Mastercard-CrescentRating

Halal Travel Frontier 2019

Report

#HTF2019

TOP 17

Trends to Watch in 2019

January 2019
Welcome to Mastercard-CrescentRating Halal Travel Frontier 2019 (HTF2019) Report. This year’s report focuses on 17 trends that we believe will shape the next phase of development in the Halal travel space.

We launched the first edition of the report in January last year, which highlighted 10 trends to watch in 2018. While some of those changes will continue to evolve and impact 2019 as well, this year’s trends will significantly influence the next wave of innovations in Halal Travel.

Being at the forefront of facilitating the growth of the Muslim travel market during the last 10 years, CrescentRating team is in a unique position with access to extensive data and insights to have a holistic view of the market. Those in-depth insights have been augmented by the emerging Muslim traveler behavior patterns we see on our HalalTrip platforms (website & mobile App) as well as the consumer purchasing behavior trends observed by Mastercard.

This has enabled us to identify key trends so that all stakeholders can prepare and benefit from the changes about to happen. In this report, the trends identified have been further corroborated by experts, influencers and industry stakeholders who are at the cutting edge of embracing these changes.

A number of trends identified this year are driven by technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI). These technologies along with proliferation of smartphones will play a key role in redefining the Muslim travelers’ experience in trip planning and during traveling. Within that, we also see an emergence of “Instant Noodle Trips”, a trend especially driven by the Millennials and Gen Z who continue to demand Authentic, Affordable and Accessible experiences.

We have identified 2019 as the year that traditional Hajj & Umrah service providers will begin to see disruptions in terms of business models and use of technology. This will mean that these players need to re-evaluate their services and the value-add that they offer to their customers. Social activism and rising female influence in trip planning will also drive changes in travel behavior patterns. We have identified several of trends driven by these phenomenon.

We also see non-OIC countries like South Africa (led by Cape Town), Japan and Taiwan dramatically changing the Muslim-friendly narrative by leading various initiatives. This competition and dynamism will lead to innovations and developments that will benefit the destinations as well as the Muslim travelers.

Finally, we foresee that there will be consolidation of Muslim travel service providers that will result in the emergence of stronger Muslim lifestyle/travel brands.

Where possible, to better illustrate the trend, we have visualized the conversation Farah, HalalTrip’s AI chatbot, would have with a Muslim traveler based on the trend.

The Muslim travel market continues to embrace new technologies to make it easier for Muslims to explore the world. This year's trend report covers how technology, environment and social activism will enable these changes. We hope this inspires all travel industry stakeholders, entrepreneurs, and startups to engage and benefit from the growth of the Muslim travel market.

Fazal Bahardeen
Founder & CEO
CrescentRating.com
HalalTrip.com
Halal travel is the next frontier in the global travel industry. It is a dynamic market segment that is growing at an impressive pace. By 2020, the Muslim travel market is expected to reach $US220 billion and it is forecast to increase by 36% to $300 billion over the following six years, according to the latest Mastercard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI).

This rapidly accelerating yet relatively untapped market provides immense business opportunities and lucrative, new revenue streams for the travel industry. This year’s Halal Travel Frontier Report highlights the trends that businesses, governments and other stakeholders in the travel sector should watch in 2019, to capture and maximize this prospective growth.

In order to tap into the fast growing Muslim travel sector, it is crucial to understand the specific needs of Muslim travelers and tailor make products and services that respect their religious and cultural beliefs. It is also important to consider the profound effect that new technology and digitization has on the way the travel industry communicates and interacts with travelers - especially millennials.

Big data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) are enhancing the experiences of Muslim travelers at every step of their journey - from planning to purchasing to sharing their travel adventures.

There is a huge opportunity for service providers to innovate to include these technologies to spur further growth in Halal travel.

At Mastercard, we are committed to supporting the expansion of this travel segment. That is why we continually collaborate with our partners to constantly develop new and innovative programs and offerings that satisfy and cater to the evolving needs of Muslim consumers.

Mastercard has been working with key industry partners such as HalalTrip and CrescentRating to gather invaluable research and market insights to help the travel industry to broaden its reach and attract more Halal travelers.

Through the constant development of unique Muslim lifestyle products and services, Mastercard aims to enhance the payments landscape, encourage cross-border commerce, drive growth, and set new benchmarks for the expansion of the travel and tourism industry - whilst sharing relevant insights with our key stakeholders.

