

Potentials, Challenges And Prospects Of Halal Tourism Development In Ethiopia

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Abstract : Some anti-Islam attributes, such as alcoholism and voyeurism, have become de facto manifestations of the tourism sector. This eventually causes a paradoxical relationship between tourism and Islam. Hence, on the one hand, Islam inherently encourages Muslims to engage in tourism, the interest of Muslims to engage in tourism is steadily increasing. On the other hand, haram activities and products that are not allowed to Muslims as per the Islamic law and doctrine have surrounded tourism. Therefore, halal tourism has emerged as the best mediator to reconcile the conflicts between secular interests and religious values. Recent studies have confirmed that halal tourism is an emerging cultural phenomenon and secular rather than religious. The central aim of halal tourism is to have delighted customers irrespective of their religious and cultural backgrounds while promoting environmental conservation and social coexistence. This study appraises halal tourism development in Ethiopia from commercial, socio-cultural and diplomatic perspectives. Employing qualitative methodologies, the study, firstly, tried to clarify the existing terminological ambiguities between halal tourism and Islamic tourism and redefine both concepts. Then, it assessed perceptions of local communities and stakeholders towards halal tourism and identified halal tourism resources of Ethiopia. Accordingly, five clusters of halal visitor attractions and five potential halal tourism routes were identified and proposed. Furthermore, the comparative advantages of Ethiopia in terms of halal tourism development and potential barriers to halal tourism development in the country were rigorously appraised. The findings of this study reveal that halal tourism could inject hard currency into the national economy and create job opportunities for the locals. It could also support the mainstream tourism industry through product diversification and curving seasonality. Moreover, socially, halal tourism reinforces interreligious cohesion, relationship and coextensive in multi-religious, multicultural and multiethnic Ethiopia. Politically, it strengthens Ethiopia's foreign diplomatic relationship with the Islamic world and its near and distant neighbor Muslim Countries.

Keywords : halal-conscious travelers, halal tourism, Islamic tourism, tourism resources

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