



HALAL CERTIFICATION PRACTICES IN TOURISM BUSINESSES¹

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate halal certification practices in tourism sector. The effect created by considering the consumer values in the management and marketing studies of tourism businesses necessitates creation of new strategies by the managers. With the effect of recent economic and political change in turkey, one of the studies conducted in the way of meeting the demands and expectation of either inbound and new outbound markets is the ‘halal certification’. Although it is seen as an application especially devoted to Muslim consumers, the aim of protecting the human health along with the religious belief comes to the forefront in terms of content. It reveals various dimensions of application that the objects of associations, organization, etc. in this field devoted to guaranteeing the human, food and product safety observe the religious values and sensitivities of society.

Keywords: Halal certification, Halal practices, Tourism

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INTRODUCTION

In fact, the concept of “halal” which draws attention of other sections mainly the businesses and consumers in tourism and relevant certification practices are not new concepts. While the concept of halal is mentioned as a product “which does not contain any forbidden issue” in accordance with religious values, the halal certification is a system in prepared, processed, transported and stored at the purified places and devices in conformity with Islamic rules and values and also containing controllable and sustainable features within the process of supply, manufacturing and consumption. It also comes to the forefront as one of criteria within the scope of certification that the products in this process are additive-free, guilelessness and non-hazardous substances on human health.

HALAL CERTIFICATION

The practices of ‘‘halal certificate’’ which has come to the agenda in our country in recent years has dated back to old times. Moreover, this practice is not an application only specific to Muslim societies. For example; the application of Kosher Certificate in Jew (indicating that the products have been prepared in conformity with Jew rules and symbolizes the quality, conformity to health and safety) has been implemented since the beginning of 1900s and there are approximately 921 institutions offering service on this subject in the world. It is known that first practices concerning to halal certificate have started by Muslims living in USA in 1960s and the countries in various regions of world have followed these. In this regard, various organizations such as World Halal Council (WHC-1999), World Halal Forum (2004), International Halal Integrity Alliance (IHI Alliance-2007), etc. were founded to create a ‘‘common understanding and acceptance’’ for halal certification in the world at global level. The Standardization and Metrology Institution of Islamic Countries (SMIIC) was founded officially within the body of Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2010 due to that the application has gained more importance in Islamic World. In parallel with the developments in the world, it is seen that the organizations making halal certification have been founded in Turkey. The Turkish Standards Institution (TSE) and Association of Food and Necessaries Auditing and Certification Researches (GIMDES) come to the forefront among these.

The halal certification practices in the world cover certifications concerning to the products and services in a wide range of sectors. One of the sectors which have come to forefront in the recent years is tourism. The tourism sector has a distinct feature in terms of both food production and service. As well as that there are concrete criteria within the scope of certification, there are also abstract aspects resulted from the service feature. Therefore, the belief, attitude and behaviors of human resources beyond the industrial criteria play a more significant role in the halal certification application in tourism sector.

As the dense competition in tourism markets, the businesses take some decisions strategically and deem changing more suitable rather than developing the target market. Even if new and rooted changes create high costs at the beginning, its higher potential return makes taking radical decisions easier. In parallel with the changes in recent years, it has been curiously followed by the researchers as well as the suppliers and consumers that the businesses in tourism sector compete to receive halal certificate due to target market change.

In the Muslim majority, Muslim Countries, the concept of halal is an absolute key to consumption (Shafie & Othman, 2006). On the other hand, Halal certification as a new marketing paradigm which marketers can use to differentiate their products and services in the current competitive environment (Rajagopal, Ramanan, Visvanathan & Satapathy, 2011). Halal

certification in tourism sector ensures that foods are served according to Islamic dietary laws. Halal means permitted or lawful or fit for consumption (Zannierah Syed Marzuki, Hall & Ballantine, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative content analysis was used to determine the halal certification practice in tourism sector. First Institutions or Organisations of Halal Certification's website was examined and found out their standards with halal certification. Second tourism businesses' website and brochure were evaluated to compare with the institutions' standards. In this stage, website and brochure consists the concepts, procedures and interpretation. Third, the findings in the institution of halal certification, tourism businesses and literature was explicated as conceptually.

Halal certification practices in tourism

With Halal certification practices that the tourism businesses apply with the aim of offering service devoted to Muslim consumers, they need certification mechanism for easily selling products and services within the scope of halal either in inbound tourism or outbound tourism without meeting an obstacle by showing that they respect to their beliefs and values. The halal certification is also one of aspects necessary for producing and offering acceptable and consumable product devoted to Muslim consumers. With this certificate, the consumers feel the comfort and peace of being in the same environment with the persons who have same opinions and beliefs as well as they may securely demand the products and services of tourism businesses. On the other side, it makes contribution to businesses in terms of achieving international standards that the halal certification practices cover ISO 22000 HACCP Food Safety Management System.