Safdar Khan
Division President, Indonesia, Malaysia & Brunei, Mastercard
17 Halal Travel Trends - 2019

1. Heightened Awareness on Social-Causes While Exploring Destinations
2. AI Will Further Empower Muslim Travelers
3. Halal Assurance Will Become Smarter With AR
4. AR Will Reconnect Muslim Travelers With Lost Islamic Heritage
5. Consolidation of Muslim Travel Space Will Result In Emergence of Stronger Muslim Lifestyle/Travel brands
6. Disruption of Traditional Umrah Market with DIY Umrah
7. Deeper Training Immersion with VR Umrah
8. Convergence of Travel Behavior Around Mobile
9. Growing Non-OIC Wave in Muslim Travel Ocean
10. Urge for Instant Noodle Trips
11. Hotel Sector Will Stop Hitting the Halal Snooze
12. Rising Female Voice in Trip Planning
13. Destinations to Encounter Multiple Muslim Traveler Identities With Common Shared Values
14. Decline in Muslim Visitors to Destinations Perceived as Unwelcoming
15. Human Resource Development To Take Centre Stage
16. Rise in Demand for Halal Advisory
17. Preventing Halal Big Data Chaos
Heightened Awareness On Social-Causes While Exploring Destinations

With a growing awareness in climate change and calls for more responsible tourism, destinations will be able to tap into the inherent religious obligations of Muslims to safeguard the environment, to drive sustainable approaches in travel.

Driven by their Islamic faith and a global trend towards sustainability, Muslim travelers are becoming more conscious of being socially responsible. As such, they will be motivated to visit destinations where they can also realize this social activism.

Social causes include the ability to improve local living conditions to various green initiatives as an outcome from the traveler’s journey to the destination. These can be communicated as part of destination marketing efforts, in educational tours during the trip itself and via post-trip news shared with visitors.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is a key framework driving this movement. As a result, travelers are becoming more responsible and in turn will reward travel businesses and destinations that embrace sustainability and responsible tourism.
I’ve led two Productive Muslim retreats over the last couple of years, and for one retreat we built a “social-responsibility” activity into the program and the other retreat, we left that social responsibility bit out.

The feedback from the second group was loud and clear, “we are not just looking to travel to nice resorts and enjoy the programs, but as Muslims, we expect Halal friendly travel to include elements of social responsibility including local tourism, philanthropy, and social welfare.”

This feedback is so pronounced that we now actively work with our retreat partners on the ground to ensure we integrate social & community responsibility projects as part of all our upcoming retreats.

Mohammed Faris
Founder, The Productive Muslim Company (ProductiveMuslim.com)
Retreat Leader, The Productive Muslim Retreat (ProductiveMuslimRetreat.com)
AI Will Further Empower Muslim Travelers

Continued Proliferation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) via Chatbots & Intelligent Personal Assistants (IPA) in the travel space will empower Muslim travelers to make more informed Muslim friendly choices on their own and better manage their trips.

While chatbots will provide rapid response times and answer customer enquiries at any time of the day, IPAs custom-designed for Muslim Lifestyle market will assist Muslim travelers to access destination information and perform a variety of routines in real time.

With machine and deep learning, AI will be able to collect and understand information on consumer preferences. This will enable AI to provide more personalized recommendations based on the traveler’s past trips, selections and enquiries.

As recommendation engines continue to better understand these personal preferences, Muslim travelers can expect to receive and enjoy the convenience of personalized trip recommendations. This will significantly reduce the time and resources needed to research and plan their travel itinerary.
I am now here with my wife and kids. Where is the nearest Halal restaurant?

Salam Ali! Great to hear from you again. Asakusa, Tokyo has plenty of Muslim-friendly eateries now. Since you like Sashimi, you might want to try this authentic Halal Sashimi restaurant located just across the road ahead of you. Follow this map on your screen.
wC* expects the AI market to grow to USD $15.7 trillion in 2030. In a decade’s time, CrescentRating also projects at least 60% of Muslim travel expenditure to come from digital touchpoints.

This marriage between the fast emerging markets of AI and Halal travel will give birth to new intelligent service applications most welcomed by Muslim travelers.

Several human service roles will be replaced by more autonomous yet human-like AI service agents capable of providing hyper-personalized service experiences on a large scale. Companies in the Halal travel space too are not protected from this disruptive reality and must begin to adapt today.

Nurhafihz Noor
PhD Researcher
(AI & Services Marketing)

*PwC 2017, Sizing the prize - What’s the real value of AI for your business and how can you capitalise?, Global Artificial Intelligence Study.
Halal Assurance Will Become Smarter With AR

Authenticating Halal claims will still be a key challenge to overcome. Muslim Travelers will take it upon themselves to self-authenticate and verify Halal assurances using multiple tools and technologies.

