objects, semiotic means, and technical devices) to perform their desired realities. On the other hand, these non-human entities reproduce new realities and relationships between the human actors who shaped them. This is because Muslims have different perceptions of halal and what may be halal for some may be haram for others (e.g., the method of slaughtering in preparing halal meat). In the same vein, visual representations of halal (e.g., images and visual arts) are widely controversial among Muslims as to what extent they are 'permissible' from a sharia viewpoint. Otherwise said, what is presented as halal in tourism may not have the same degree of legitimacy mainly because different groups of Muslims have different perceptions of halal. Having discussed how the notions of institutionality and performativity can

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explain certain phenomena in tourism, under three categories, I will suggest some ideas for future research.

Understanding the Institutions and their Roles and Relationships

Of all the institutions suggested by neo-institutional theorists, the state and religion seem to be playing the most significant role in shaping the tourism landscape. This was highlighted by Din (1989) a long time ago as he clearly established how theocratic states could allow or disallow a certain degree of tolerance in 'un-Islamic' practices to be present in tourism. Seyfi & Hall (2019) and Zamani-Farahani & Henderson (2010) also emphasized how the coupling of the institutions of the state and religion can produce a specific institutional environment that idealizes some and demonizes other forms of tourism. These authors' cross-country examination of Iran and Saudi Arabia delicately unveils a series of ideological and political factors (e.g., politics of gender and citizenry and religious identity management) that underlie the (under-)development of multiple tourism phenomena. These politics are also largely wrought with different types of economic and political competitions in achieving hegemony in regional geopolitics. It would be interesting to investigate how changing geopolitical dynamics influence theocratic states' management of tourism. In other words, what kind of institutional work do they undertake to achieve their intended goals? What kind of tourism do they promote or demote? What actors do they employ to do so? What compromises may each institution make? What other institutions and institutional logics may they resort to in order to reinforce their logics? What potential conflicts may arise between the institutions of the state and religion? How would these conflicts manifest in policies aimed at managing tourism? Similarly, in secular systems of governance, where the institution of religion does not formally participate in determining public and economic policy, it would be exciting to examine how religious institutional actors may try to impact upon tourism. For example, are there lobbies that try to form a particular form of tourism? What kind of trade-offs are made in such negotiations? What kind of collective actions are possibly mobilized to insert a change in tourism? What resources are used?

As regards other institutions, future research would immensely benefit from more systematic research on how professionals in industry (e.g., market research organizations, advertising agencies, and halal certification bodies) shape tourism in relation to Muslim societies. As such, a number of questions can be put forward for research: what do these professionals do? What material, symbolic, and technical entities do they produce and reproduce? How do they legitimate these entities? What processes are involved in these legitimations? Who do they link with other institutions (e.g., the state, religion, and community)? How do they compete and collaborate with each other? How do these interactions contribute to the formation or transformation of tourism realities? What normative, cultural-cognitive, or regulatory mechanisms do they resort to and shape in pursuing their interests?

Although many existing studies (e.g., Battour et al. 2017; Battour & Ismail, 2016; Boğan & Sarıışık, 2019; Preko et al., 2020) highlight the role of the family in tourists' motivations, more research is needed on exploring the extent to which the institutional logic of the family creates different tourist behaviours. For example, it is not uncommon for some Muslim males to travel to places where they

would not, under any circumstances, go with their families. For example, on their own or with their likeminded male friends, colleagues, or relatives, they would have no reservation to travel to and visit mixed-sex holiday resorts, but they would not take female members of their families to such places (The Guardian, 2010). Din (1989) also alludes to the existence of such double standards in Muslim countries. These observations draw attention to the institutional role of family and gendered identities in shaping tourism and touristic behaviours; and these areas are very promising for future research. Exploring issues of this type would particularly help understand how gender policies and politics in certain local contexts (e.g., individual countries) can contribute to the formation of certain touristic attractions in other Muslim societies (e.g., different Muslim nationals visiting Dubai for fun).

Exploring Socio-Economic Disequilibrium in Muslim Societies

Despite ongoing collaborations among Muslim states in regional (e.g., Arab League) and global (OIC) organizations, resourceful-powerful actors in these establishments largely provide lip service to their less resourceful-powerful member states. That is, they all advocate the development of 'Islamic tourism' but discretely they tend to pursue their own national interests. As a result, the tourist subjects they collaboratively shape inevitably work to their own advantage. This is because they have more resources (e.g., infrastructure), economic stability, geopolitical security, and political power in international relations. These factors enable them to attract more tourists, recruit competent human resources, and further their touristic resources and infrastructure. Imbalance between countries in all these factors widen the gap between Muslim societies in such a way that some countries become rich at the expense of others. For example, permanent or temporary migration of skilled workforce from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, or Indonesia to countries with higher GDPs can eventually work to the disadvantage of those countries because their tourism development slows down. Following the same pattern, richer countries continue to develop by capitalizing on cheap labour from poorer countries (Eriksson et al., 2009). Consider, for example, how luxurious hotels in some Muslim countries built by workers who live with low wages in poor conditions. Alternatively, one can think of how while affluent tourists celebrate the prospects of halal tourism with their families, those individuals who have left their families behind for meagre salaries in other countries make several sacrifices to produce the ideal 'Islamic' tourism for others.