The Halal certification provides confidence, moral comfort and social benefit to the individuals by preparing the necessary conditions in the tourism businesses in conformity with the consumer health and religious values and Islamic rules and inspecting the additive materials, preparation and manufacturing methods, cleaning, hygiene and health conditions and safety rules. It positively affects the recognition and introduction of tourism businesses in Islamic world that the key staff who have received the education of halal information take duty in offering the product and service in conformity with international quality and safety standards. In this case, the tourism businesses which have received halal certification may find opportunity for offering their products to global halal market and increase their power of international competition by playing an important role in overcoming the obstacles which may occur in developing the target market.

In tourism businesses, the process of halal certification covers that the product to be manufactured and offered will cover the principle of traceability, transparency and objectivity, capability-competency (qualified people taking part in the process) and sustainability along with the evaluations starting from their source. At every stage of products which have been subjected to procedures and processes appropriate for religious beliefs and values as of the food source and offered to the consumers, it is a requirement that the tourism businesses shall crate an organizational structure which may undertake all financial and moral responsibility. This is because the halal certification practices do not contain only supply, manufacturing and distribution procedures. There is also a stage of service offering which maintains this process. These reveal the complexity and comprehensiveness of halal certification practices in tourism that the tools used during the sale and offering of products at this stage are used for halal food

completely, they are serviced along with alcoholic drinks, there are not products, services, etc. which are out of the scope of halal certificate in the areas where there are these kinds of consumers, the tour guides have adequate information and experience about religious issues, tours include relevant arrangements concerning to prayer times and prayer rooms during either tour or accommodation, the social areas in the facilities like beaches, swimming pools, hot springs, etc. meet the criteria.

Along with that consumers who will purchase a tourism product in accordance with the religious beliefs and values find the opportunity of making a conscious selection within the direction of these certificates, they may securely benefit from tourism products such as tours, accommodation, food-drinks, transportation, etc. that they have purchased with a more effective and healthy control mechanism. The halal certificate is an indicator not only for that the tourism product conforms to halal criteria but also this product has been implemented in conformity with the safety and hygiene rules in terms of human health. But it is required that these kinds of practices shall not lead to opinions, attitudes and behaviors which may remain any question mark in terms of consumers rather than businesses.

As in every application, some specific aspects may not be found satisfactory especially in terms of consumers in halal certification application. In the certification procedures, it is significant that to what extent they are conducted in conformity with the ethical values as well as that the numeric redundancy of authorized organizations such as businesses, foundations, associations, etc. This is because it has been indispensable to adapting the rules determined in the areas where there is human factor to the current situation and environment. Giving ‘‘halal certificate’’ to the businesses which produce alcoholic beverages may be given as an example as published in the press previously. This reveals the irresponsibility and unconformity of certification businesses to ethical values as well as the businesses offering service in terms of exploiting the consumers.

On the other side, it infamizes the institutions carrying on business in this field in a serious and responsible way that the certification procedures are conducted by institutions which carry on business against fee and with only commercial aims by neglecting the religious beliefs and values of consumers. The system may eliminate these kinds of institutions in time but there will be always remain question marks in the mind. For this, the strict audit and inspection shall be sustainable.

RESULT

Every religion has its own characteristics and rules. Halal certification is not only marketing tool but also religion’s rule. While Rajagopal (2011) pointed out the halal certification as a new marketing paradigm which marketers can use to differentiate their products and services in the current competitive environment, Shafie and Othman (2006) mentioned that the concept of halal is an absolute key to consumption. But Hotel businesses are faced with some difficulties about the halal certification to practice in tourism industry. Because the human is the main factor taking place within the process from the supply of product to putting on the market. Therefore, it is required that the individuals taking part in this process shall have religious beliefs and values and/or adopt the conscientious responsibility, quality, hygiene rules and ethical values. Therefore, these kinds of studies are to be evaluated in unity. In the halal certificate application, it is very significant in terms of bring the organization to international standards that the time and spatial difference do not create difference in understanding and practices. Finally, it will make significant contributions to all parties that certification institutions of halal certification practices prepared, offered and requested in conformity with religious beliefs and values may satisfy the tourism businesses and consumers

in financial and moral terms. Halal certification practice is a credit to the tourism industry in many Muslim Countries. But halal certification standards in Muslim World have some differences in practice each other.

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