With the lack of Halal certification in both Muslim-majority countries and Muslim-minority countries, Muslim travelers will find verifying the Halal status of eateries or food products difficult.

More travelers will continue to take ownership of determining the level of Muslim friendliness/Halalness of products & services.

AR and AI technologies will be used to ascertain the Halal status of ingredients, products or restaurants.

Through AR, digital information on the Halal status can be layered into the users’ environment in real time. This also allows restaurants in non-Muslim majority destinations to communicate the Halal status of their foods in a more targeted manner to Muslim travelers without requiring the explicit display of Halal certificates in their premises.

Travelers will also increasingly use social media to ask their personal network on Halal restaurants and products. In addition, they will rely on credible visual cues such as CrescentRating’s rating system that communicate the level of Muslim friendliness.
4 AR Will Reconnect Muslim Travelers With Lost Islamic Heritage

Augmented Reality will provide an immersive platform for destinations to bring to life their rich Muslim history and heritage and effectively communicate these stories to Muslim travelers.

More travelers today are looking for not just present experiences, but a way to reconnect with the Islamic heritage of a destination. Currently such information is offered via websites, travel brochures or tour guides. However the historic information is still passively disconnected from the traveler and may be biased based on the point of view of the human guide.

AR will serve as the bridge between the past and present by offering travelers a real-time digital layering of historic sites as they travel. These AR applications will be accessible via mobile applications and developed using high quality and reliable site information.

More destinations will offer self-guided AR trails as a unique differentiation factor. These can also be customized to fit the traveler’s language and trail preferences. Such AR trails are more scalable as compared to the production of heritage texts or the training of specialized tour guides familiar with the site history.
'Welcome to Alhambra of Granada, Spain! Are you ready to reconnect with Spain's Islamic roots! To begin your Islamic heritage trail, follow the arrow on your screen to the starting point.'

Turn right take 10 steps forward then turn left
Cities contain multiple narratives, and technologies such as AR can unlock and reveal the layers of a place to the traveler. It also enables the past to be juxtaposed with the present hence offering the traveler access to context and a richer appreciation of the places.

As travelers get sophisticated, this layering of historical and real-time information also offers the modern Muslim traveler a critical and contextual appreciation of the cities of today.

With Islamic Heritage content overlaid on the places of today in these AR applications, one would enjoy new lenses to view the cities they visit, and find themselves appreciating the intersection of religious and secular worlds in the urban fabric.

Adib Jalal
Co-founder and Director of placemaking studio, Shophouse & Co
Consolidation of Muslim Travel Space Will Result In Emergence of Stronger Muslim Lifestyle/Travel brands

Catering to the increasing needs of Muslim travelers in the current highly competitive travel segment, requires substantial investments which will drive mergers and acquisitions in 2019.

Startups focused on the Muslim travel market will need to grow substantially in order to be competitive and become global brands. However they do not have sufficient resources to truly scale on their own. In addition, organic growth is not a viable strategy given the rapid market changes.

In 2019, the Halal travel space will witness mergers and acquisitions. An increase in VC funding for this segment, coupled with more start-ups and risk capital flows, will result in stronger brands capable of competing in the overall travel segment.

More investments will be channeled to actualize and deliver better solutions to Muslim travelers.

This will result in the emergence of companies which will be on track to become unicorns in the next coming years.
The Muslim Travel Market (MTM) is a fragmented marketplace of content and destination based sites, Bloggers/Vloggers, Travel agents, Muslim country and non-Muslim country offerings, etc. In such a fragmented marketplace, information search costs are high, offerings/brands are localized, and the seamless search experience and reservations are work in progress.

We now need to migrate to MTM 2.0, where consolidation is the way forward to build a global brand so the potential becomes actual. The challenge in consolidating is the owners believe their startups are worth millions of dollars, they don’t want to be employees, etc., but the reality is, it’s better to have a small percentage of a large (and growing) pie than a large percentage of a small (localized) pie. Furthermore, the major travel brands have been observing MTM and it’s a matter of time before they either buy a startup or create a division.

It will be better for the current crop of startups in MTM to consolidate and have large database, positive cash flows, brand recognition, etc., and then either take it public or sell to a major brand.

Rushdi Siddiqui
Advisor to New York based Wall Street Blockchain Alliance and Mentor (Islamic Economy Startups) for Singapore based Quest Ventures
Disruption of Traditional Umrah Market with DIY Umrah

The Umrah and Hajj segment has been ripe for disruption for some time. 2019 will see an accelerated momentum in this direction. The disruption will happen in a number of fronts enabled by technology; disruption of the traditional Umrah operators role, training of pilgrims to perform the rites and helping in the performance of the rites itself.