Researchers interested in the intersections of Islamicness and tourism could significantly contribute to both policy and practice by delving into exploring how tourism contributes to a wider range of inequalities in society. Research on these issues could help create awareness about and possibly change the institutional arrangements in which social inequalities are nurtured and reproduced. Investigations of this kind would responsibilize different institutional actors whose collective actions, if properly corrected, can turn tourism into a field where every participant can benefit from developments made in tourism. Attention to labour law and business ethics could particularly shift analysis away from economic viability and tourists' expenditure to human rights and humane tourism practices. Likewise, research on the environmental impacts of preservation or degradation of natural resources in different contexts can help adopt and implement policies that would allow a sustainable and equitable form of

tourism. For example, ecotourism is more likely to be promoted and implemented in countries that have more advanced social-economic, regulatory, and technological infrastructure.

Examining the Cross-Cultural Self-Reflexivities Among Tourists

As discussed earlier, the construction of Islamic/halal tourism is a joint venture between different institutional actors who undertake a wide range of institutional work to achieve their various goals. One main type of such institutional work to construct the Muslim tourist subject as the consumer of historicized products. For example, nowadays, many countries resort to the cinema and film industry to depict a utopian world and then attract tourists to the manifestations of the utopia. One clear example is Turkey, which has, over the past two decades, substantially invested in producing tantalizing historical (e.g., about the grandeur of the Ottoman Islam) and modern (e.g., about the role of Turkey in fighting the manifestations of Imperialism) TV series.

These visual images play an important role in constructing and attracting tourists whose imaginations are built by these art products. While this phenomenon is not specific to Muslim societies (Wen et al., 2018), Muslims' societies' differential socio-cultural, economic, political, and ideological conditions warrant specific attention to how international tourism can invoke certain changes in local societies within the Muslim world. For example, Buccianti (2010) documents how watching dubbed Turkish soap operas by Arabs has contributed to the growth of divorce in some Arab countries. This, Buccianti argues, stems from how these soap operas change the audiences' imaginations about the ideal life.

Extending Buccianti's study to different areas of social life can offer tourism researchers some interesting insights to explore how, through its 'imaginal politics' (Bottici, 2014) of visual arts and discourse, tourism can stimulate tourists to reflexively question the institutional structures that have shaped their identities. From a Butlerian (2005, 2010) perspective, tourists performation of their desirable identities is more likely to result in their attempts to question, refute or unsettle some of their own existing realities in economy, culture, politics, and society at large. This is because by accelerating human mobility, tourism significantly contributes to the formation of 'global flows' (Appadurai, 1990), which in turn fosters self-reflexivity among human beings (Giddens, 1991). That is, as a result of being exposed to other realities, people start to inevitably compare and contrast their own life conditions with those of others (Jafari & Goulding, 2013). With a focus on such dynamics, researchers can embark on interesting projects to investigate how tourism influences Muslims' imaginations and perceptions of self and others, and their subsequent impact on tourism itself and what tourism performs. These dynamics include both individual and social psychological issues (e.g., emotional, imaginative, comparative) that need specific attention.

Conclusion

This article suggest that Islamic tourism be conceptualised *not* as type of tourism but as broad field of study in which Islamicness intersects with multiple tourism phenomena. I argued that although valuable, existing definitions of 'Islamic' and 'halal' tourisms leave little room for researchers to

embark on many issues that are relevant to Muslim societies. I discussed how theorising tourism as an institutional field can help identify and address under-studied areas. I particularly, drew attention to the performative nature of Islamicness in tourism.

Sometimes, theoretical oversights arise from the lack of sufficient reflexivity in research. That is, scholars may not acknowledge how their subjective worldviews underpin their theorisations. Following Said (2005/1998) and Al-Azmeh (1993), Article suggest that researchers more reflexively recognise the ontological and epistemological positions from which they see themselves, their research phenomena, and the world in which they research and report those phenomena. Such reflexivity, as Butler (2005) and Spivak (1988) also note, requires researchers' deep reflections on the institutional structures that have described and prescribed their subjective identities as individuals and members of different collectives. This kind of reflexivity could also inspire scholars to primarily scrutinize their own assumptions and the motivations underlying their investigations. Many researchers whose work that has been cited earlier collectively and rightly highlight that Islamic/halal tourism largely emerged and has rapidly grown in the post 9/11 era. It is, therefore, important for researchers to consider how politics and policies of identity – e.g., redefining and reconstructing the Muslim identity in a global context – underpin discourses and practices in Islamic tourism.

To justify the emergence of an Islamic Tourism does not need efforts aimed at normalizing Muslims as participants in tourism, travel, and leisure activities. Neither is there a necessity to theorise Muslims as an exceptional societal group whose belief in Islam makes them behave in a 'unique' manner. Because all societal groups have certain unique characteristics, they are all 'commonly different' (to borrow from Wilk, 1995). Engagement in efforts of this kind can distract scholars from addressing many pressing issues mentioned in this article.

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