

Significant Growth in Expected Muslim Inbound Tourists in Japan Towards 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Still Incipient Stage of Current Halal Implementations in Hiroshima

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Abstract : Tourism has moved to the forefront of national attention in Japan since September of 2013 when Tokyo won its bid to host the 2020 Summer Olympics. The number of foreign tourists has continued to break records, reaching 13.4 million in 2014, and is now expected to hit 20 million sooner than initially targeted 2020 due to government stimulus promotions; an increase in low cost carriers; the weakening of the Japanese yen, and strong economic growth in Asia. The tourism industry can be an effective trigger in Japan's economic recovery as foreign tourists spent two trillion yen (\$16.6 billion) in Japan in 2014. In addition, 81% of them were all from Asian countries, and it is essential to know that 68.9% of the world's Muslims, about a billion people, live in South and Southeast Asia. An important question is 'Do Muslim tourists feel comfortable traveling in Japan?' This research was initiated by an encounter with Muslim visitors in Hiroshima, a popular international tourist destination, who said they had found very few suitable restaurants in Hiroshima. The purpose of this research is to examine halal implementation in Hiroshima and suggest the next steps to be taken to improve current efforts. The goal will be to provide anyone, Muslims included, with first class hospitality in the near future in preparation for the massive influx of foreign tourists in 2020. The methods of this research were questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, phone interviews, and internet research. First, this research aims to address the significance of growing inbound tourism in Japan, especially the expected growth in Muslim tourists. Additionally, it should address the strong popularity of eating Japanese foods in Asian Muslim countries and as ranked no. 1 thing foreign tourists want to do in Japan. Secondly, the current incipient stage of Hiroshima's halal implementation at hotels, restaurants, and major public places were exposed, and the existing action plans by Hiroshima Prefecture Government were presented. Furthermore, two surveys were conducted to clarify basic halal awareness of local residents in Hiroshima, and to gauge the inconveniences Muslims living in Hiroshima faced. Thirdly, the reasons for this lapse were observed and compared to the benchmarking data of other major tourist sites, Hiroshima's halal implementation plans were proposed. The conclusion is, despite increasing demands and interests in halal-friendly businesses, overall halal actions have barely been applied in Hiroshima. 76% of Hiroshima residents had no idea what halal or halaal meant. It is essential to increase halal awareness and its importance to the economy and to launch further actions to make Muslim tourists feel welcome in Hiroshima and the entire country.

Keywords : halaal, halal implementation, Hiroshima, inbound tourists in Japan

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