The current Umrah Visa process has been a roadblock in preventing major business model disruptions. Enabled by online technology, this process is set to undergo changes. This will allow new players to emerge in the Umrah space in 2019 with new business models. These companies will introduce innovative solutions to disrupt the traditional model which has been heavily dependent on Umrah travel agents. Most of these travel agents are largely composed of family businesses and have not embraced new technology.

With new Umrah solutions, more pilgrims, in particular the younger ones, will be able to book and arrange their own Umrah trips without needing to depend on a travel agent or join an umrah tour group. Thus Umrah travel agents, will need to re-invent themselves to stay relevant as intermediaries, as most of their traditional service roles will be replaced with web-connected applications.
Farah @HalalTrip.com

I need to clear my annual leave by end of this month. Really would like to use that to perform Umrah. Do you think I can go for Umrah at such short notice?

Farah

Alhamdulillah, that's great news Ahmad. Yes you can do so, here are the steps:

- Get Visa Online
- Purchase Air Tickets
- Book Lodging & Transportation
- Download Personal Digital Umrah Assistant
Deeper Training Immersion with VR Umrah

Virtual Reality (VR) is increasingly being deployed within the travel industry. It is ideally suited to train and familiarize with Hajj and Umrah rituals.

Majority of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims require extensive training to familiarize with the proper performance of the rituals prior to embarking on the trip. This will ensure that they get maximum benefit from the trip, which to many will be a once in a lifetime experience.

Currently, Umrah agents are a key source in providing this service of “manual” training for the pilgrims. However, with the proliferation and advancement of VR technology, previous traditional training services will become less impactful. The integration of VR in mobile will also endanger current tour groups and guides.

The use of VR in a number of areas across the Umrah journey, from training to performing will enable travelers to manage their own Umrah pilgrimages by guiding them on the steps and the rites needed to be observed.
he future is now as VR is being adopted to enhance pilgrims experiences. The use of VR will give pilgrims an extra dimension incorporated into their learning of the rituals of performing Umrah or Masjidul. Pilgrims are able to immerse themselves at the Masjidil Haram premises, with details that expose them to the actual surroundings.

This VR experience will give pilgrims the confidence to perform their Umrah or Hajj rituals with ease independently, without much reliance on their religious tour guides.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA) will also be widely used for visa processing and other processes.

Being an Umrah and Hajj Travel leader in Singapore, we are successfully adapting and adopting this VR trend to enhance our pilgrimage’s experience.

Ayoob Yacoob Angullia
Founder & Managing Director of Shahidah Travel & Tours
Leading Umrah and Hajj Travel Provider in Singapore
8 Convergence of Travel Behavior Around Mobile

With Millennials leading the use of digital technologies, other generations of Muslims are displaying similar usage patterns and empowering themselves with mobile applications to travel better.

Advances in digital technology are flattening traditional behavioral differences across generations, with more Muslim travelers making online bookings.

The Mastercard-Crescentrating Digital Muslim Travel Report 2018 revealed the deeper role of online sites and tools in enabling Muslims to better plan and experience their travels.

This trend will continue with mobile phones and web-based applications becoming part of the Muslim lifestyle in helping them with their faith-based needs.

Destinations and service providers, assisted by AI, will be able to project their voice to a wider audience through various digital channels.

Further development of ICT infrastructure across destinations will improve the overall online Halal travel ecosystem.
Assalamualaikum Farah. I would like to travel to Australia to visit my children and grandchildren this summer.

Waalaikumsalam Mohd, I’m sure they would be happy to see you. Would you like me to help you arrange for your flights and airport pick-up from your home?

Yes and please request for my in-flight meal preference to be low-salt diet. My doctor told me to watch my hypertension, I am getting older :)

Sure I will request for a Halal, Low-Salt diet.
Muslim Millennials play a significant role in influencing other generations of Muslim travelers who are moving from traditional means of trip planning towards more independent travel with higher engagement in digital content and services.

With Muslim travelers estimated to spend USD$180 billion by 2026, businesses must adopt and adapt to digital enablement with online transactions and purchases being some of the key motivators.

Like other travelers, Muslims turn to social networking sites to stay connected with loved ones and to share their journey with like-minded travelers. With a strong online network within the Muslim traveler community, the digital space plays a pertinent role in enabling and encouraging them to plan, book and experience their travels while still fulfilling their faith requirements.

Through place discovery content on the HalalTrip website and prayer tools on the mobile app, we continuously strive to enhance every Muslim traveler’s journey...wherever they are.

Raudha Zaini
Marketing Manager
Growing Non-OIC Wave in Muslim Travel Ocean

Several new destinations, particularly from non-OIC regions, are increasing their capability and capacity to attract Muslim travelers. This competition and dynamism will lead to new developments that will benefit Muslim travelers.

Non-OIC countries like South Africa, led by Cape Town, are dramatically changing the Muslim-friendly narrative by leading various initiatives. Many Asian countries are also looking to attract Muslim visitors and investing resources nationwide to achieve this goal. Amongst these destinations are Japan, Taiwan and Korea.

As a result of its many government-led initiatives including the Mastercard-CrescentRating Indonesia Muslim Travel Index 2018, Asia’s once sleeping dragon, Indonesia, continues to leap and accelerate in its offerings of Halal-friendly services for Muslim travelers.

There will be an increased competition from destinations to become more Muslim friendly. Destination leaders in OIC regions such as Malaysia and non-OIC such as Singapore will face stiff competition to retain their positions in the Global Muslim Travel Index.

*OIC: Organization of Islamic Cooperation
Tourism from the Muslim market is part of the future of global travel. As a non-Muslim country, we are actively working on ways to encourage local businesses to facilitate a friendly environment for the global Muslim traveler within their strategies.

This may be a work in process, but since Cape Town already has a thriving Muslim community, we have a great platform from which to reach this growing market.

Enver Duminy
CEO, Cape Town Tourism
A growing number of younger travelers will seek for “Instant Noodle Trips”: affordable, impromptu short trips that are decided a few days prior to leaving.

Prompted by promotional sales for airfares, travel discounts during off peak seasons, an increasing number of regional routes by budget airlines and busier work schedules all year round, more Muslim Travelers will take “Instant Noodle Trips” throughout the year.

Similar to the essence of Instant Noodles, these trips are affordable, convenient and available at any time of the year. They will offer a condensed yet satisfying experience of a fully planned trip.

With the increasing need for these trips, travel solutions will be redesigned and offered through more mobile friendly applications. These plans will have shorter lead times and are able to provide travelers with instant booking and confirmation of all aspects of travel services.

“Instant Noodle Trips” will integrate seamlessly into the traveler’s lifestyle and serve their travel escapades at a short notice when required.
Assalamualaikum Farah. I managed to clear my work schedule just in time for the long weekend and will have five consecutive days off starting day after tomorrow. Where would you recommend?

Sounds good, book us on the earliest flight. Do you know of any good places to stay at?

Sure thing. Yes I do, I have shortlisted these Crescent Rated hotels.

- Courtyard by Marriott Madrid Princesa
- Sercotel Gran Hotel Luna de Granada
- L&H Gran Vía Selection

Waalaikumsalam Amar! Nice to hear from you again. Good news: there is a sale happening for flights to Madrid, Spain! It has stunning sceneries and a good number of halal restaurants.
I believe we are accustomed to the narrative that a successful trip is one that is well planned in advance and does not break the bank. To save cost, we buy plane tickets early.

But many like myself may not have the luxury of making plans early due to tight work schedules. Therefore, I often have to settle for last minute trips - be it business or leisure.

Contrary to popular belief, last minute trips do not necessarily cost a bomb because promotional airfares and discounts happen all year round. More people are becoming increasingly comfortable with instant travel purchasing decisions.

As quick or instant my decision may be, I would still ensure it to be affordable just like how budget-friendly an Instant Noodle is. So I’m a Muslim Instant Noodle Traveler who is ready to globe-trot whenever my schedule permits.

Neollene
Filmmaker & Photographer
@neollene
Hotel Sector Will Stop Hitting the Halal Snooze

With the competitive climate of the hotel sector, coupled with the need for better hospitality services and travel experiences, the Muslim travel market is one segment that the hotel sector will no longer be in “snooze” mode.

Businesses in various tourism sectors have responded to the needs of Muslim travelers in phases. This gradual process started with the food industry with restaurants deciding to go halal. The airlines followed by providing Muslim travelers Halal meals upon request.

In recent times, airports around the world are also becoming increasingly Muslim-friendly. Most airports are now equipped with multi-faith prayer facilities and increasing availability of Halal food outlets.

One service touchpoint that has lagged in catering to the needs of Muslim travelers is the hotel sector. With a groundswell of Halal friendly services by other service providers, the hotel sector is now coming on board.

To serve guests from many cultures and faith groups, more hotel brands will skillfully communicate their brands and manage their Muslim-friendly services in order to position themselves as being welcoming to diverse groups of travelers.
In many cases, hotels have been providing limited services for Muslim guests such as different restaurant timings during Ramadan or the clear labeling of dishes containing pork. One can find such hotels in London, Barcelona or Geneva. This, however, is not enough.

There is a much wider range of products and services that need to be made available, and Shaza Hotels is proud to be the first and only international hotel operator to offer them.

Catering to the Halal-conscious traveler was for us not only an opportunity to set Shaza apart from the fold, but also to offer our hotel owners an interesting investment proposition.

Having said that, Shaza’s success lies in its ability to not exclusively cater to Halal-conscious travelers, but to be a hotel brand that appeals to a wide spectrum of guests from different cultures and backgrounds.

Christian Nader
Vice President
Development, Shaza Hotels
Rising Female Voice in Trip Planning

With more Muslim females gaining access to tertiary education and entering the workforce, they will become more influential in planning and deciding on their travels.

According to a recent report by Pew Research Centre*, young Muslim women are closing the gender gap in higher education as more Muslim females are educated and getting into universities especially in the Middle East. Muslim females are also actively participating in the workforce in more diverse sectors. This influence is also being exerted in the digital sphere with a majority of social media influencers in the Muslim travel and lifestyle space being female.

These complementary drivers will allow Muslim females to have a stronger influence when planning trips on their own, with their friends or even with family. Specific travel conditions will be more salient and important to them, such as safety. As a result, more destinations will need to offer Muslim-friendly services which take into account the sensitivities of Muslim female travelers.

*Pew Research Study Muslim Educational Attainment
Hi Siti,

There are many halal eateries in Wan Chai and Tsim Sha Tsui and I have rounded up a list of the mid-range hotels there. Take a look at the hotels below:

- Hotels in Wan Chai, Hong Kong
- Hotels in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong

Alternatively, you may also want to consider staying at any of the Disneyland Hotels as they are able to provide halal meals upon request. Each room in these hotels come with 2 large queen beds and would be comfy for your family. There are halal certified restaurants in Hong Kong Disneyland as well.

- Hotels in Disneyland, Hong Kong

As for ladies-only hair salon, there are none currently. However there is a female-only spa and they also provide hair dressing services. You can request for a private room and a female stylist. Check out the listing here.
A lot of my blog readers are females who are educated and have traveled on their own prior to marriage. They are independent and experienced in trip research and planning.

Many Muslim women are continuing to influence their family’s travel decisions after marriage. Usually, they are the ones who will do trip planning while considering the needs of their families. We often receive emails from female travelers who ask for information specific to the needs of their families. For example, child-friendly options and spouse’s food preferences. They often prioritize their family’s needs before their own.

Interestingly, we have observed that when newlyweds plan their honeymoon, the conversation always starts with the male, however, the final say is always with the female even if they are not involved in the entire process. Companies should account for the Muslim female influence in their campaigns and product offering.

Elena Nikolova
Founder and Chief Editor of MuslimTravelGirl.com
@muslimtravelgirl
Destinations to Encounter Multiple Muslim Traveler Identities With Common Shared Values

Within the Muslim faith are a multitude of cultures and identities. Binding these together are common faith-based threads. Destinations are required to serve both their shared needs and the differences with empathy and inclusiveness.

As destinations focus on the growing Muslim travel market, they will begin to observe multiple identities and nuances. These can come in the form of differences in public dressing to dietary preferences and even social conduct.

To effectively manage this diversity, destinations need to have a deeper understanding of Muslim travelers. They need to be tactful in their market outreach and in catering to multiple Muslim profiles.

At the same time, destinations should be mindful of the common faith-based needs such as halal food, prayer facilities, water-friendly washrooms, ramadan services, no non-halal activities and recreational facilities with privacy.

Destinations which are able to translate these common needs as well as the diversity to actual services will be rewarded by a wider range of Muslim travelers.
Customers in 2019 expect ‘anticipated, personal, and relevant messaging that people actually want to get’

Many destinations are uniquely placed to create beautifully crafted, memorable brand experiences for their Muslim visitors. As the facilitators of powerful emotional journeys that resonate with the personal and spiritual aspirations of Muslim travelers, halal travel service providers must invest resources to understanding customers at a deep, authentic level. At the heart of this customer empathy process is Human-Centred Design (HCD).

In a October 2018 report titled The Business Value of Design, McKinsey & Co surveyed many globally successful companies. They concluded that by embracing HCD practices, companies develop meaningful, differentiated customer journeys resulting in customer loyalty, global brand awareness and higher margins.

Peter Gould
Design Executive Officer, Studio Zileej
We design inspiring brands, products & experiences for Muslim audiences
Decline in Muslim Visitors to Destinations Perceived as Unwelcoming

Islamophobic sentiments, which linger in some regions, will deter Muslim travelers from visiting these places. Instead, travelers will be able to readily substitute these destinations with options which are more welcoming.

In the past, Muslims may have continued to visit destinations which are perceived to be unwelcoming. This is because such news did not surface and were largely unknown to the wider global community.

However, with an increasing fervour of social policing and locals amplifying the realities of everyday life, travelers no longer obtain a destination’s environment and living conditions solely from traditional tourism brand communication channels.

Muslim travelers will be more informed and will make educated travel decisions. They will increasingly rely on multiple media channels to obtain more “credible” news about the Muslim friendly climate of a region especially before making the travel booking. These informal news sources will continue to grow and become more influential in shaping the traveler’s perceptions of a destination.
15 Human Resource Development To Take Centre Stage

Tourism providers will increase their human resource and training development in order to serve this growing pool of Muslim travelers and remain competitive in a changing economy.

Talent development will continue to be key for organizations catering to Muslim travelers. This comes in the midst of various disruptions caused primarily by advancements in technology and a more competitive and dynamic Muslim travel market.

These shifts in the global landscape will result in a surge of human resource development activities to urgently increase the competencies and skills of tourism and hospitality professionals to better cater to Muslim travelers.

All levels of the organization, from junior staff to senior management, will be involved in training delivered via classrooms, online lessons and AI-assisted HR development courses. These will equip professionals with the necessary skills, knowledge and certification to stay relevant for both their careers and the Muslim travel market.
Rise in Demand for Halal Advisory

Destinations will engage in more advisory services as they seek to better understand the Muslim travel market and position themselves effectively to compete for Muslim tourist arrivals.

As more destinations seek to differentiate themselves and serve the growing Muslim travel market, the knowledge gap in understanding the needs of Muslim travelers will need to be rapidly filled with Halal advisory services.

These services will be available to assist destinations in different business phases, from planning and strategizing to execution. They will come in various outfits, from individual experts to fully-fledged companies.

In addition, such Halal travel advisory services should also connect them with a wider network and greater access to the overall Muslim travel market.
It is absolutely essential for tourism and hospitality providers to be more strategic, proactive and open towards seeking Halal advisory services to gain insightful knowledge and guidance, in-depth market research, competitive intelligence and to develop innovative growth strategies.

Customized training and development will be provided by the advisory service providers to optimize skills and competencies of tourism and hospitality workforce and to professionalize the global halal tourism industry.

Ms Barkathunnisha (Nisha) Abu Bakar
Founder & Principal Consultant, Elevated Consultancy & Training
There is an explosion in the variety and volume of digital content produced by Muslim travelers. Companies will need to better manage this data in order to understand and create meaningful insights.

With the increasing use of smartphones, social media applications and easy-to-use media production software applications, Muslim travelers will continue to create and share useful digital content.

This universe of digital media will also have different sizes and formats. This can range from dynamic vlogs to expressive text-based microblogging. As such, the information readability will vary across different formats.

The continued exponential increase in digital travel content will create a rich data repository containing important consumer information and insights. Companies which can manage and interpret such information will be able to truly harness its potential. By unlocking the true value from this big data, they will be able to translate data insights to industry impact in the Muslim travel space.
Travelers are increasingly looking for unique experiences - personalized to their lifestyles and expectations - and organizations can use data analytics as a predictive tool to improve customer experiences. This includes enhancing loyalty programs, creating bespoke offers, and providing positive digital experiences.

Organizations can also better understand when and how guests like to be engaged, and provide the right information at the right time using the most appropriate channel. This has enabled key players in the travel sector to improve their operations, enhance tourism growth, better serve customers, and ultimately grow their bottom line.

Aisha Islam
Vice President
Market Product Management
Mastercard
But collecting and connecting that data in useful and innovative ways can prove challenging, as much of it is unstructured and requires significant wrangling before it can be effectively deployed. This is where Artificial Intelligence steps up: by making sense of the massive data streams that are available and extracting valuable insights from them, AI can quickly provide companies, researchers and policymakers with the data-driven proof required to make effective decisions.

The Halal travel industry is clearly a unique market segment, with Muslim travelers seeking destinations which meet their needs, in terms of food, dress or rituals. Harnessing the power of big data and AI can provide companies operating in the Halal travel space with valuable insights to streamline operations, improve profit margins and provide an overall better experience to customers. This is what LUNAIQ is focused on doing.

"Big data is rapidly transforming most areas of business and various aspects of our lives. This is particularly the case for the travel industry, which is known for creating massive amounts of data throughout the travel journey."

- Professor Dr. Guy De Pauw
Scientific Advisor, LUNAIQ
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Fazal Bahardeen

Fazal Bahardeen is an entrepreneur in the Muslim Lifestyle and Travel Space. He founded CrescentRating in 2008, along with the world’s first rating system to rate travel and tourism services for their Muslim friendliness. Currently, he overlooks two leading brands in the Halal travel segment; CrescentRating and HalalTrip. Prior to this, he held senior management roles at Alcatel-Lucent, based in Europe and Asia.

Nabilah Ayunni

Nabilah graduated with a Bachelor of Business and Commerce from Monash University, Malaysia. Her career in the Halal Industry started when she began to focus on Islamic Business in her final undergraduate year. In 2016, she represented Monash University at the 7th Global Islamic Marketing Conference (GIMAC) where she presented a co-authored paper on “Perception of Halal Products and Halal branding by Muslim Consumers.” Her goal is to make travel easy for Muslims around the world.
About CrescentRating

CrescentRating is the world’s leading authority on halal-friendly travel. The company’s vision is to lead, innovate and drive this segment through practical and deliverable solutions in what is regarded today as one of the fastest growing segment in the tourism sector.

The company uses insight, industry intelligence, lifestyle, behavior and research on the needs of the Muslim traveler to deliver authoritative guidance on all aspects of halal-friendly travel to organisations across the globe.

Formed in 2008, CrescentRating services are now used by every tier of the tourism industry globally, from Government bodies, tourism agencies to hospitality service providers, on how they can meet and serve the needs of the Muslim traveler.

Its unique Halal/Muslim friendly rating service, which combines detailed analysis, assessment and benchmarking, is now established as the premier rating standard for the industry.

Since 2015, CrescentRating partnered with MasterCard to co-develop industry leading research reports on the Muslim travel market. The “MasterCard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI)” is now the premier resource to benchmark destinations on Halal Travel.

CrescentRating has established a partnership with ITB Asia, ITB Berlin, MIHAS and Uzakrota to host the “Halal In Travel” conferences in Singapore, Berlin, Kuala Lumpur and Istanbul.

The aim of CrescentRating is to enable Muslim travelers to explore every part of the world with the satisfaction that their needs and requirements are being met.

CrescentRating’s services include rating & accreditation, research & consultancy, workshops & training, ranking & indices, destination marketing, event support/partnerships and content provisioning.
About Mastercard

Mastercard is a technology company in the global payments industry that connects consumers, financial institutions, merchants, governments, digital partners, businesses and other organizations worldwide, enabling them to use electronic forms of payment instead of cash and checks. With the company’s global payments processing network, Mastercard can facilitate the switching (authorization, clearing and settlement) of payment transactions and deliver related products and services.

Mastercard makes payments easier and more efficient by creating a wide range of payment solutions and services using our family of well-known brands, including Mastercard®, Maestro®, and Cirrus®. The company’s recent acquisition of Vocalink Holdings Limited (“Vocalink”) has expanded Mastercard’s capability to process automated clearing house (“ACH”) transactions, among other things.

As a multi-rail network, Mastercard now offers customers one partner to turn to for their payment needs for both domestic and cross-border transactions. The company also provides value-added offerings such as safety and security products, information services and consulting, loyalty and reward programs and issuer and acquirer processing. Mastercard networks are designed to ensure safety and security for the global payments system.
About Halaltrip

HalalTrip helps Muslim Travelers “Get Inspired . Go. Inspire Others”. It makes place discovery and trip planning easier, fun and more intuitive for those looking for a halal-friendly travel experience.

HalalTrip is the world’s leading online travel platform catering specifically to the needs of the Muslim traveler and uses the latest technology for travelers to experience Halal travel. It’s vision is to be the trusted trip advisor for Muslim travelers around the globe.

HalalTrip mobile application available for iPhone/iPad and Android devices provides a collection must-have features to help Muslims navigate their way, whether they are planning the next Halal friendly holiday or want to explore the city where they live.

The App, which is available in a number of languages, also boasts the world’s first in-flight prayer time calculator which allows Muslims to work out the prayer times and directions instantly while they are on board the plane.

Halaltrip also brings together the global Muslim community by encouraging sharing of Mosques & Attractions and reviewing of Halal Restaurants.

www.halaltrip.com
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